

CITY OF COOS BAY CITY COUNCIL
Agenda Report

MEETING DATE July 15, 2014	AGENDA ITEM NUMBER
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TO: Coos Bay City Council and Coos Bay City Manager
FROM: Coos Bay Mayor Crystal Shoji
SUBJECT: Opportunities for Tourism Development: Promoting Coos Bay’s Sense of Place

The City of Coos Bay’s Role within the Region

The City of Coos Bay (City) is recognized as the “inner city” of the region. The City is the largest in the region, and the name “Coos Bay” identifies both the City and the region. The City is often expected to respond as the voice and venue of the region.

Thus the City plays a central role in building the reputation and identification of the region, and responding on behalf of the region. This role has come about due to historical reasons, the layout of the City, personality and culture of this community that has merged at least (5) five smaller communities, the size of the City in comparison to other regional communities, and other factors. The City’s role results in increased responsibilities and costs.

Additionally, the opportunities for promoting the City and building its reputation as a visitor-friendly community differ from those of other communities. Coos Bay, North Bend, Charleston and the Tribes all have unique assets to be recognized. The Coos Bay City Council’s responsibility at this time is to address and encourage discussion about the role and promotion of the City of Coos Bay. This should result in defining the City’s needs and expectations for promotion.

Examples of Coos Bay’s Regional Assets and Activities

Examples of Coos Bay assets and activities that draw from and identify our region exist because of the efforts of individuals and groups throughout the greater Bay Area. The City of Coos Bay supports and sustains these events through public works and police staffing. For example, when there are events, the City sets up and cleans up, coordinates traffic, works with existing businesses, provides for traffic enforcement and safety, and addresses needs for restrooms and trash. A mix of individuals and organizations from Coos Bay, North Bend, and adjacent rural areas of Coos County sponsor events, attractions and facilities within the City of Coos Bay.

Most attractions and events need to be combined with those in other Bay Area communities to provide synergy and focus. This is a creative and time-consuming process that involves communication with members of the public throughout the greater Bay Area community. The process is a local focus that contributes to the understanding of tourism promotion in a holistic way, which is often not understood by single event promoters. Without this understanding and presentation, we cannot build our base and reputation for tourism.

Here is a list of Coos Bay facilities, events, and activities that could be combined with others throughout the region for promotion that will support lodging and the restaurant industry. The list is not all-inclusive.

- Farmer's Market
- Memorial Day Parade, Bay Area Fun Festival and Prefontaine Runs, and Blackberry Arts Festival
- Empire Clamboree
- Coos Art Museum
- The Boat Building Center and Hollering Place
- The Egyptian Theatre
- Mingus Park Lake with ducks and trails
- Eastside Millicoma Walking Trail
- Choshi Gardens and Japanese Bridge
- The New Coos County Maritime Center, the Railroad Museum and the Marshfield Sun Museum
- Empire Lakes Park and trails
- Music on the Bay and Oregon Coast Music Festival event in Mingus Park
- July 4th Fireworks and activities
- Tall Ship Days
- Boat docks at Empire, Eastside and downtown
- Coos Bay Boardwalk
- Marshfield Pioneer Cemetery (Yes, pioneer cemeteries are a tourism niche.)

Suggested Coos Bay Proposals to Promote the City and the Region

To promote the City as a more dynamic urban area, there must be a shift in the way that Coos Bay presents itself, and ultimately in the way that tourism dollars are utilized. At this time, the City spends an average of \$140,197.00 annually on marketing and advertising the region. The Visitor Convention Bureau (VCB) carries out the marketing and advertising for the region, which includes the City of North Bend, Charleston, ocean beaches, dunes, the Mill Casino, and other attractions. The City of North Bend and the Coquille Indian tribe also contribute funding.

The City would like to provide more focus on the urban ambiance. The City could then utilize a portion of the funds that they contribute to promote Coos Bay or the greater Bay Area as a hub centered on and around the Bay. The focus would change from the depiction of our City as one of a several communities lying close to a marvelous ocean and outdoor atmosphere to providing an urban identity with side trips to the ocean and dozens of other attractions. It's the City's prerogative that in doing so that we will attract more tourism related visits to our community over time, benefiting local hoteliers, along with restaurant and business owners in our community. We will build tourism and our brand.

Strategies to be incorporated:

1. Thread the diverse assets of our community as a special place that connects the past, present and future, the fun with the work, and the land with the architecture to brand the community and promote it as a brand built on its strong points.

2. Promote those events, activities, facilities, and places that make Coos Bay unique throughout the year. Note: People will come to appreciate and enjoy our city in a weather-friendly and fun environment, which brands our city and increases tourism over time. Inviting visitors to come only when it is raining and cold may be reasonable for traditional outdoor enthusiast-style activities such as hunting and fishing, but these are not always activities that include the entire family and build the City's reputation as a tourist destination.
3. Depict unique features over and over in promotion to identify our city. For example Mirror Pond identifies the City of Bend, while skiing is part of the larger outdoor environment that is outside the City. Mingus Park with the ducks, and Choshi Park with the Japanese Gardens can be promoted as an identifiable image of Coos Bay. Many citizens identify it as one of their favorite places, but it is not used as a city identifier in promotion.
4. Promote the ambiance of Coos Bay with focus on attractions, events, activities, and engaged people, to appeal to all ages, both sexes, and diverse audiences.
5. Enhance connections among facilities, organizations, and events by working with individuals and groups who are sponsoring community events that can combine and connect to build the City's tourist reputation over time.
6. Foster community pride in tourism by providing a local voice and face for tourism, which will enhance our community's desire and creativity as a destination for tourism.
7. Utilize the name, Coos Bay, which identifies our region in broader markets.
8. Other.

Summary of Benefits

Developing a marketing plan with tasks can improve the City's reputation as a tourism asset that brings vitality, repeat visitors, and a new brand to the entire region.

Enhancing promotion of the urban amenities can also provide an opportunity for younger people to see the positive vitality of the largest little city on the Oregon Coast, which will bring new residences and young entrepreneurs. A survey cited in Rebecca Ryan's recent book *Live First, Work Second* found that three out of four Americans under the age of 28 indicated that a cool city is more important than a good job.

I believe that it is imperative that the City present itself in a new light as a "cool city." To accomplish this, we must exhibit pride, and share the vitality that exists. Without doing so, we are nothing more than an outpost that happens to exist somewhere out there along the Pacific Ocean.

Options for Moving Forward

The City must continue to work with partners on regional advertising and promotion. The City recognizes that there may be a need to renegotiate our partnership and the tasks that the VCB carries out on our behalf. It is essential that Coos Bay work with partners in the Bay Area and

beyond, so that there is increased impact for tourism. "Going it alone" is not a good option. In fact, national trends suggest that we should increase partnering, rather than "hunkering down."

The City should move forward utilizing one of the following options:

- A. Amend the Coos Bay/North Bend Visitor and Convention Bureau Agreement so that the City contributes less to regional promotion. This will allow the City of Coos Bay to develop its own marketing plan that can then be utilized as an element of the overall Bay Area marketing plan. The City could go out for bid to carry out their identified marketing strategies and tasks. Bids could be submitted by local nonprofits or profit organizations having an interest in marketing. For example, bids could be solicited from the VCB, the Chamber, the Downtown Association, and local contractors.
- B. If the VCB and its partners are amenable to expanding and shifting the focus of the VCB as it is currently configured, the City could request that the VCB provide tasks and timeline for presentation of new concepts, images, advertising, and other promotion along with tasks and timelines for their implementation. Understanding and having the ability to determine the best way to proceed is essential for public officials to respond to their constituents.

ACTION REQUESTED:

Please provide staff direction on how to best move forward on this matter.