

Tourism Wells Gray
Minutes of Regular Board Meeting
Thursday September 7th, 2023

MINUTES of the meeting of the Tourism Wells Gray Board of Directors held in person and via Zoom on Thursday September 7th, 2023, from 1:36PM – 3:56PM at the DLCC multipurpose room in Clearwater, BC.

PRESENT:

Chair M. Larose – via Zoom	MRDT
Vice-Chair H. Wadlegger	Director at Large
Treasurer T. Govaert	MRDT
H. Louwerse	Guiding and Activities
P. Bradstock	Clearwater Chamber of Commerce
L. Frizzle	District of Clearwater, Councillor
V. Gat	BC Parks
A. Green	Simpcw First Nation
R. Vesak	TNRD Area A

STAFF:

A. Benoit	Executive Director
A. Svenson	Visitor's Centre Manager
A. Belanger	BC Parks Ranger

REGRETS:

T. Haughton	BC Parks
W. Robinson	Accommodation and Food
K. McKay	Parks Permit Holder

1. CALL TO ORDER:

- a. The meeting was called to order by Chair at 1:36PM.

2. ADDITIONS/CHANGES TO AGENDA:

MOTION: That the agenda for the Sep 7th, 2023, Regular Board Meeting be approved.

Moved by H. Wadlegger

Seconded by P. Bradstock

CARRIED

3. READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING:

MOTION: That the minutes of the meeting from Jul 6th, 2023, be accepted as presented.

Moved by H. Wadlegger

Seconded by P. Bradstock

CARRIED

4. CORRESPONDENCE

- a. None to report

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. Executive Director Cell Phone – tabled until Claire returns. Multiple attempts were made to secure a cell phone for the Executive Director position; however, the process was a dead end due to logistics, and this will be revisited next Spring.
- b. VIC Staff Room – bids for work on the partition wall were offered to 3 companies: Honest Craft Carpentry, Trophy Mountain Contracting, and Snapline Contracting. The board recommends Trophy Mountain Contracting for the project due to the contractor's Red Seal qualifications, quote, and previous experience/references.

MOTION: That Tourism Wells Gray hires Trophy Mountain Contracting to construct a partition wall within the lower level of the Visitor Centre in order to create a staff room for those working in the building.

**Moved by H. Wadlegger
Seconded by P. Bradstock**

CARRIED

A quote was also received from Clear Security Solutions, the Visitor Centre's current security provider, to partition the security system to allow use of the lower rental space during hours when the Visitor Centre is closed to the public.

MOTION: That Tourism Wells Gray approves the partitioning of the security system for the quoted amount of \$1,771.56 by Clear Security Solutions.

**Moved by P. Bradstock
Seconded by T. Govaert**

CARRIED

- c. Season End Hospitality Gala – Date confirmed for Saturday, Oct 14th at the Clearwater Ski Hill.
- d. TWG AGM – Currently set for Friday, September 29th at 6PM at the Wells Gray Inn's Monroe Room. Appetizers and drinks will be served. Discussion arose on whether or not this needs to be an AGM, as the last one was held only 10 months ago and the next AGM is slated for April 2024, only 7 months after the 2023 AGM. Executive Director to investigate BC Societies Act and TWG constitution, as there is some confusion on if we can delay the AGM or need to hold one this calendar year. Either way, the Sept 29th gathering will be held in lieu of the October 5th board meeting.

6. NEW BUSINESS

- a. DDF Grant – Contractor Recommendation – tabled as further discussion and clarification from potential contractors is required.
- b. PEF Grants 2023 – Unfortunately, the three applications made this year were declined due to an overwhelming number of applications received by BC Parks. Luckily, Tod Houghton at BC Parks was able to secure a \$10,000.00 improvement fund to use for Visitor Centre upgrades. This will be used for the

aforementioned staff room partition and security system upgrades. Consensus was also reached that the remaining amount would be well utilized to fulfill one of the PEF grant projects: installation of a water refilling station at the centre. ED will obtain a updated quotes for this work and bring to the next meeting for review.

Executive Director recommends directing 2024 grant applications to the creation and installation of new educational signage at Helmcken Falls.

- c. EV Charger at VIC – Unfortunately, Tourism Wells Gray does not qualify to apply for grant funding through CleanBC as one of the requirements is to have the chargers accessible 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. The gate at the Visitor Centre is closed at night, disqualifying this location from application.
- d. VIC Gate Keys – In progress between Amanda and Vladi.
- e. ED/VIC Manager Vacation – Oct 2nd – 6th – Approved.

Recommendation was made to close the Visitor Centre a week earlier than originally planned, on Sept 30th (last day open to the public: Sept 29th), as the first week of October is typically very slow. This final week of staffing can be used instead to clear out the centre in preparation of the upgrades to the Visitor Centre that will be occurring over the winter.

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

- a. Wildfires and Marketing – Summer/Fall campaign articles were scheduled to go out in the Prince George Citizen and on Castanet (Kelowna/Kamloops/Penticton) a couple of days after the fires in West Kelowna intensified. Both campaigns were put on hold for reassessment of the situation. The Prince George Citizen article was released a few days later, after assessment confirmed that the narrative in Prince George has not changed significantly as a result of the wildfire situation in the Okanagan. The Castanet article was held for approximately a week and a half, and then released once the wildfires had partially stabilized. At the monthly CDMO roundtable, the discussion centred on how to approach marketing amidst wildfires, and the overwhelming narrative was that, while we need to be sensitive to the situation unfolding in West Kelowna, most small communities in BC cannot afford to hold off on marketing efforts so close to the end of the operating season. Ellen from TOTA fiercely advocated for the removal of travel restrictions to communities not directly affected by evacuation orders – this was applauded by the CDMOs as a clear example of advocacy for rural tourism.

Further discussion was had on the impacts of the wildfires on Clearwater stakeholders, and the suggestion was made to invest in a PurpleAir monitor for the Visitor Centre, so that visitors can see real-time indicators of air quality in Clearwater and plan their travels accordingly. A monitor in the park would be ideal as well, but an internet connection would be required.

- b. Starry Nights Festival – Event was generally successful, although not attended as widely as hoped for. The event was broadcast on social media, emailed out to stakeholders, and posters were placed around town; however, total attendance was around 45 people, which is on the lower end of attendance for this event. This is somewhat unsurprising, as we are still recovering events post-Covid. Regardless of attendance, the venue proved to be perfect, and the movie and meteor shower were very well-received by those who attended. Recommendation was made to approach the TRU Astronomy Department if the event runs next year to see if students can get credit for coming up and doing a

presentation, rather than hiring an astronomer from Vancouver. This would greatly reduce the cost of the event. It would also be worth investing in portable lighting for the event.

8. VISITOR CENTRE REPORT

- Volume – Visitation is up 40% from last year with proportionally more busses than in 2019. Just over 10,000 people visited in August.
- Commissions – Invoiced \$1800 in commission in both July and August. Totals are over \$4700 for summer commissions to date (double the originally budgeted goal).
- Maps – Ran out of maps unexpectedly in July – worked with ED to update contact details. ED further redesigned to now be a trifold map that arrives flat for convenience to the staff. Further redesign collaboration will happen over the winter.
- Social Media – enjoying creating for social media and trying to balance the level of engagement as too frequent of posting results in less impressions per post. ED commended Amanda on her consistency in never missing a collaboration post despite the summer volume at the Visitor Centre.

9. FINANCIAL REPORT

- MRDT for May 2023 was higher than May 2019 numbers, and on track with the expected revenue for the year.
- Request was made to move financials earlier in the agenda.

10. CHAIR'S REPORT

- None to report

11. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS -

a. **BC PARKS: Vladi Gat**

- Overall, this was a good summer in the park.
- BC Parks had 8 crew members living in the park; 2 ambassadors already secured for next year
- Huge thank you to Roland and Anne Neave for their contributions to the park and park programs this year.
- Trophies/Sheila Lake work is almost done – 20 tent pads there now.
- Moul Falls is closed until September 15th in preparation of stair replacement.
- \$10,000.00 has been secured for improvements at the Visitor Centre
- BC Parks has had meetings with Blackpool Fire Department and the TNRD regarding fire mitigation on Caroline Road
- The River Road rehabilitation project is being reviewed with the local rafting companies and the Minister, but no official reports/decisions at this time.
- With cooler temperatures, and increased precipitation in the area, all statuses for fires within Wells Gray Park have now been changed to 'held'.

b. **MRDT: Tania Govaert**

- Announced that she will be stepping down after this term as treasurer.

- Occupancy this season has been close to 2019 levels, despite the issues with the wildfires and smoke.
- c. **SIMPCW: Alison Green**
 - N/A Nothing to report.
- d. **PARKS PERMIT HOLDER: Kenneth McKay**
 - Regrets
- e. **ACCOMMODATION & FOOD: Will Robinson**
 - Regrets
- f. **GUIDING & ACTIVITIES: Holly Louwerse**
 - Has been working with Executive Director on a collection of photo assets to fill in some gaps in content – these will be uploaded for Tourism Wells Gray’s use soon.
- g. **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: Peter Bradstock**
 - “Of the Year” Awards night to be held October 20th.
 - Chamber of Commerce AGM on September 12th at 6PM.
 - Some businesses have commented that they are not on the Chamber map; however, this is due to absence of Chamber of Commerce membership.
- h. **DISTRICT OF CLEARWATER: Lynne Frizzle**
 - Clearwater River Trail – the bridges quadrupled in price since the grant application was submitted, resulting in an extra \$72,000.00 provided by city council to pay for the project.
- i. **DIRECTOR AT LARGE WGOC: Hazel Wadlegger**
 - Candle Creek Half Marathon – many people cancelled because of air quality. The marathon drew about 100 runners out, and roughly 66 deferred until next year, citing smoke and wildfires near their homes as the reason. Despite this, many attendees stayed for several nights in Clearwater and deliberately experienced more trails, restaurants, and activities after having been single day participants of the marathon in previous years.
- j. **TNRD: Rob Vesak**
 - N/A Nothing to report.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The next regular board meeting tentatively set for Friday September 29th at 6PM at the Wells Gray Inn’s Monroe Room.

13. ADJOURNEMENT:

- a. **M. Larose moved to adjourn meeting at 3:56PM.**

CARRIED