



Indiana Office of Tourism Development

MINUTES AND MEMORANDA OF A MEETING OF THE INDIANA TOURISM COUNCIL

Held: December 6, 2018

A quarterly meeting of the Indiana Tourism Council was held at 10:30 a.m. at the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site, 1230 N Delaware St., Indianapolis.

The following council members were present: Chief of Staff to the Lieutenant Governor Tracy Barnes, Cindy Hoye, Robe Caputo, James Wallis, Karen Niverson, Lorelei Weimer, Rep. Justin Moed, Eric Snow, and ex officio member Dr. Liping Cai. Elise Shrock attended in place of Patrick Tamm. Cam Clark, ex officio member Dr. Jonathon Day, and JLL representative David Holder participated via conference phone.

Tracy Barnes called the meeting to order at 10:38 a.m.

I. Welcome

Tracy Barnes welcomed the council and welcomes Charles Hyde, President and CEO of the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site. He gave a brief introduction to the historic property and organization.

The Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site is a 501c3 non-profit. It is entirely privately funded by grants, general admission, and various services provided. The organization works hard to drive visitation, and is grateful for the efforts of those who work to advance the tourism industry as a whole. It speaks to the power of this council's work and investments that the BHPS received a grant to produce a documentary called "President at the Crossroads" that aired statewide, and was picked up by over 200 stations nationally. Opportunities like said grant allow BHPS to share the story of the 23rd president, the story of Indiana, and the impact Indiana has had on the nation.

II. Approval of Minutes

Due to a lack of quorum, minutes from the June and September meetings were unable to be approved.

III. Tourism Task Force Report

The Tourism Task Force report has been completed, and was submitted to the Indiana General Assembly last month. The Lieutenant Governor is very excited about the information provided. We are thankful to JLL for partnering with us through this initiative.

David Holder: There are few things I would like to touch on regarding the report. Right now, Indiana has a golden opportunity to rethink the tourism industry and Indiana as a destination. The tie between tourism and economic development cannot be overstated. The tourism industry is a key driver in creating quality of place. The goal is to project Indiana as not just a great place to visit, but a great place to study, work, and live as well. Tourism is the building block for that goal.

We asked ourselves, what is needed for true tourism development from a governance standpoint? We looked at states such as Oregon and Virginia, which have a quasi-public governance structure. They pursue outside funding with product development. This information is all in the report, and I cannot praise the Tourism Task Force enough. Their input really made the process.

Tracy Barnes: This is really serendipitous timing, as the agency will soon be under new leadership. The report calls for a much higher level operational strategy. Tourism, and tourism in Indiana, are going to go through a significant number of changes in the next 6 months. I will look to all of you for understanding and support for the new leadership. There is lots of enthusiasm for tourism in the Lieutenant Governor's office and the statehouse.

As for an agency update, it dovetails from process there. One of our goals is to find a way to keep working with JLL. They have helped up with the search for a new director, and we're getting close. We've looked for someone who is a technician by trade; we've interviewed for character, abilities, and willingness to work with the Lieutenant Governor. JLL has helped us look at 100 resumes and complete a half dozen video screens.

Additionally, we are planning on doing six—maybe more—listening sessions around the state to get input and feedback from constituents and stakeholders. We have done this with all of our agencies. The timing would be perfect with a new director coming in; stakeholders could hear the information directly from the new director, and the new director could be introduced to state. These listening sessions are part of our long-term strategic plans, and we will continue to work with JLL on them.

The tourism caucus—regular sessions to keep the legislature aware of the tourism industry—is a great opportunity for all of you to get in rooms with elected officials and show the overall collaboration across tourism. We are going into a budget year, so sending a stronger message only works in our favor.

Michael Solari: Tourism Caucus is typically done around the lunch hour from 12-1:00. There are box lunches available, and normally two groups of presentations that each take ten minutes or so.

TB: The only definite is that these meetings will be in the statehouse.

IV. Destination Development Grant Report

At 10:59 the meeting was turned over to Kyle Johnson for an update on Destination Development Grants.

Kyle Johnson: The application window for Destination Development Grants closed on Monday. We received 18 applications, and all six regions of the state were represented. Five applications had issues; we notified those applicants and have already cleared two of them, so that's a good sign. The scoring committee meets next week and will determine the finalists. We will then send a report to the council and notify the finalists. They will present at the March meeting and the council will vote. Members of the council may come in and review applications throughout the entire month of February.

Lorelei Weimer: Can you black out sensitive information and send the applications to us? It's hard to travel, and we can't do groups justice if we can't review the applications.

KJ: We can make arrangements to come to you.

TB: We can look at just sending the pertinent information. We don't want to send a mass report.

KJ: If you want to see them, we will make it happen so that you can see them. What we do send out, we will have to modify in some way.

Karen Niverson: I would be interested in seeing a full list of applicants.

KJ: (reads list)

TB: How does the application count compare to last year?

KJ: We had more last year, but the ones this year are of a higher quality. Right now we have issues with three of the applications; last year we had issues with ten.

LW: Can we have a council member on the review committee?

TB: We have had conversations on that topic. We're not against it, we just haven't yet figured out how to make it work. We have to make sure there are no conflicts. The Lieutenant Governor is very big on transparency. She wants this information out there. We really want the council connected to the initiatives.

LW: even the summary is not enough. We're awarding a lot of money, and there's a lot of information we don't have. During the last final round, there were a lot of questions we wanted to ask, but couldn't due to the public nature of the meeting.

TB: Help me understand why it is an issue to ask questions with people in the room?

LW: You don't want to offend anyone, but it's going to get into nitty gritty conversation.

Cindy Hoyer: In the name of more transparency prior to the meeting, can we read through the applications ahead of time, go back to Kyle and have tourism ask our questions?

LW: It is extremely helpful to read through and ask questions in advance.

TB: The meeting frequency for the council is quarterly—is that enough? Do we need another meeting between now and the final round in March?

LW: We need more frequency when in the middle of a grant cycle. I don't mind driving for a robust meeting that I know is making a difference.

Dr. Liping Cai: Could we do video conferencing for additional meetings?

TB: It will be easier to schedule any additional meetings at the statehouse or at least on state grounds.

LC: For the listening sessions, reach out to hospitality programs at universities. Get their students involved. They are very active in their local communities, they are future leaders of the industry, and it could be very inspirational for them. I think we have 10 programs across the state: Purdue, IUPUI, Vincennes...

TB: Absolutely, that's a good idea.

Rep. Justin Moed: Invite the state representatives from those areas.

TB: Yes, the goal is to be as inclusive as possible, like a town hall. Let me look at some level of meeting between now and March.

James Wallis: I really like the idea of an additional meeting. Could we maybe just redact information on a password protected website? It would be so much better to do this electronically.

KJ: When the scoring committee reviews the quality of applications, we say "These are the projects that have the best chances of succeeding, and will have the greatest impact." Usually there is an obvious break in the caliber of submitted applications. We're not hiding anything from the council, we just want to make sure only the high quality applications make their way in front of you.

JW: You do a great job, but boiling down to a half page leaves a lot of blanks for us.

KJ: What about a webinar instead of a summary document? I feel like the issue is you want to know why we score things the way we score them.

JW: We run into these people across the state at various times, and we can't answer them when they ask why they weren't funded.

LW: A lot of these people actually manage grant programs in their communities. Your recommendations are sometimes the complete opposite of who we would vote for. We look at the situation differently. We look at it from the private sector. We have all been put on the spot about this process. People say, "We put all of this information in our application," they drill us on the information in the application. Well, we didn't know, we didn't see the application.

KJ: You mentioned our scores and voting differently. Our scores are a ranking of the technical aspects. It's saying what applications seem best suited for success. We're not grading the merits of an idea. I like the idea of the council having more access, but being on the scoring committee leaves the possibility of biases. Council members do represent regions of the state.

TB: Give me a week to circle back to the council. One negative that we are up against is the June 30th deadline to disburse funds. We have to move quickly after voting in March.

KJ: If we have a break at 3, we will put the top 5 or 6 in front of you, so you can see our thinking. We all have applications we particularly like, but if they fail the rubric, we can't put them in front of you.

LW: To avoid conflict, you could identify a council member who is not from a destination and wouldn't have a bias. Carrie, Cam, Liping...and you could choose it on a year by year basis.

TB: There are opportunities for input that do not rely on true scoring.

V. Final Business

LW: What is the timeline for a new hire?

TB: It will be announced by the end of the year, in place by the first of the year.

CH: Tying all of this together, this Tourism Caucus on the 23rd, does it make sense to attach a tourism council meeting to the front or back end of that meeting, to meet the new director?

KJ: It would be in the window of after application scoring.

TB: Let's keep that in mind, put a hard lock on that January 23rd date.

Elise Shrock: I wanted to thank the IOTD staff for keeping things moving and Tracy for leadership in this time of transition.

Noelle Szydyk: The 2019 travel guide and golf guides are coming out. Let us know if you don't get it and want it. We will be working on distribution lists.

VI. Adjournment

Seeing no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Barnes
Designee for the Lieutenant Governor

ATTEST:

Emily McNally
Representative for IOTD