

**RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS
SKAGIT COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2018**

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Thursday, March 15, 2018, with Chair Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, and Commissioner Lisa Janicki present. Commissioner Ron Wesen excused.

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Dahlstedt called the proceedings to order at 11:01 a.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Chair Dahlstedt led the gallery in the salute to the flag.

III. AGENDA:

a) 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Special Meeting: Presentation by Katherine Kertzman, President and CEO of Seattle Southside Regional Tourism Authority - TPA Best Practices

Chair Dahlstedt introduced Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC) CEO John Sternlicht and recognized elected officials who were in the audience.

Mr. Sternlicht thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to hear and learn about best practices regarding the possible formation of a Tourism Promotion Area (TPA). Mr. Sternlicht invited many interested individuals to listen to a presentation from Ms. Kertzman, the President and CEO of Seattle Southside Regional TPA, and ask questions about TPA formation.

Mr. Sternlicht provided an overview about TPA's and what one could mean economically for Skagit County (increased tax revenues and a reduced tax burden on individual families). He discussed the differences between Lodging Tax Committees and Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO), reducing overhead at EDASC by sharing a DMO through EDASC, the preference to create a diverse board from all sectors for the formation of a Skagit TPA, the desire to hire an experienced tourism marketing professional, and starting with a community-wide strategic planning process.

Mr. Sternlicht said that the role played by Skagit County was legislative in nature and that Skagit County would be passing through funds without deduction to the DMO. He said there was no financial risk or responsibility involved for any city or town, and, he talked about the success of another regional TPA: Spokane, in order to demonstrate that regional TPA's flourished and each and every TPA was different and unique.

The PowerPoint provided by Mr. Sternlicht can be found here:

<ftp://ftp.skagitcounty.net/countycommissioners/documents/agendapackets/03122018/>

Mr. Sternlicht invited Ms. Kertzman to talk about TPAs and the Seattle Southside Regional Tourism Authority.

Ms. Kertzman said that she had been involved in tourism for 18 years and no two destinations were alike or even managed the same. Since the inception of Seattle Southside, they had grown from 1 employee to 14. Ms. Kertzman shared that many organization models

had been evaluated, and a vision, mission, and promise for branding had been created.

She shared that SeaTac, Tukwila, and Des Moines benefited from joining the brand “Seattle Southside” and that the TPA grew stronger in being able to deliver more to visitors with their inclusion. Ms. Kertzman said that before the TPA had been formed, she worked in a Chamber of Commerce and was often disappointed that the organizational structure of the commerce only highlighted businesses and activities that were part of the commerce and that visitors only saw a portion of what was available to explore in the region. She knew that providing the bigger picture through a TPA would benefit the area.

Ms. Kertzman went on to share more information about how their TPA was formed, how it grew, what kinds of problems occurred, and how they were able to adapt their model and succeed.

One of the most important steps they took was reaching out to each and every hotel before the TPA was formed for input and support. She talked about the importance of data and spending tracking and said that most visitors came through online methods vs. brochures and travel guides. Keeping their website up-to-date was another important step and she said they had also benefited by joining the Washington Tourism Alliance.

Through their shifting and growing pains, Ms. Kertzman was happy to report that for every \$1 spent by their Regional Tourism Authority, \$42.86 was generated for the Seattle Southside region in visitor spending and, because of that additional revenue; each King County household saved \$916 in taxes.

The PowerPoint provided by Ms. Kertzman can be found here:

<ftp://ftp.skagitcounty.net/countycommissioners/documents/agendapackets/03122018/>

Questions and comments were asked by the Commissioners, Lennart Bentsen of Hotel Services Group, Warren Beach of SMJ Management, Germaine Kornegay of the Sedro-Woolley City Council, Eron Berg with the City of Sedro-Woolley, Steve Sexton the Mayor of Burlington, Anthony Young of the Anacortes City Council, Andy Mayer of the Mount Vernon Chamber, Jason Miller the Mayor of Concrete/Publisher of the Concrete Herald, Pola Kelley of the Sedro-Woolley Chamber of Commerce, Peter Browning of the Burlington Chamber of Commerce, and Ryan Walters of the Anacortes City Council.

The general discussion and consensus was that a TPA was stronger when it was regional and everyone participated and was “all-in”.

- b) *12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County TPA Luncheon
- c) *6:00 p.m. Cape Horn Properties Community Meeting RE: Floodway (Concrete School Commons, 7830 Superior Avenue, Concrete)

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Dahlstedt adjourned the proceedings at 12:02 p.m.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Chair

Lisa Janicki, Commissioner

Ron Wesen, Commissioner

ATTEST:

Clerk of the Board