



Chinook Scenic Byway Board Meeting

Alta Crystal Resort

June 17, 2015

Meeting started: 3:00 p.m.

Board Members present:

Trip Hart – President, Westside Citizen at Large Representative

Steve Cadematori – Vice President, Community of Greenwater Representative and proxy for Enumclaw Chamber of Commerce

Danielle Surkatty – Secretary/Treasurer, Eastside Citizen at Large Representative

Jeff Vassallo – State Parks, proxy for Federation Forest State Park Representative

Board Members on conference call:

Tom Washington, Washington State Department of Transportation

Guests:

Eric Richardson – Hancock Forest Management, North Cascades Region

Curt Warber – Parametrix

WSDOT Board position

Tom Washington asked about his membership on the board as he will be retiring in six months and no longer involved after retiring. He had already spoken with ED Spilker in Olympia and someone from the Northwest Region about representing WSDOT on the Board and was waiting to hear back from them. Trip stated that we will welcome his new replacement, and to please pass on how valuable we felt WSDOT input/direction is to the CSB Board and that it's critical that they be represented.

MORA Park Report

Tracy stated that the last fiscal year has been record setting in terms of revenue almost every month, starting in October 2014, with multiple records broken. At the end of May revenue was 75% higher than the same time last year. When asked why they felt this was happening, she responded:

- Weekend weather has been good - which always draws people to the park
- Low snow levels has led to less participation in some activities, but overall more visitors to the park
- Early spring opening

Most of the visitors are coming for the day and are not staying at the lodge.

- They've already reached visitor levels like the peak summer periods, but they are not fully staffed up yet.
- Have been several fatalities already this year due to hiking/climbing accidents.
- Major construction projects are ongoing at Paradise.
- With lengthening shoulder seasons with climate change that we could be looking at longer periods for the park to be open in the years ahead.

Steve Cadematori also reported that visitors to Alta Crystal are up 50% in May and 25% already in June, but that February, March and April visitor levels were lower than normal, due to the low snow pack for skiing.

Discussion of Corridor Management Plan - Curt Warber

Discussed where we stand – the status of the CMP. He is gathering up feedback from a variety of sources so that we can tie up the final version of the plan. At times it has been tough to get clarity on where we want to go with the overall plan. We need to settle some decisions on projects. His goal is to get that clarified at today's meeting.

Byway supports have changed in recent years due to state/federal changes in byway funding. This changes how we can plan for projects – as the financial and technical support we could have received from the federal level a few years ago just isn't there anymore.

Now byways are having to look at hybrid funding for projects with 1) community development money, 2) lodging tax dollars and 3) federal funding – which is for the most part gone now. He is not optimistic that in the short term that Washington DC will support development of byways with significant funding.

We don't need to worry about byway entities going away as they will still exist and can still make a big difference locally. Tracy stated that those groups that are already organized will be more able to jump in when future funding opportunities arise, and quicker to respond if a good plan is already in place. Those groups will be the first beneficiaries of new funding. Curt reminded us that, if we can diversify our funding, it makes CSB more stable, strong and effective in the long run.

2 Key Questions to Finalize

1. Possible actions and programs – what do you want to do?
2. How do you want to do them – where are the priorities?

Curt feels that there are legacy structural issues that need to be changed and we need to decide which direction we want to go in as far as, makeup of the board and roles that board members play. We talked about the role of private and agency stakeholders – convening is an issue – unless we have a defined program we're working on / towards.

Steve Cadematori felt that CSB allows him to collaborate with federal and state entities more easily. He feels his involvement has been positive and helpful for his business to be able to express concerns that he has and discuss issues with various stakeholders. We agreed that there is always "value" whenever you get people with common interests in the same room together talking!

Discussion of about Bryan's Bowden's integral role to the success of past involvements with CSB, how he was very focused on building community relationships and as not only a park,

but a regional employee, he was in a unique position to assist the Byway organization. He was a very direct facilitator – where other national parks may hire a consultant to do what Bryan did.

Eastside Follow-up Meeting

We discussed the need for holding another east side follow-up meeting and the concerns of the people that participated in the initial meetings on the east side. Those concerns centered a lot on closure of forest service roads and recreational access. Their needs, as expressed in the meetings, didn't focus a lot on capital projects. Curt stated that at this point the remaining budget is getting very tight and he'll either be able to have another eastside meeting or one on the west side, not both. Curt is going to talk to Tracy about remaining funds from the full allocation. Curt talked about the various roles of community groups, in negotiating amongst various parties, with the two extremes being "watch-doggy" vs. collaborative / supportive – but with most groups falling somewhere in between in practice.

Several of the comments at our east side meetings led Curt to believe that people felt that they have no voice and no role in major decision making that affects them. There was a lot of unhappiness expressed with forest service road closures and reduced recreational access.

On the Westside there are cutbacks in the forest service with more meetings and admin positions being pulled up to North Bend from Enumclaw. That is not true so much on the east side – where involvement and communication has been really good!

Tracy talked about the role of advocacy in a group like CSB. For agency people it's hard to be faced with comments that they can't really respond to in public forums. Trip reminded us all that this is one of the reasons that major agency reps on the CSB Board don't have voting power. That they serve as liaisons and representatives of their agency, for the purpose of communications and working together.

Curt talked about getting projects done being dependent on the group / organizational structure being worked out. Steve Cadematori disagreed saying that he's seen this group set a goal, then work backwards towards that goal successfully.

Project Overview

The bulk of the meeting was spent reviewing the various projects. There was a lot of discussion around signage projects along the Byway and the importance of good signage in identifying the Byway.

Curt related that he had discovered that the "undersigned" nature of the Mather Memorial Parkway was intentional in its design period.

Weaknesses

In the past 100% of our funding came from federal dollars from DC, but that isn't going to be possible in the near future. It was agreed that not having signage was a major weakness of the Byway, because people come from all over and aren't familiar with the opportunities on the road ahead of them. Urban dwellers often feel disoriented in a wilderness area and need more wayfinding than people that live in the area or nearby and have frequent access. With the lack of phone service along the Byway a lot of visitors feel lost.

123 / 410 Byway Intersection

Specific discussion was held on this accident-prone intersection and the challenges of signage there. Wayfinding document has concepts and locations for various signs.

Upper Nile Valley Information site

Curt stated that there was interest from the forest service to work with a local entity in the upper Nile valley to set up an information distribution site there. This is a subject that could be taken back to the community in future east side meetings.

Trip, Danielle, and Tracy agreed to hold eastside meetings to introduce the final draft of the CMP, if Curt's budget doesn't allow him to hold/coordinate the meeting.

Restrooms

Lots of discussion on the need for additional restrooms. Funds can be acquired to put them in, but the long term maintenance is always hard to get an agency to want to take it on. Particular discussion about the west side "viewpoint" where no view is ensured and it's a great place for restrooms to be installed.

Respectfully submitted,
Danielle Surkatty
Secretary/Treasurer