

Minutes



**Moab Area Travel Council
Advisory Board Meeting
July 19th, 2018
3:00pm
Grand County Council Chambers
125 E. Center Street**

Members Present: Howard Trenholme, Cherie Major, Jaylyn Hawkes, Sarah Sidwell, Sharon Kienzle

Members Absent: Zach Bynum, Laici Shumway, David Everitt

Staff: Elaine Gizler, Kelli Day, Absent: Robert Riberia

1. Meeting Called to Order at 4:00 by Chair Howard Trenholme

Howard stated that the meeting was called in order to address special issues that the Board is being faced with at this time. There are special factors that require discussion in regards to the State Code governing the Travel Council.

2. Public Q & A:

Howard asked the public if anyone would like to address the Board.

- a. An un-named individual complimented the Board of the recent advertising of the Travel Council. She suggested that the Travel Council use the sounds of Moab in some of their ads. The birds, river, etc. would be a great way to introduce people to Moab.
- b. Another member of the public announced that she came to the meeting to observe and make her own opinion regarding the Travel Council as she is concerned about advertising and the amount of people coming into Moab. The individual stated that she was concerned about the amount of tourism coming into Moab and what it is doing to the resources.

Howard responded that the Travel Council is governed by State laws, and money spent in advertising is according to State laws. If the public is upset about the amount of tourism they need to contact the city and county officials and have them take their concerns to the legislature.

Elaine Gizler interjected that the Travel Council does not advertise UTV's ATV's, and that the Travel Council is not a proponent of that activity. She

Minutes

also stated that the Travel Council is also in the process of generating a public service announcement directed at tourists on the proper use, and basic respect of the local residents with ATV/UTV use on Moab's roads and trails. She stated that she has worked with 3 local tour companies, Chief Winder, BLM, Forest Service, National Park Service, the local riparian group, and Moab's Search and Rescue to educate visitors about this issue.

Howard explained that 1.9 million of TRT money goes to the Sherriff's Department and 260K goes to solid waste. The Travel Council spends the minimum allotted for marketing. It is the city zoning that gives permits for the building of all of the new hotels coming in. The County has nothing to do with that. Howard also commented that the State of Utah hasn't seen such a great success with tourism ever. Moab is a class 5 town and is #4 in the State for TRT collections. Howard stated that the problem with the community is that it doesn't have enough employees to service the business that it has. Affordable housing is a serious issue and needs to be addressed.

Elaine stated that the Travel Council gets a bad rap. The leaders of the community have been making the decisions about overnight rentals, hotels, etc. and many other decisions that have been impacting tourism for the past 15 years and nothing was done to address the underlying issues that it caused. The leaders of our community need to address the transition.

Sharon stated that the MIC promotes safety and preservation, however if a tourist asks about something specific, not necessarily being a safe activity, they have to give the tourist the information requested. Sharon also stated that if people pay attention to the advertising done by the Travel Council, they would see that it supports safe, legitimate activities in and around Moab. A public member stated that she has witnessed advertising of individuals jumping over rocks and going into preservation areas and is wondering why the Travel Council is doing such advertising. Elaine explained that is not Travel Council advertising. Others in the group interjected that anyone can post on the internet and You Tube, which has nothing to do with the Travel Council. Elaine stated that we do not advertise Mill Creek or advertising of slack lining. Sharon stated that 7 years ago someone posted "Top 10 places to cliff dive" on the internet. Her staff initially refused to share the whereabouts of Mill Creek to visitors inquiring about it. Sharon checked with the BLM and was told that if someone asks about Mill Creek specifically, they do in fact have to tell the visitor about it and where it is at.

Elaine stated that of the 2%, only 20% of (the 2%) is used to run the Travel Council office. That amount pays salaries, other utilities and

Minutes

operational costs. The County does not use any of its funding to support the Travel Council. The Travel Council prints 150K travel planners, which are sent out all over the world. The Travel Council website gets over 2 Million hits a year and it advertises safe, responsible and respectful behaviors for tourists when they are in Moab to recreate and site see. We advertise the “do’s and don’ts”.

3. Other Agenda Items:

a: Production of a priority list

Howard moved onto addressing the agenda. He thanked the public for coming and encouraged them to attend when they have questions. He stated that the Travel Council is dedicated to communicating and making Moab a better town.

Howard also stated advertising and tourism must never be shut down.

Howard wanted to address what our rolls are as far as being on the Travel Council Advisory Board. Howard began by saying that the Travel Council Advisory Board does an exceptional job. However, he stated that the Tax Advisory Board requires more attention and has lacked positive actions and needs to get more involved. Not once has a priority list ever been produced and it needs to be done immediately. Howard stated that The Tax Advisory Board should meet with the county clerk and see where the budget spending is at this time.

Howard stated that he feels a review of the spending needs to be reviewed. He asked about the % of calls of our law enforcement responding the calls on BLM and government lands and if they have their own law enforcement, and should they be reimbursing Grand County for the calls where Grand County responds to calls on their lands. Howard stated that he felt this was an item for review.

Howard also asked if land agencies were collecting local TRT and other taxes? It was found that our federal partners do not collect taxes. So if that is the case, why shouldn't they since they use our law enforcement. It would help to help subsidize the costs incurred by Grand County.

The group agreed that was an issue that needed to be pursued.

Howard asked to group if they felt a priority list should be produced. The group unanimous agreed that they should.

b: Affordable housing

Harold stated that he feels that since we are #4 in collection of TRT, and we are a rural county, we need to look at the possibility of using TRT monies for to help with affordable housing. He stated that being a rural

Minutes

community, our needs are very different than areas with much larger populations.

Howard also stated that he felt if we assigned a certain amount of funds they could be used as a multiplier if partnered with the City, County and Federal entities. This would come from the 1.25% and TRCC monies. Harold stated that they could recommend that the County save money for something "down the line".

Jaylyn stated that the County is using their portion of TRT money in very responsible ways and in accordance to the Utah State Code. And that all of the money is being utilized completely.

Sara asked where it would be taken from. Howard stated it could come from the carryover from previous years, and possibly from the 1.25% allocations.

Sharon asked if the City would end up being a landlord getting into affordable housing. Sharon stated that the County and City need to change zoning laws, Howard stated it would take longer to do that than reallocate an assured housing program.

Howard stated that Chris was able to get a line written in the budget for affordable housing. And very little has been put into so far. Howard stated that "We as board have the power to make a change to get this going. If this issue isn't addressed immediately it will have an extremely negative impact on tourism as this is a tourism driven town."

Howard stated that if everyone waits for the zoning laws to change, it will be too late.

With the level of collection with an excess of 500 K it was suggested that maybe the money can be used for housing. Howard stated that the housing issue is a problem that can be helped using money. It's inevitable that the zoning laws will be changed, but not soon enough.

Sharon asked if the funds will be used for bounce back money, the answer was no. Not at all.

Howard has asked the State Auditor this question:

- 1) Isn't tourist employee related housing fall under a tourist related facility?

The lodging industry is driving housing costs way over what housing is worth.

Sharon: stated that she has individuals that come into town and fill out an application and then don't show up for the interview because they just

Minutes

want unemployment benefits and the application helps fulfill the requirements to receive them.

Howard stated that unless you are making 80K a year, it's very hard to find a home. The market is not available for individuals making a living wage.

Jaylyn responded to Elaine; Trusts that the Travel Council Advisory Board is doing an outstanding job. And asked for the same from Elaine with the County Council. Jaylyn understands that many of the public are vitriol towards the Travel Council and wishes that they weren't, and it's very sad. But feels that this is happening because the public feels disenfranchised. They make a suggestion and are told that tourism is great and their comment is ignored. Grand County Council member Wells stated, (and Jaylyn stated that she agreed) the bottom line is that I feel like what is needed is cooperation between the County Council and this board, step down advertising a bit. We have built it, they will come. Unified voices with the counties need to go to the legislature. When they approached the legislature last year, roads were added.

Howard: stated that he spoke to Chris last week and he suggested that the conversations be started with our board. Also, that when discussing it start with a threshold level. When TRT has amount to say 5 million, then the splits change. Then from 2%, maybe go to 1.75%. We are surround to so much private land and we need to realize that we are very limited to developmental areas. The school district is sitting on a piece of property. Maybe approach them to develop it into something like a Cinema Court complex. Realistically, Spanish Valley has the infrastructure to support new development.

Sarah suggested that trail a trail ambassador program be initiated with some of the funds.

Elaine stated that she met with Chris Baird, she has areas that she can take care of for the County and free up funds for the County so that they can take funds and put them aside for affordable housing. The question was, when will a shovel be put into the ground and we are moving forward with it.

Howard stated that if the public saw that the Travel Council was helping to fund affordable housing, it would soften the hatred toward the Council.

Jaylyn read a letter from a citizen:

“To that point, I very much respect your adult attitude about being a positive agent for change in regards to criticism of the Travel Council. I

Minutes

believe the "vitriolic" comments to or about those individuals are, however, indicative of the extreme frustration citizens feel when they are disregarded, told that madness must persist because people are "just doing their jobs" and that they are, in effect powerless to effect a change, however small, that is so desperately needed.

The Travel Council is a lightning rod for public angst because their mission, as currently interpreted, is antithetical to the community's wellbeing. Moabites know that. It is, I believe, counterproductive to pretend otherwise."

Sarah, stated that she really hates it when somebody from this Board says that they are just doing their job, because you know what, the Nazis were too.

Howard: "Sarah, that was uncalled for. I am offended. That was completely out of line."

Elaine: "I take total offense to that. I am totally offended. I am offended that me and my staff and my office would be equated to Nazis. That is awful that this what this has come to."

Sarah: "I'm sorry. No, that was not what I was trying to say. I am going to withdraw that. I am going to withdrawing that."

Elaine: "I am sorry, and when I say we are doing our jobs, we are following the law. The State law of Utah." (Elaine exits the chambers.)

Sarah: "I understand that. That's not what I meant and I am very sorry Elaine. Oh wow. I just made a really bad mess up. I am very very sorry to everyone in this room that I said that including Elaine and the Travel Council staff.

May I, um, may I make one point because I really did screw that one up really horribly bad. If I make one point, um, yes I really hate when we all say that we are just doing our job. Yes, I have said it. And um, I always feel bad when I say that. Because these people that you are talking about are just trying to help make it better as well. And I know that one of the reasons why I sit on this board and one of the reasons that I want to be here is because I feel that I can make a positive impact on the community even thru tourism, even though what I just said didn't make any positive impact at all."

Howard stated that the Tax Advisory Board needs to step up and ask about numbers and make sure things are being done in a productive way.

The advertising that is in effect now is done with a company that has great results and we get a big bang for our buck. It is also the same company that the State of Utah utilizes. If any funds needed to be cut, it can't come from the Travel Council's operating costs because they are the backbone and a vital piece of the success of the county.

Minutes

Howard motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:12 pm, Sharon 2nd the motion. Board unanimously agreed.