



Brewster County Tourism Council

Minutes and Motions

Regular Board Meeting April 17, 2019

Val Clark Beard Board Room – Alpine, Texas

Attendees: Bill Ivey, Tom Williams, Barbara Trammell, Marsha Roberts, Travis Roberts, Carol Peterson, Linda Walker, Mimi Webb Miller, Robert Alvarez, Kara Gerbert, Aaron Rodriguez, Belle Pena-Lancaster

Absent: John Price, Wendy Little, Alaine Berg

Visitors: Judge Cano, Commissioner Sarah Colando, Linda Beranek, John Waters, Molly Finnerty, Belinda Dominguez, DJ Sanders, David Elkowitz, Chris Ruggia

Call to Order by President Bill Ivey

Quorum Established

Introduction of guests and attendees

President Bill Ivey asked for approval of the minutes from the previous board meeting.

Travis Roberts made the motion to approve with typing errors amended.

Tom Williams seconded

Motion Passed

Agenda Item #8 -Aaron Rodriguez presented his IT Report first due to him having to go to his job with Alpine Police Department.

- Most traffic on our website is coming from search engines (Bing, Google, etc.)
- The most visited times are 8:00 am, Noon, and 6:00pm
- Most visitors searching the main page are looking for lodging, Terlingua, and trains
- 42.7% of visitors are female, 27.3% male, and the remainder is “other”
- Main age group of visitors to the website are 25-34 yr. old’s
- He mentioned that a website committee meeting was due

- He also mentioned that it was possible to create the new website in house
- He noted that the new website needed to highlight user generated content
- Content should be geared toward the tourist and not what we “think” might work
- He suggested looking at the Visit Idaho website and the Visit New Hampshire website
- Robert mentioned the “backpack” aspect from the Visit Idaho site as being something that might work well on our new website
- Single page, easy websites are what are working to drive visitation
- Carol Peterson mentioned she liked the idea of being able to change the website in house
- Aaron said he could email his report to anyone who wanted it.

Discussion ensued about age demographic of visitors and Bill added input & suggestions from the board members be brought to Robert of the Website Committee. It was discussed as to who was originally appointed to the committee: Wendy, Sandy, and Molly who refused via email to be on the committee due to not having any time.

Agenda Item #8 – Bill called for a confirmation on a website committee meeting. Robert asked Aaron for a date that would work for him & he stated that Monday April 29, 2019 would work.

Agenda Item #1 – Legislative Update

- a) THLA & Pancho Nevarez created a bill to help Brewster Co. during government shut downs that will allow us to help the park out monetarily. It is House Bill 4152. Robert explained his experience in Austin during his testimony on the bill and stated that there was no opposition and that it should pass into law quickly.
- b) Airbnb currently has local tax lawsuits in effect, so no legislation can be submitted for local taxes to be taken out by Airbnb automatically until those are complete. Bill explained the confusion between state and local taxes taken out of the Airbnb monies and that local taxes are not. Discussion ensued about the number of Airbnb properties that are in the county but that are not on our tax rolls & that this was where the co-op with the Rio Grande Council of Governments employee comes into play.

Agenda Item #2 – BCTC Policy Manual Initial Draft Review

Discussion ensued about the “draft” of the policy manual and Bill asked for input from the board. Judge Cano spoke about this and he feels that we can get this to the commissioner’s court and approved. Robert noted that one of the main issues that we needed to tackle were the tips at meals & the allowance of a 2-3 drinks for when we are hosting journalists. Currently these are not allowed due to county policy, but a policy manual approved by the commissioner’s court would alleviate this issue. It was mentioned that the manual show that any approved representative from BCTC will fall under the manual rules.

Robert asked if a motion should be made to approve changes and additions to the manual via email. It was decided that this should need to be done.

Motion was made by Travis Roberts to submit and approve changes and additions via email to Robert for the operations manual.

A second was made by Mimi Webb Miller

NO OBJECTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Agenda Item #3 – Chamber Contracts for both Marathon & Big Bend

A) 2019 Review & Sign – attorney said it all looked fine and was ready for approval.

Discussion ensued about accepting and signing the contracts for 2019.

Marsha Roberts made a motion to approve the contract and sign it today

Second was made by Carol Peterson

Motion Passed

B) 2020 Changes to Chamber Contracts

Discussion ensued about the contracts for 2020. Travis requested that any contracts have the pages numbered from here on out.

Barbara Trammell wants to see the 501c6 designation when the chambers submit their new budgets. Bill called for a motion to table discussion on the 2020 contract for the chambers.

Linda made the motion to table the re-writing/re-negotiating of the 2020 Chamber Contracts until the next meeting with emailed comments, changes, and ideas.

Second was made by Carol Peterson

Motion Passed

Item #4 – Big Bend Chamber Budget Amendments

Discussion ensued on the amendment to the BBCoC budget submitted by Molly Finnerty so that they can pay their social media manager just as the Marathon Chamber is already doing. Robert mentioned that the BOARD had NOT approved the BBCoC budget, even though he accepted it so that there was one on file. He stated that the board had never approved the submitted budget. Robert also questioned the funds allocated and paid to Tony Drewry for his part in the website creation. Molly explained that he produced the creative visual but not the data aspect. Barbara asked about the 3rd page where money is allocated to updating of the website and why the totals did not add up. Bill asked how much print/ad creation/poster creation costs and he thought the costs were excessive. Robert feels that the design services are excessive, and he doesn't feel he should approve budget items unless the board gives him the sole discretion to do so. If the board gave him this authority, he stated there are several items on their (BBCoC) budget that he felt was a misuse of HOT taxes and that he would not approve them. Robert would like future budgets broken down more clearly to show exactly what is paid to whom Bill said that the board is going to have to decide where to draw the line between local event and events that bring in HOT taxes. Carol agreed with Bill on the fact that if an event is to be paid for in any way with the HOT tax money that they need

to legitimately prove that they bring in out of town visitors. Linda thinks that we are being too controlling in expecting the chambers to give us detailed budgets. Tom mentioned that in the beginning of this organization that we were charged with the responsibility to spend these monies responsibly & he doesn't feel that Robert should be placed in the position to have the final say because he believes that will set him up to be "stabbed in the back" and force him to leave. He feels that if Robert is presented with design work or anything on the budgets that seem excessive that he should report it to the board immediately. Tom said he wants a report at the end of the year telling the board what events worked and what events didn't. Linda said that the chamber members should be helping to justify to the board whether the events actually happened. Linda believes we're micro managing the chambers. Bill asked the board why we give them money. Carol said that the expectation of the chambers at the grassroots level is to advertise an event or the community in order to bring people in to stay in the hotels. Barbara mentioned that this board has worked hard over the years to be able to supply the chambers with this money. Molly said she'd be ok with the BCTC doing their designs. Marsha mentioned that we should give them a chance to prove what they can do because they're all new to this on the BBCoC. Robert stated that all invoices for the rest of 2019 from the BBCoC will be paid and everything will be looked at more closely for 2020. Bill asked for a motion to approve everything that comes in for 2019.

Travis Roberts made a motion to accept BBCoC invoices that have been submitted and approved for the 2019 budget & to move forward with the budget expenditures for them for 2019.

Mimi Webb Miller seconded the motion

Motion Passed

Item #5 – BCTC Contract Staff Taxation Issues

Bill said that we as a council have done all that we can do. We don't feel it is correct that they are being given 1099's for ALL income including their reimbursement monies. We are hoping that with our new policy and procedure manual we can address this and change the way this is handled.

Item #6 – Marketing Committee Update

Linda believes within two meetings that the committee should be able to bring the 2020 budget to the board.

Item #7 – Sign Committee Update

Travis noted that the signs are ready for us to measure the kiosks so they can be framed and placed in the kiosks. Carol asked if it's possible that we might take into consideration some of these signs be converted into placemats? Travis noted that the Ranching signs were essentially ready and that they would be placed in three locations in the county. Each sight would have the general ranching sign accompanied by the respective area ranching sign. The north county ranching sign would be placed at the intersection of Hwy 67/90, the east county ranching sign would be placed east of

Marathon, and the south county ranching sign will be placed at the South County Visitor Center. Travis also presented the map that they wanted to use to place in each of the visitor centers also and he asked for ideas and recommendations for locations to add to it. Chris Ruggia proposed an extension of the sign program, with a historic sign funded by the City of Alpine to be placed on Murphy street depicting the history of that area and would like to see one sign added yearly to Alpine.

REPORTS

President's/Treasurer's Report – Financials were not available at the time of the meeting, as they were working on the financials for the Commissioner's Court meeting. Will have income & expenses at the next meeting.

Director's Report – Robert reported that he had been traveling extensively during the month of March and in general since the first part of the year.

March 1-10: ITB International Travel Show – Berlin

March 11: Met with Visit El Paso on partnerships

March 15: Austin Monthly "Bands to Watch Event" booth at Scholtz Gardens for SXSW

March 22-23: Lubbock Great Outdoors Expo

March 29-31: Dallas Travel & Adventure Show

April 1-5: Canada Media Mission with Travel Texas

April 6: Visit Big Bend Night – Odessa Jackalopes Hockey

April 9-11: Legislative Testimony in Austin on House Bill 4152: BCTC Government Shutdown Assistance

Robert also reported on the Spring Break Trash Assistance where roll offs were placed in South Co. An additional roll off was placed in Marathon & he noted that despite the signs on the roll offs stating that household trash (mattresses, etc.) was still placed in the roll off in South Co. No actual report on the Marathon placement, but comments had been made that it was successful. Robert estimated this cost us around \$4000.00 but that the final bill had not come in. This amount was excessive due to the roll off placed in Marathon that was not originally discussed. His recommendation is to not do this again unless both the Marathon & Big Bend Chambers assist with the policing of these containers and explain throughout these communities that these are not intended for large

items and are meant for tourist use to keep visitors from illegally placing their trash in the containers of local residents.

RGCOG/BCTC Partnerships: The part-time position in conjunction with the RGCOG is still in the review state with a good final candidate meeting again later this week with RGCOG officials, to either accept or decline the position. This position will be housed in the BCTC office but will work 20 hours for us sending welcome letters and notices to accommodation providers who are delinquent or not registered to pay the local HOT taxes.

BCTC Survey: The RGCOG & BCTC have been in discussion with UTEP to do a survey like the ones done in the past from Texas A & M. The RGCOG wanted to add an additional aspect to the survey, but that proved to be too costly. A rough estimate was provided by Professor Fullerton of UTEP of around \$40k, but that was more than we had budgeted. They are still working on whether they will be able to reduce expenses to get it inline with our budget. Robert noted he will reach out to Texas A & M to repeat the survey they did in 2011.

Film Committee Report

Mimi mentioned that she was in talks with Tex Toler about some film ideas concerning border communities – Film Alliance of Texas Border Communities.

She mentioned she would like information sent to her about films that reach out to us as soon as we get that information. She mentioned that several films have/were taking place this year, such as folks from National Geographic, Smithsonian, and she also mentioned that Vice (series) is supposed to come down here.

Social Media Report

Belle mentioned that our social media platforms were increasing in followers.

Instagram – last reporting period showed 33.1k up to 37.7k, which is a 4.7k increase from 2/15/19 to 4/9/19.

Facebook – New page followers up 1,009 with a total of 66 posts during that reporting period.

Twitter – holding steady with little reportable growth – 16 tweets in the reporting period

*Pinterest will be priority for May with a few additions to the YouTube channel for slice of life marketing

Trips & Educational Development

3/19 – Larry Heath of Australian Review FAM

3/23 – Family Crises Center Blog & content creation trip (Chihuahua Races)

3/26 – Marketing Meeting (Marathon)

4/2 – Mike Geng of Ride Texas FAM

4/3 – Content Creation for video of Eve’s Garden

4/4 – Bill Sain tour of Carolyn Ohl’s ranch in Xmas mountains

4/10 – Crowdriff Customer Webinar on connecting business accounts

4/11 – Tam Warner Minton FAM – cancelled due to health issue

4/11 – Dutch Tour Operator FAM dinner at the Gage

4/18 – Tumbleweed Smith FAM dinner at Lajitas

Photos collage Ad created in March

Newsletter for 1st quarter sent with 19,798 subscribers and a reach of 8,231. Next newsletter will go out around end of May or early June.

Council President Report

Bill mentioned a person that went to the county commissioner’s meeting in south county and stated that person believes” we should quit promoting the area and that he didn’t like seeing all the money go to Alpine.”

Marathon Chamber (Linda Beranek & Carol Peterson)

Carrie Van Eck their social media manager has had over 1M views of her bluebonnet posts. The chamber changed the day for the Fiesta de Noche Buena since it occurred at the same time as some Alpine events and they believed this would help attendance. The fire department is to hold a chili event and the Gage is to hold a motorcycle event in conjunction with Tour Texas.

Big Bend Chamber

The BBCoC has 4 new members and they have raised enough money to hold their first event.

Dark Sky Roundtable mixer set for May 4th.

Historical Commission

Travis stated he sent out 144 letters for the May 18th event in Marathon and he expects between 100-150 people.

BBNP

March statistics are in and the park saw its busiest Spring Break ever with over 80k people visiting the park during the month.

Alpine Chamber – No Report

BBRSP – No Report

TX MTN Trail – No Report

Date set for the next meeting: May 21st @ 1:00 pm

Adjourned