



TOURISM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

January 16, 2025

3:30 p.m.

Hybrid

Approved: March 20, 2025

Call to Order

Chair Pam Silbernagel called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Roll Call

Members present: Sharon Konopa, Pam Silbernagel, Peggy Burris, Bob Moore, Jonni Hudgens, Oscar Hult

Members absent: Nick Andrews (excused)

Election of Vice Chair and Chair

Motion: Member Peggy Burris nominated Bob Moore for the position of Vice-Chair. Member Moore accepted the nomination. Member Hudgens seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Motion: Member Hult nominated Pam Silbernagel to continue as Chair. Silbernagel accepted the nomination. Member Burris seconded the nomination, which passed 6-0.

Approval of Minutes

3:32 p.m.

Motion: Member Moore moved to approve the minutes from September 26, 2024. A minor correction was noted on page 4. Member Hudgens seconded the motion with the correction. Motion passed 6-0.

Business from the Public

None.

Scheduled Business

3:34 p.m.

- Collaborative Tourism and Promotion (CTP) Grant Evaluation and Awards

Economic Development Coordinator, Jennifer Wehr, shared how much spending was available, she reported that there was \$24,400 available in the CTP funds to award and that there were six applications received for review.

Albany Historic Carousel and Museum

3:35 p.m.

Executive Director, Nicki Marazzani requested funds for a packet of 30 headsets for the museum tours to translate tours for Spanish speakers as many of the groups interested in tours required some bilingual assistance. She also included funds for bilingual signage as a second ask. With the signage included their request is for \$10,000. The headsets themselves with corresponding translation software would amount to \$5,265. She explained the additional expense for signage will depend upon the sign materials and design.

Albany Civic Theater

3:39 p.m.

Douglas Hambley described their ask to replace the tracks on their marquee. He shared that the tracks that hold up show titles and events are deteriorated, and they are having issues with letters falling. Their ask is for \$4,316. based on a previous bid.

Member Silbernagel asked given that this is an historic building in a historic district if the modification requires Landmarks Review or whether this was just considered maintenance which would not require further review. He responded that it did not require review. She asked the reason this should be considered tourism related. Hambley responded that the deteriorating marquee deters attendance and reflects badly on the downtown.

Albany HUTS (Transitional Shelters)

3:43 p.m.

Chair Silbernagel noted that there was no representative in attendance to present the application but instructed the Board to ask any pertinent questions for the record. There was no budget attached, or location indicated on the application. There were questions on how the project fit into tourism. Member Konopa shared her conversation with the applicant, but she clearly believed this wasn't related to tourism. Staff had included it in the award process as they did apply for funding.

Cap and Stem NW

3:46 p.m.

Patrick Winczewski, Board President presented the application for funding of the 2025 Albany Mushroom Festival. Last year's event attracted almost 8,000 visitors and promoted downtown restaurants and businesses. This is the second year of applying and funds will allow improvements for 2025 to increase the capacity for the event. The first year they applied they were turned away because of the timing of their request and unfamiliarity with the process.

Elaine Adair, Board Treasurer, addressed the Board sharing feedback they had gotten. She explained the funds would go for site improvements, bands, stage set up, handwashing stations, bathrooms, fencing and social media promotion and signage. They are coordinating with local businesses for advertising. Improvements will build on last year's success and make the event more sustainable. The increased marketing will provide greater reach and bring more tourism to Albany.

Giving A Hoot

3:57 p.m.

Bobby Williams Herrera, Co-founder, presented their ask. He explained they are a volunteer organization that has tasked themselves with trash pickup in three high traffic areas of Albany. They currently are supplying all the needs for their volunteers. They are asking for funds for safety vests, gloves, carts and pickers. They have some volunteer groups of 20 to 30 people and need to increase their supplies. They do signage during events for safety and promotion of their efforts. Their ask is \$1200 for supplies and \$500 for the vests and \$300 for the signs. (\$2000).

Linn-Benton Hispanic Advisory Committee

4:07 p.m.

Cristhian Galvez, Committee Co-Chair, presented their application for the 2025 Festival Latino. They submitted a detailed budget with anticipated quotes from their vendors. They highlighted new components to the event. He shared the importance of diversifying Albany's events for cultural appreciation and have added some elements such as exhibits for historic education of Hispanic contributions. They are increasing marketing efforts along the valley, Salem to Eugene, Sweet Home to the coast.

Committee Deliberation

4:12 p.m.

The Chair called for deliberation on what projects to award and the amounts. Member Hult was reluctant to approve all applicants as he didn't feel they all met the definition of what the funds should be applied

to. There was discussion regarding the defined purpose for the funding and how the applicants met that purpose.

Member Moore offered his ranking of the projects. Member Silbernagel restated Moore's proposal for the record.

Member Silbernagel asked for a motion not to keep the HUTS project in consideration as it didn't meet the intent of the grant, and the application lacked required components.

Motion: Member Burris moved to remove Committee consideration of Albany HUTS for CTP funding. Member Hudgens seconded the motion. All voted in favor 6-0.

Most agreed on the member Moore's proposed awards. Member Konopa did express concerns over the marquee request as not being in line with the fund's intent and voiced concerns over setting a difficult precedent. In response for clarification the applicant responded that the theater will be celebrating and promoting their 75th season and the marquee will be updated and a feature of the celebration.

Member Konopa wanted to voice her disappointment in the City's refusal to fund Giving a Hoot's efforts and hoped that there can be a way in the future to access city funds. Keeping the city clean is a necessary draw for tourism and they need the necessary tools to keep the city attractive. Member Silbernagel suggested making a separate motion directing the staff to look at and budget a line of funding for the ongoing program. Basic litter patrol should be the city's responsibility.

Member Hult struggled that some of the applications did not fit the purpose. Member Konopa suggested that there could be changes to the questionnaire and application to better detail out the fund's purpose on promoting hotel stays and offered that there should be future discussion.

Motion: Member Moore motioned to award CTP Funding in the amounts as follows:

- Albany Historic Carousel \$5,265.
- Albany Civic Theater \$4,316.
- Cap and Stem NW \$8,819.
- Giving A Hoot \$2,000.
- Linn-Benton Hispanic Advisory Committee \$4,000.
- No funding for HUT

Member Hudgens seconded the vote which passed 5-1, with member Hult voting against.

Chair Silbernagel thanked the applicants and all the work they have put into these projects.

The discussion continued on future funding for Giving a Hoot efforts.

Motion: Member Konopa motioned to recommend to the City Council that they direct staff to incorporate a line item into the budget to support the efforts of Giving a Hoot Program with the tools they need to be able to continue clean up arterial gateways. Member Hudgens seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

- CTP Grant Post-Event Reports

4:36 p.m.

The Chair noted a report was included in the packet from Dana Wheeler for the Albany Coin Challenge geocache event.

Albany Downtown Association, Executive Director, Lise Grato introduced their bi-annual report and provided the monthly newsletter.

Rebecca Bond with Albany Visitors Association (AVA) was present and further encouraged members to view their promotional videos paid for by the award.

Business from Staff

4:39 p.m.

Wehr provided updates on Short-term Rental Transient Lodging (TLT) taxes recalling that there hadn't been a mechanism in place previously to do collections, so they have contracted with a third party to gather information and collect taxes for the program. The contractor will be building the software and training staff on the registration process and dashboard. They are anticipating beginning the outreach and registration process in the spring. At the end of the second quarter, they hope to start collecting funds.

She then reported on the tax receipts and budget projections. There was a question on the differences from last year as receipts seem to be declining.

The reserve line for Economic Development program which includes our contracted agencies is \$500,000 per biennium and those funds are necessary for emergencies to continue operations. The only funds available for distribution by this Committee are the CTP grants.

She announced that there will be Citizen Advisory Group training on February 27, 2025, and will forward details when available.

- Review Application and Process for Updates

4:40 p.m.

Wehr began acknowledging the question of whether the application fits the description of the grant. She asked members what clarification they want to see and whether those suggestions are regarding the application dates, the quote requirements, the grant definition and how a project relates to tourism.

Member Hult strongly suggested that the definition needed to be changed, or funds shouldn't be awarded to applications that don't meet the definition.

Member Konopa shared that originally the events were supposed to be generating heads-to-beds. She felt it's been a disconnect for applicants is that they are focusing on the event but not the resulting effect on hotel stays.

Chair Silbernagel shared that to her, tourism is more than just hotel stays. But hotel stays are an indicator. But limiting it to the metric of hotel stays is too limiting.

Members continued discussions about potential funding metrics and application review criteria considerations.

Member Silbernagel offered that the process shouldn't be too onerous because it is a reimbursable grant, and we get actual receipts. But agreed that they should be funding activities within the definition of the fund.

Member Hult emphasized it's important that they know what they are funding first and if not the first year, then there should be something new being promoted. Moore explained that previously it's been considered as beginning from the first application, not necessarily the first year of the event.

Staff suggested that this was a great start to the conversation but asked if they could schedule a separate meeting to clean up the application language before the grant cycle re-opens this year. Members agreed

to a work session focusing on this. The chair offered to help draft some questions to direct the effort when they meet. The Committee scheduled a work session for March 20, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Chair Silbernagel wanted to discuss getting the meeting minutes in advance of publishing the meeting to facilitate getting materials in the Council packets in a timely manner. Staff responded that wasn't the formal procedure. Member Silbernagel emphasized that the video, even though available quickly, was too unwieldy to manipulate in finding information and can't be an expectation that the Council would review videos.

Motion: Member Burris motioned that Member Moore speak on the Committee's behalf to pursue efforts with staff to get meeting minutes in advance of published meeting agenda. Member Moore seconded the motion, which passed 6-0.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled as a work session on March 20, 2025, at 3:30 p.m.

Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Chair Silbernagel adjourned the meeting at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature on file

Susan Muniz
Recorder

Reviewed by,

Signature on file

Jennifer Wehr
Economic Development Coordinator

**Documents discussed at the meeting that are not in the agenda packet are archived in the record. The documents are available by emailing cdaa@albanyoregon.gov.*