

Sweet Home Chamber of Commerce
Board Meeting Minutes
February 18, 2021
5:30 - 7:00 pm

Attendees:

George Medellin – President
Christy Duncan – Vice President
Mark Opperman – Treasurer
Karla Hogan - excused absence
Shelly Larson
Paula Newman
Marlene Peterson
Cassie Richey
Dylan Richards - City of Sweet Home Liaison
Angelita Sanchez - City of Sweet Home Liaison
Shirley Selleck - Administrative Assistant
Melody Jordan – Office Manager

Call to Order

George called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm and welcomed Dylan and Angelita to the Board and Shirley as Administrative Assistant. A short introduction was given by those in attendance.

Review of Previous Minutes

VOTE: Motion to approve the January 21, 2021 minutes as presented was made by Paula. Cassie seconded the motion. The motion carried without objections or abstentions.

Financial Report

Mark updated the Board on account balances from Umpqua Bank:
Checking \$19,472.76
Savings \$18,806.17 including \$17,300 EIDL funds

Checking has been hovering around \$20,000 for the last couple of months as memberships are coming in, which are our primary source of income.

January financial reports are delayed because the bookkeeper is amid tax season but will be emailed to the Board as soon as they are received.

Nonprofit Update

Mark shared that he is still trying to contact the IRS for a final verification that what was owed has been taken care of for the 2016 Unemployment Insurance that was missing, according to his last call with the IRS. The bookkeeper has sent the back payments to the IRS. The IRS gives a message that they are too overwhelmed and cannot take his call at this time, but he will keep trying. The next step is to move ahead with applying for

reinstatement for nonprofit status. The application has been completed, but he will review the checklist again and then mail it to the IRS.

Executive Director Update

George shared that the last couple of months the Board has been working on creating a budget which would include a salary for the Executive Director, as well as a job description that was approved by the Board last month. Yesterday George, representing the Executive team, made the offer of the Executive Director position to Melody and she accepted! She starts in her new role March 1st. George will announce the change at the Chamber Forum on February 25th. Paula commented the Chamber is so fortunate to have her. Melody thanked the Board for their words and is excited for this new position. She said she is thrilled to be working with an awesome group of people and appreciates them all.

Office Manager Update

Melody stated the Chamber's strategic plan gives great structure for planning and staying on track and is great for reporting. She reviewed the new mission of enhancing our community by strengthening local business through service, connection, promotion, and advocacy. The Chamber's priorities are Member Benefits, Business Advocacy, Talent Development and Tourism.

One of the Chamber's objectives is to offer relationship and referral building opportunities. Coffee with Colleagues on February 9th has increased business to business referrals. The Woods Roadhouse owner, Theresa Brown was the guest presenter and shared much knowledge and experience. Two new members joined the event, and there were nine participants total. Melody followed up with the new members and was able to connect them to other business owners who are members, and other Sweet Home organizations.

Six members have upgraded their memberships and there are 18 new memberships, making 65 total, compared to around 81 total in 2020. Melody is confident we can accomplish 15 or 16 more in the next few weeks.

Resource Navigation Hub - Blair Larsen of the City and Melody have been collaborating on materials that will be simple and clear with handouts to have at the Chamber and City for starting a business in Sweet Home.

Shop Local Campaign, Localopoly - The City generously sponsored the \$800 cash prizes for the game. The City is also sponsoring \$1500 in prizes for a local business storefront refresh for a potential new business visiting Sweet Home in the next couple weeks. If they choose Sweet Home, Melody said it could open 100-200 jobs in Sweet Home. Ray, the City Manager, contacted the Chamber to assist in encouraging Sweet Home businesses put their best foot forward through their storefronts.

Business Expo planning is projected to begin September 2021, potentially with the Lebanon Chamber. There is nothing to report yet, but it has been touched on lightly with the regional directors.

Private Brand Development Contracts - This year the Chamber added some business services including website design, Facebook page setup, website maintenance, logo design and taking branding photos. Melody shared she wants to do this at a lower cost. The Chamber goal on the Budget of 2021 is to have four website clients. Currently the Chamber has two member websites clients, one website and one Facebook page clients for a non-member. Melody is confident the Chamber will get the fourth client and meet the goal for this year.

Improving the Chamber's online presence - Last month the online reach jumped 95% to reach nearly 23,000 people, Melody thought due to the Bernie in mittens photo. Engagement went up 91% with 5,700 people engaging on the posts. On Facebook, January 2021 had 2,689 followers and February 2021 had 2,780 followers. Website visits are up 2% from last month, the number of pages per visit +10%, and the Chamber now has a new five-star recommendation on Google. Search engine optimization is improving. Melody will add a Testimonial Campaign to outgoing member emails that can rate us on Google and Facebook.

Executive Directors (ED) from Albany, Corvallis, and Stayton-Sublimity agreed to meet monthly. The ED from Monmouth-Independence called Melody last week about Localopoly and now will be joining the ED meeting. The next meeting will be held at The Point in Sweet Home. Newport Parks & Recreation reached out to the Chamber about their virtual mileage event that is all along Highway 20 featuring different towns and landmarks to tour. Melody sent out some of the Chamber member names to be mentioned on their social media as they go on their tour and Sweet Home will get recognition on it.

Questions were asked about cost and services for web page building: \$225 members for initial building of website, \$300 non-members, and in addition they pay for the web hosting site. \$50 per month for website maintenance and \$75 for Facebook building, which was noted as an excellent price.

Business Advocacy – The Chamber has renewed their Oregon State Chamber of Commerce membership, which Melody noted are very active in legislative measures and keep the Chamber informed, which means the Chamber can keep the members informed. Melody thanked the Board for doing a great job at being present at City Council meetings either in person or online. Melody is strengthening her relationship with Blair Larsen; the Economic Development Director and they are working on business resources. Blair helped with the Lewis Creek Development meeting by hosting it in the City Council Chambers. Presence at County Board meetings is on the strategic plan, but Melody does not have information about that currently. If the Board has information, she asked them to please send it to her.

Shop Local Campaigns - There are 16 businesses on the Localopoly board game, and the Chamber has received positive feedback. There is low submission so far, but Melody noted the Chamber is in the middle of the game right now. Businesses reported that participants are calling and visiting the stores to play the game. Cassie reported that people from out of town are also playing the game.

Cascade Leadership Program & School Work Credit (Voucher) Programs - There is not much to report currently.

Talent Development - There is not much to report here yet, although there is possible collaboration with Lebanon for a Leadership Program in the future.

Tourism - In order to market Sweet Home as a destination, the Chamber has done this with the Big Foot Campaign. Melody has a lot of footage from the Big Foot Campaign, which has been ongoing. A Big Foot revival is scheduled for May. Melody shared the person in the costume is a marketing mastermind and the Chamber should be able to make it more exciting and come up with a great revival campaign.

Strengthening connections with Visitors Associations - Melody will continue the relationship with Newport and is really working on getting in touch with Sisters. She has received some emails from Albany but will continue to work on strengthening that relationship as well.

To host/support community events that support business vitality and Chamber revenue, Melody has been nurturing a relationship with Linn County Parks, specifically with the Director Brian Carroll who will be the guest speaker at the next in-person Coffee with Colleagues at Radiator Supply House, March 9 at 8:30 am.

The Chamber is also doing a photography contest with SHOCASE and the result of that will be postcards in the Visitors Center. Melody noted that in the Visitors Center the Chamber now has the new Administrative Assistant Shirley and one regular volunteer on Wednesdays. Melody has made the Visitors Center more welcoming and is still working with Kellie Kem for Sweet Home merchandise and possibly may have Magnum Metal Works bring in some Sweet Home merchandise to sell as well.

<u>Finance Markers:</u>	Goals for 2020-21 Budget
Goal:	\$24,000 from membership sales
Current:	\$19,670
Business service goal:	\$ 3,340
Current:	\$ 2,350
Sponsorships:	\$ 2,300
Localopoly:	\$ 1,150

Awards Banquet - Melody shared the Board liked the proposed summer theme. The potential dates are spaced out enough from the Sportsman’s Holiday and the Oregon Jamboree. Dates proposed are Thursday, Friday, Saturday, July 22, 23 & *24 or August 19, 20 & 21. The times could change depending on the day chosen. Melody shared that Jobe Woosley and his band are available July 24th to provide live music. Expenses could be kept low with food options and borrowed picnic baskets. It was decided to vote later by email on the potential dates to allow more time to confirm what else is scheduled with Sweet Home and Lebanon events, Sportsman’s Holiday and the Oregon Jamboree. Melody will reach out to Robert, manager at the Oregon Jamboree to see if they have decided to move forward with the event this summer. If the decision will be made soon, Melody suggested the Chamber wait and base our decision on that. She

noted the Chamber could have a good attendance if the Jamboree isn't held. Christy shared the Marks Ridge Winery used to have live performances on Friday nights that were well received and thought live music at our event would be a good replacement since the owners of the winery have retired.

Paula shared she is using Suburban Landscaping and asked him to join the Chamber, and suggested Melody contact him to invite him to be a member.

Chamber Forum

The Chamber Forum will be held next Thursday, February 25th at 6:30 pm. Melody's report will be based on the strategic plan as adopted at the Board retreat in December 2020. The announcement will be made of Melody becoming the new Executive Director. The Board Members will each give a two-minute presentation of both what Sweet Home means to them and their vision for Sweet Home. All rehearsed their presentations during this meeting.

Mark shared that Dylan and Angelita as City Liaisons can help present the good in the Chamber and help celebrate that with the Council. They can act as a bridge to foster a good relationship between the Chamber and City Council, and to help the Chamber see where the City is going and vice versa.

Sub-Committee reports

Princess Court Task Force - Paula, Shelly, Karla

Paula shared the Task Force met with the entire Princess Court Committee regarding last year's Court and let them know the season is over and everything is done with the prior program. It is now being completely revamped, new policies are being written and will be discussed at the Chamber Forum. Shelly shared every policy will be Board approved. Shelly and Melody will work on getting the proposed Princess Court Policy out via email to the Board for a vote.

Other Business

Melody met with Miriam Swanson, New Era Newspaper, about the Visitors Guide last week. Melody noted about half the Visitors Guide is the Chamber's Business Directory which lists all the businesses in Sweet Home. The Chamber members are listed in bold and get a more descriptive listing with their business information. Melody gives The New Era the list of businesses for the guide, but The New Era asks that we purchase a whole page ad which is a cost of \$1200. This ad gives the Chamber an opportunity to feature our partners. Monday, March 8th is the deadline to purchase the ad and Melody noted our members also get 30% off for ads in the Guide. Mark reported that \$1589 was spent on advertising last April, probably for this, and \$2,734 in May of 2019 was spent which he believes was for this Visitors Guide. The Chamber member benefits state we will advertise them in this way, so the Chamber will need to buy an ad to fulfill that commitment. Paula said the Lebanon, Stayton and Sublimity Executive Directors have stated they receive a lot of money selling ads for their Visitors Guides, noting it is a major fundraiser for them. George shared that The New Era took over the Visitors Guide because of the situation the Chamber was in for a couple of years.

Marlene suggested some more research and a possible negotiation should be the approach. Melody will move forward and have a discussion with The New Era and report back to the Board.

Paid Time Off Policy

Melody sent out the proposed policy that needs to be reviewed and voted on today. The accountant asked the Board to put this out and implement now.

VOTE: Christy made a motion to approve the proposed Paid Time Off Policy as presented. Paula seconded the motion. The motion carried without objections or abstentions.

Adjournment

George gave a reminder of the Forum next week and noted that all Board members will be in attendance. Meeting was adjourned at 7:08 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Opperman
Treasurer/Secretary

Shirley Selleck
Recorder