



City of Kirkland

Tourism Development Committee (TDC) Meeting Minutes

Date: October 1, 2020 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.

“Virtual” Meeting via Zoom Conference

Present: Chairperson Toby Nixon, Lori Goldfarb, Jac Cooper and Phil Megenhardt

Staff: Jim Lopez and Chris Hendrickson

Absent: Danielle Dorland and Jeff Lockhart

Welcome and call to order: Chairperson Nixon called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Approval of Minutes: The meeting minutes from September 3, 2020 were approved. Motion for approval made by Lori Goldfarb and seconded by Jac Cooper. Passed unanimously.

Presentation by Green Rubino

Account representatives Althea Conyers Achem and Joleen Zanuzoski gave an overview on ways Green Rubino has revised and adapted the City’s 2020 public relations plan to accommodate the rapidly changing tourism landscape resulting from COVID-19. With the City’s widespread event cancellations and subsequent restrictions on dine-in services, there was a dramatic shift in our normal public relations strategy to one that zeroed in on promoting Kirkland businesses, which are one of our greatest tourism assets, through the pandemic. The shift included an emphasis on what businesses were doing to stay alive, information about curbside pickup, takeout options and more. Media visits were placed on pause to accommodate restrictions on public gatherings and other operational limitations.

Green Rubino worked to pitch positive stories about our community, including virtual offerings like what is happening at Kirkland Performance Center and other uplifting stories meant to highlight the City’s resilience.

As things have evolved and progressed, Green Rubino has worked to identify tourism trends as we have entered into a whole new realm travel habits, needs, wants and tendencies. Currently, the industry is seeing a “drive market,” meaning that destinations are hosting guests from roughly 50 to 70 miles away. Part of Kirkland’s appeal is its distinct beauty, cleanliness, and close proximity to water, making it an ideal destination for guests from Spokane, Yakima, and places like that. It’s urban but neatly avoids the issues of litter and homelessness that travelers find in bigger cities. Hotels like the Heathman and the Woodmark offer stunning, spacious rooms making them ideal for families who want to get away, but still need to work and/or attend school remotely.

Golf travel is up, and destinations can anticipate an extended golf season this year as people long to be outside longer.

Green Rubino resumed media visit coordination with the City in August. Media visits are a collaborative effort between Green Rubino and City Staff, who work to develop compelling itineraries for visiting writers to promote Kirkland as a wonderful day trip destination. Looking ahead at 2021, the goal is to promote Kirkland as a safe, healthy community and a vibrant place to escape for a weekend. Continued flexibility is vital as the future of group gatherings is still shrouded in much uncertainty, but whatever the future brings, Green Rubino is poised to showcase Kirkland in a positive light.

Pumpkins in the Park Presentation: Kirkland Downtown Association Events Manager Tessa Hanson

Kirkland Downtown Association requested that the TDC consider a proposal to repurpose a portion of its previously awarded \$2,000 grant for the 2020 “Boo’s Cruise” event to support the 2020 Pumpkins in the Park event. Pumpkins in the Park takes place from 3 to 6 p.m. on October 28 at the final Kirkland Wednesday market of the season. Normally, the market ends in September, but KDA requested and was granted an extension to hold the market through October. Tessa requested \$1,000 to support Pumpkins in the Park, which will transform the final Wednesday market into a Halloween-themed festivity to close out the successful market season a wonderful, family-friendly opportunity for fun.

The KDA has worked hard all summer to fulfil all the health and safety regulations imposed by public health and are well versed in current protocols. Pumpkins in the Park at the market will be festive, with the entire market decked out in Halloween decorations purchased for last year’s inaugural event. They plan to encourage kids to dress in costumes and instead of giving out candy they’ll have a rewards system in place that earns guests a swag-bag when they leave the market. The swag-bag will have coupons and other items to compel guests to visit Kirkland businesses.

The \$1,000 in funding will be used for marketing, printed materials and purchasing candy and other swag-bag items.

Current regulations at the market include closely tracking how many people are in the market at one time, ensuring that all guests have face coverings and use the hand sanitizing stations. Hand-washing and social distancing are heavily promoted. For Pumpkins in the Park they plan to triple the number of volunteers they have during normal markets, with volunteers assigned at the entrance and exit points, plus helping at each vendor booth. They plan to use their existing systems to track market attendance to make sure they don’t exceed recommended crowd levels.

Pumpkins in the Park is a new event that just launched in 2019. It’s vital that they maintain some continuity and keep the momentum going so that next year they can advertise it as the third annual. Pumpkins in the Park has vast potential for growth and is an important shoulder season event. An event like this will be wonderful for the community, bringing a sense of normalcy and an air of celebration to what’s been a very trying year.

TDC member Lori Goldfarb made a motion to approve the revised scope of “Boo’s Cruise” and award \$1,000 to the 2020 Pumpkins in the Park. The motion was seconded by TDC member Jac Cooper. The vote was unanimous.

Staff report: Budget and grant process update

The TDC-adopted budget has gone to Finance and has been initially reviewed by City Manager Kurt Triplett. Finance is now in production of the budget document (which includes all City departments and funds), which they’ll be compiling over the next few weeks. Triplett will present the City Manager’s Proposed Budget to the Council and the public on Tuesday, October 20. The budget will be reviewed and discussed over the course of several meetings held in October and November, with anticipated adoption of the 2021 - 2022 budget on December 8.

The 2021 grant process is complete pending Council approval on December 8. All grant recipients have been notified of their potential/pending awards.

Staff report: Update on 2020 event cancellations

The TDC received an update on 2020 event cancellations. As of October 2020, the status is as follows: a total of 12 events were cancelled with their grant awards unencumbered, three events were completed, two are still pending, and Pumpkins in the Park will proceed based on TDC action earlier in the meeting. Two events – 7 Hills of Kirkland and Kirkland Art Center’s Speak Up – were “repurposed” and transformed to digital, with the applicants submitting revised applications to the TDC for its review and consideration.

Staff report: Update committee vacancy outreach

The Heathman general manager Mike Hill has been approached about serving on the TDC but has not responded. Outreach was conducted by City staff in person, and via email.

Discussion: Looking into the future

Chairperson Nixon referenced conversations held by the TDC at the start of the year centered around funding one major event rather than distributing LTAC funding to support a menu of smaller events held throughout the year. He asked TDC members if they were still interested in going down this path, and if so, when would they like to resume those discussions. If the vision is to introduce a new, largescale event in 2022, they will want to launch their discussions in the upcoming months. If 2023 is more the goal, than it becomes less urgent.

Lori Goldfarb stated that it may be more feasible to wait until 2023 to consider such an endeavor.

Phil Megenhardt agreed, stating that what we have in Kirkland is not broken, it's actually fantastic. This pandemic has had dramatic impacts on some of the City's most loyal returning events, and right now TDC efforts should be aimed at sustaining and supporting the City's long-running, existing events in whatever capacity they're able. Let's keep the good things going, he said.

Jac Cooper said that his philosophy is to get some new events and kick start them with a generous level of support to help them launch, with the hope that they'll be able to support their own existence as they grow and become established in the community. He stressed that it's important that the TDC look for new opportunities and that it continues to promote the idea that there's always something great happening in Kirkland. He referenced the Junior League Softball World Series as the "poster child" for tourism events in the City.

Lori suggested sort of a hybrid approach, and Chairperson Nixon pointed out that they actually implemented that approach this year, by choosing not to fund local, community events and instead pouring that support into the Softball World Series and the two new events that were introduced and funded for 2021. This is a dynamic, ongoing conversation, dependent on future outcomes related to group gatherings and public events and what those look like in the face of COVID-related health recommendations. More discussion will take place in future months using data compiled by City staff about what types of events might do well in Kirkland.

Discussion: Collaboration with Parks and Community Services

Item deferred to next TDC meeting.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, November 5, 2020

Meeting adjourned at: 10:01 a.m.

Meeting minutes prepared by Chris Hendrickson