

July 11, 2011

Lodging Tax Board Breaks Trail in First 90 days

The Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Joint Powers Board, appointed in April to oversee lodging tax promotions monies, today reported results for their first 3 months. In addition to accomplishing 12 start-up actions, the board agreed to focus on attracting more business from October through May, coordinating with other marketing efforts, maintaining two-way communication with the community and carefully promoting new tourism business to Teton County compatible with community values.

Although revenues have just started to come in and lag 90 days behind the lodging purchase, eventually, the promotion monies are expected to reach \$2.1 million annually. “It sounds like a lot of money, but it’s not much in the marketplace where we compete for visitors,” said board chair, Stephen Price. “So, we have informed ourselves on other major marketing efforts going on locally, in the state, and regionally and we think it will be smart to stretch the lodging tax funds by selectively partnering with others.”

In the 3 months its inception, Price notes the newly formed board completed 12 major actions. Administratively, they completed a legal briefing from Deputy County Attorney Keith Gingery; selected a local accounting firm; approved by-laws; agreed on purpose, mission, values, and priorities.

In marketing areas, the board engaged contracts for some visitor services that had previously been a cost to local government. According to Price, “Many people don’t realize that an immediate community benefit of the lodging tax is that it relieves the Town and County budgets of \$284,000 cost of visitor services that’s more than a quarter million dollars every year that can now be used for other community needs.”

In other marketing actions, the board funded a marathon race from Jackson to Teton Village for September 2011; issued a Request for Proposal for destination marketing professional services; developed a marketing budget; agreed on how local events might fit with marketing objectives; and provided incentives that enabled Jackson Hole to compete and succeed as the location for a proposed episode of the top-rated television show, “Modern Family”.

“This lodging tax fund isn’t a ‘magic bullet’ that will turn around our local economy in one season. But we’re going to be strategic and smart in how we go about it; get the most for the money we have to work with. We’re aiming for real results for our community.” said Price.

“The board has settled in on a couple key points to guide us as we decide the best way to spend the funds,” Price reported. They include:

- Does it serves our Brand?
- Will it produce positive economic impacts with in desired seasons?
- How does it offer public relations value?
- Does it indicate multiple positive impacts for guest and community experience?
- Will it strongly impact our destination marketing objectives?
- Will it increases business October through May?

Additionally, the board intends to look for ways to include local talent; focus where visitors search and decide on travel & vacations, and work from a unified plan.

After a fast-paced first 90 days, the lodging tax board continues to charge ahead with a full lineup of actionable items for meeting agendas for the next few months. Items to be considered next include:

- Review and select proposals from destination marketing specialists to handle the marketing program.
- Engage a local to write and disseminate updates on the board’s activities and set up a framework for two-way communication. “We are definitely committed to keeping the information flowing two-ways and want to engage a local person to help us with that, “ said Price.
- Assess options for promoting the upcoming winter 2011-2012 tourism season
- Provide a route for event sponsors to learn how events fit into the overall marketing program.

The seven-person board appointed by the Jackson Town Council and Teton County Commissioners from 37 applicants, is the first local lodging tax board since 1994 when the tax was last in effect in Teton County.

Re-instated by local voters last November, the 2% tax is paid by visitors on their lodging bill. Lodging in Teton County includes southern Yellowstone National Park and all of Grand Teton National Park. As described on the election ballot, 60% of the funds go to tourism promotion; 30% goes to local governments for costs of tourism impacts, and 10% is retained by local governments.

The Travel and Tourism Joint Powers Board meets the second Thursday of every month at 3:00pm at the Teton County Public Health building at 460 East Pearl Street. The next meeting will be held July 14. Future on-line information coming to Town and County websites.

Attachments: List of Board Members
Mission, Vision, Values

- END -

see attachments that follow

Jackson Hole Travel and Tourism Joint Powers Board

Stephen Price, Chair

Spring Creek Resort, General Manager

Pontier Sackrey, Vice Chair

National Museum of Wildlife Art, Barnes Family Director of Development & Marketing

Jeff Golightly, Treasurer

Togwotee Mountain Lodge, General Manager

Chip Carey, Secretary

Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, Chief Marketing Officer

Candra Day,

Non-profit management consultant

Bruce Grosbety,

Terra Resort Group, Vice President of Operations

Aaron Pruzan,

Rendezvous River Sports, Owner

I. MISSION

Effectively spend lodging tax funds to promote travel and tourism to Teton County in a manner that is consistent with the shared values of our community.

- strive toward sustainability
- highlight outstanding activities and amenities (assets)
- stewardship of natural resources

II. VISION

A year-round sustainable economy for Teton County

III. HOW WE WILL DECIDE

“North Star” to guide us:

- Does it serves our Brand?
- Will it produce positive economic impacts with destination visitation in desired seasons?
- How does it offer public relations value?
- Does it indicate multiple positive impacts for guest and community experience?
- Will it strongly impact our destination marketing objectives?
- Will it increases business October through May?

Other considerations:

- converts interest into results
- leverages our funds by joining with others
- coordinates and handles priorities un-funded by others
- supports what we want to be known for
- helps JH compete in the marketplace
- drives new business to Teton County

IV. VALUES BY WHICH WE OPERATE

- We take care to not harm community values or assets
 - Our choices contribute to more vibrant social, environmental, eco-health
 - We are trustworthy, consider things fairly
 - Keep an eye out for access by smaller and start up organizations
 - Be transparent in decisions; easy for community to access what's going on
 - Establish and use a framework for open dialog w/ community including ways for our process and decisions to be easily accessed by community and enable community to have access to impact us
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- Operate from a unified plan, not constantly reacting
 - Augment and leverage existing marketing of others (local, State, regional)
 - Flexibility to also consider worthwhile, unplanned opportunities
 - Work towards a bigger, unifying tourism vision; connecting among and with others
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- Recognize natural resource is the treasure in the economy
 - Align with values of local federal public lands agencies to protect and value natural resources
 - Work from a "resource stewardship" mentality

- END -

