



**Minutes of the Gig Harbor
Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
June 30, 2004**

Call to Order/Roll Call:

Laureen Lund called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Present: Committee Members present: Sue Braaten, Kathy Franklin, Wade Perrow, Mort Altman, Linda Gair, Kim Hails, Mary Rae Lund, Councilmember Derek Young and Jennifer Kilmer. Others present: Randy Fortier, General Manager for the Inn at Gig Harbor, Mark Hoppen, City Administrator and Molly Towslee, City Clerk.

Laureen gave a brief overview of the handouts. She touched on the positive relationship with the Kitsap Visitors Bureau and the benefit of continuing the partnership.

Laureen then began discussion about participating with the Tacoma Convention and Visitors Bureau. She said that she had requested a report from TCVB regarding the results of the last six months. What she received was a very general, generic report that contained no specifics about Gig Harbor. She said that she was bothered by the lack of support from the TCVB. Laureen said that she had gotten much better results from working with the PR person, who brought out at least ten travel writers in the last six months.

Jennifer Kilmer reported that there was wrong information in the museum guide published by the Tacoma CVB.

Laureen recommended that the LTAC not budget to participate in the TCVB in 2005 due to their decision to require a 19% participation level from Gig Harbor. She announced that they voted not to accept the city's offer to participate at a 15% level, including the level of support that comes from our Marketing Director.

Mark Hoppen explained that Fife was willing to participate at only 12%. Mr. Hoppen said that he had told the TCVB that because they are unable to substantiate the benefit to Gig Harbor, that the city wants to participate at the level of an affiliate, but that the hoteliers were stuck on the 19% figure. He said that it doesn't make sense for Gig Harbor to participate at the full amount.

Councilmember Derek Young explained that it is becoming increasingly difficult to convince the other Councilmembers to support this expenditure, even at its current level. He said that the Council does its best to defer to the LTAC recommendation to participate in the TCVB, but it may be more difficult with the increased amount.

There was continued discussion on what would occur if Gig Harbor, Fife and any other cities choose not to participate next year. Mr. Hoppen said that the results wouldn't be clear for a year.

Wade Perrow voiced concern that the TCVB is hoping that everyone will "get out of their way" so that they can focus on the Tacoma Convention Center. He said that each year Gig Harbor has asked the TCVB for an accounting of what benefit is gained by participating, and every year, all that has been offered is the same generic reporting. He recommended spending the money a different way.

Laureen said that credit had to be given for the relationship that she had built through the TCVB, but those relationships are now in place and will not disappear. She explained that even though the city does not participate at the 19%, advertising could still be bought at a higher rate, but would not be listed on their website.

Councilmember Young said that another issue is that the TCVB is requesting that the city agree to a multi-year commitment; something that Council would not support.

Jennifer Kilmer said that she supports using that money for other things such as the hiring of a Marketing Assistant. Laureen said that she is not comfortable with the 19% participation level, which is a huge portion of the Gig Harbor LTAC budget. She discussed the great return from the relationship with Kimberly Svetin, our contracted PR person. She recommended that the committee go through the draft budget and then determine what may be a better use of the funds.

Kim Hails joined the meeting at this time, and gave an overview of the report on the tracking numbers for the Welcome Center and Chamber Office. She was asked for her comments in regards to the continued relationship with the TCVB. Ms. Hails explained that the Chamber would still work on ways to partner with the TCVB with such things as links to the Chamber website. She said that Laureen is doing a 110% job, and it is shame that TCVB has said it would require all or nothing.

Laureen began the overview of the draft budget. She asked for direction for a new messaging system through CenturyTel that would prevent busy signals and would cost approximately \$50 per month. The Board members gave her the go ahead to try the system now to see if it would meet the need. The Board also voiced approval of the hiring of a Marketing Assistant in 2005.

Laureen then recommended that funds be spent to re-evaluate the goals and objectives of the marketing efforts to determine if the program is headed in the right direction. Members of the Board and staff discussed the value of bringing back Chandler, and

Associates, who performed a study several years ago. Councilmember Young said that Gig Harbor may need to go in a different direction and sell the Art Galleries or some other item as a “hook” to get the visitors to come.

Linda Gair said that we need to “sell the experience.” She explained that the Downtown Retail Association was in the process of becoming a non-profit organization. She talked about the upcoming event “Chalk the Walk.” She then asked if it would be appropriate for them to ask for support from the LTAC for downtown revitalization or if that should come from another source.

This led to a discussion on bringing in a consultant to help ascertain the future of the downtown. Mark Hoppen talked about the upcoming process to determine what the citizens want. He said that the city would be in charge of the structural aspect, but the marketing aspect is geared more toward the “business of the day.” He said that it would make sense to hire someone through the LTAC.

Wade Perrow said that he saw economic development as a function of the Community Development Department rather than the LTAC. He talked about the enhancement of the downtown while retaining the respect for the residents who live there as a zoning issue.

Jennifer Kilmer said that the first step would be to complete the branding / marketing assessment to make sure that what is chosen could be marketed.

Councilmember Young stressed that there is no strong picture yet of what the citizens or the retail owners need. He recommended that the retail owners determine what they need to survive, then to take that plan to the residents to see if they could live with it.

Mr. Perrow said that the Design Guidelines contains a section on “connectors” that addressed the relationship between the two. He said that the infrastructure, such as the sewer outfall, is what needs to be addressed first, as this would have a major impact. If the line needs to run down the middle of Harborview, then a plan could be devised to redo the street and get a community that is connected. Then the city could deal with how late a restaurant could stay open.

Linda Gair reported that she was the first Chair of the *Destination Gig Harbor* effort when Chandler was first brought in. The process involved interviewing and then summarizing the results of what people were looking for. Those coming to Gig Harbor are looking for upscale shopping and lodging facilities. She said that Gig Harbor is a classy area that attracts classy people, and that she thinks we are on the right track. She voiced support for developing a video to sell the city.

Mark Hoppen commented that the best plan would be to get the basic data updated and compare it to the older version.

Mort Altman said that the tourist industry is still recovering from the 9-11 attack. Linda Gair mentioned that it would be helpful to get some consultant to return to take advantage of the corporate memory. She then recommended a parking map, and showed a pocket guide from Whistler as an example of what might work. Lauren Lund pointed out that there already was a pocket-sized directory, adding that there was the potential to add more advertising.

Mr. Perrow recommended letting Chandler and Brooks make a recommendation before going forward with any changes.

Councilmember Young recommended leaving in the budget item for Downtown Revitalization, adding that it may be included with a broader category. Kathy Franklin agreed.

Lauren moved on to the next budget item and discussed working with Kimberly, the Public Relations person. She said that a great deal of the work had been completed and that she didn't anticipate the need for as many hours in 2005, which is reflected in the decrease from \$12,000 in 2004 to \$6000 in 2005.

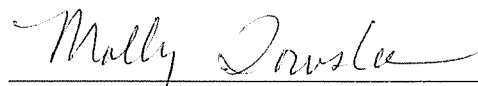
The discussion moved to an upgrade of the website. Councilmember Young recommended developing the site to allow people to do more on-line. He said that by scaling back advertising, the money would be better spent on improvements and links to the site. Lauren will research the cost and report back at the next meeting.

She then asked the Board to review the recommendation for advertising in 2005. She explained that developing a video was her lowest priority. Linda Gair said that a video would be good to place in motels in Seattle. Lauren said that she thought the cost would be too prohibitive. Sue Braaten recommended have a "virtual tour" that could be played online. Other board members agreed.

Lauren announced that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 15th, at 9:00 a.m.

There was no further discussion and the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Molly M. Towslee, City Clerk