

City of Forks
Council Meeting Minutes Special Session
City Council Chambers
500 East Division Street
November 25, 2019
5:30 P.M.

ROLL CALL

Council members present: Preston [arrived at 5:42 p.m.], Brager, Hillcar, Weissenfels, and Mayor Fletcher. Absent: Council Member Soha. Staff present: Grafstrom, Clerk/Treasurer, Fleck, Attorney/Planner, and Hampton, Public Works Director. Absent: Rowley, Police Chief.

2019 Budget Workshop

Mayor Fletcher invited those present to speak about their applications for Lodging Tax funds and to answer any questions from Council.

Dan Trickey with Forks Merchants Co-ed Softball Club explained expenditures for the softball tournaments. It was noted that each player is accompanied by six to ten family members, all of whom spend money on lodging, food, etc. locally. He stated that we may attract more teams if the fields were in better condition.

[Council member Preston arrived.]

Linda Offutt, Manager of the Forks Timber Museum thanked the Council for their continued support of the museum. She distributed updated statistics regarding museum attendance, expenditures, and income, and also reviewed several projects completed by staff and volunteers. She reported that construction began this week on the Lloyd Allen Pavilion. She also reviewed projects for the coming year including the moving and expanding of exhibits. They plan to add Olympic Theater, Alexander the Great and Mora, and local shipwreck exhibits, and expand information about the Forks fire and native culture. She stated that she plans to retire at the end of October 2020 and will be looking for a replacement to mentor.

Marcia Yanish, Piecemakers Quilt Club stated the club will have added expenses in the coming year, including a new highway banner and poster design. In addition, the tote bags, which have proved to be a good advertising mechanism, will be more expensive this year. The club currently has 89 members, 32 of whom live in Forks. Many of the out-of-town members attend retreats in Forks throughout the year and stay overnight. Clerk/Treasurer Grafstrom encouraged the club to report statistics on retreat attendees as well as quilt show attendees going forward.

Jolene Price and Phillip Sifuentes, representing the Rain of Terror Haunted House stated this is the first time they have applied for lodging tax funds. They had their highest attendance, nearly 1,500, in 2019. They completed their paperwork and are now a 501(c)(3). They receive a lot of in-kind contributions from the community, and are

looking at expanding with an escape room and a game of “Clue”. People come from all over for a 15- to 20-minute experience. Some attendees even fly into Quillayute Airport to experience the Rain of Terror. With the slogan, “We scare because we care,” their goal is to become one of the biggest charity organizations in the area.

Kenneth Turner, Director of the Raincon Committee explained their event. They conduct a comic convention that is free of charge. Some attendees are cosplayers. More promotion was undertaken this year, which resulted in an increase in attendance. The event is held at the Rainforest Arts Center. They are applying for lodging tax funds to offset the cost of renting the RAC and advertising.

Dean Decker, owner of True Value, and Lissy Andros represented the West End Business & Professional Association (WEB&PA). They have partnered with business owners and the Chamber of Commerce to pay for a portable restroom located at True Value. Since WEB&PA does not have non-profit or charitable organization status, the City has proposed paying for the portable restroom directly, using lodging tax funds. The portable restroom is mainly there for the benefit of tourists. It has been moved closer to the street, which has helped with vandalism and cleanliness issues. Council would like to look at adding a hand wash station or hand sanitizer.

Victor Whitehead, West End Thunder is taking over operations from Phil Arbeiter. His application is based on the prior year’s expenses. They are looking at upgrading the computers for racing equipment, including the “Christmas tree”. Attendance was down significantly this year due in large part to the fact that two and a half races were rained out. He presented a detailed list of expenditures for 2019.

Lissy Andros, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director spoke about their request for funds to be used for Visitor Information Center (VIC) operations. She thanked the Council for their confidence in the Chamber. They have requested \$115,000 in lodging tax funds. Their biggest challenge is increasing costs. They operate with a paid staff rather than volunteers. She distributed magazines publicizing the Forks area. There will be more lodging establishments and restaurants to promote in 2020. The lodging concierge service established in 2019 was very successful, helping 347 people find last minute lodging, which equates to 115 room nights. She is working on coordinating a bicycle event in October. She is currently serving on the Clallam County Lodging Tax Advisory Committee.

Lissy Andros next spoke about the Chamber’s application for lodging tax funds for the Forever Twilight in Forks Collection. She distributed current visitor count information showing that by the end of October, the 2019 visitor count had surpassed the total for all of 2018. Individuals have stated they would like to donate pieces, or bequeath them to the collection upon their death. She would like to form a 501(c)(3) for the Collection.

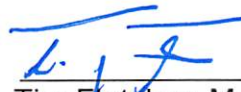
Lissy Andros then spoke about the Chamber’s application for lodging tax funds for the Forever Twilight in Forks Festival (FTF). Organizers are attempting to secure Peter Facinelli as the featured guest for the 2020 Festival. They will hear about a Port of Port

Angeles grant to offset some of those costs on December 10. Very Important Twilighter (VIT) tickets will go on sale in December. On average, attendees are aged 41 or older, they stay in Forks for 5 to 6 days, and 50% of them spend \$500 to \$1,000. They would like to hang the FTF banner at the south end of town all summer. The drop in attendance for 2019 was due to 2018 being an exceptional year. Many attendees bring family members.


Clerk/Treasurer Grafstrom then guided Council and staff through a comparison of the lodging tax fund for the years 2016 through 2019 (estimated), and Council proceeded to give their recommendation to fully fund all lodging tax applications.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Hillcar, second Weissenfels, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.



Tim Fletcher, Mayor



Audrey Grafstrom, Clerk/Treasurer