

City of Blaine
Request for Council Action
Meeting Date: June 22, 2020

Subject: Resolution 1818-20, authorizing the City Manager to enter into a contract with the Blaine Chamber of Commerce to provide annual management services to the Blaine Welcome Center and Visitor Information Center.

Department: Community Development Services Department Prepared By: _____
(Digital Signature)

Agenda Location: Consent Agenda Council Action Unfinished Business

Attachments:

1. Resolution 1818-20 authorizing the City Manager to enter into a contract with the Blaine Chamber of Commerce to provide annual management services to the Blaine Welcome Center and Visitor Information Center.
2. Blaine Chamber of Commerce Proposal

Background/Summary:

The City anticipates reopening the Blaine Welcome Center and Visitor Information Center as Whatcom County and the City of Blaine move forward with Governor Inslee's Safe Start Plan.

The City previously operated the BWC using a part-time Blaine Visitor Information Center Coordinator position. The salary of the position in 2020 is \$20,000. The Chamber's proposed contract is for \$30,000 annually or an additional \$10,000 cost to the City, but also includes additional and improved services. The improved services are much needed and will significantly change the "atmosphere" of the BWC.

These include:

- a. Ensuring visitors are greeted in a friendly and welcoming manner, in-person and by telephone, and;
- b. Ensuring visitors are provided with appropriate and accurate information, including training BWC volunteers to provide such information.

The Chamber's proposal also includes new services needed to grow the City's Blaine by the Sea tourism program. These include the following:

- a. Produce bi-weekly media postings specific to tourism in Blaine and the surrounding region to the Blaine by the Sea digital platforms including website, Facebook and Instagram (March – October), and then weekly media postings in the off-season (November – February), and;
- b. Maintain a tourism related email list for Blaine by the Sea announcements.

The Chamber's proposal also allows potential secondary cost savings to the City including managing inventory and ordering Visitor Information Center materials, such as rack cards and other informational items.

Accepting the Chamber's proposal will improve coordination between the City, the chamber, and our tourism partners, minimize issues with a transition of management services and allow the City to get the BWC up and running this summer when such facilities are reopened in the near future.

The Department has considered the following budgetary items when preparing this recommendation.

2020 Lodging Tax Revenue Projection

A 30% decrease in annual lodging tax revenue is currently forecasted, which represents a loss of \$75,000. This is the anticipated decrease due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however actual revenue in 2020 could be even less if the economic recovery is slower than expected.

2020 Lodging Tax Expenditure Reductions

Approved reductions to expenditures include the following: cancellation of BTAC grants for events per Council Resolution 1807-20, approved furloughs, and defunding a less than half-time position that staffed the Welcome Center. These measures represent an approximate \$85,000 reduction in 2020.

2021 Lodging Tax Projected Expenditures

Some of this impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be absorbed by budget cuts this year but the full impact on the City's lodging fund revenue is not fully known. Due to these reasons, and based on discussion of the BTAC, the CDS Department expects BTAC grants in 2021 to be more competitive but comparable to 2020. This year BTAC funded over \$118,000 in grants, which may have to be moderately reduced in 2021 based on final 2020 lodging fund revenue.

To accommodate an increase of \$10,000 for management services of the Blaine Welcome Center in 2021 (\$20,000 up to \$30,000), CDS recommends reducing event grant funding, including the City's lodging tax funding for unidentified "special events and projects", which was also \$10,000 in the City's 2020 budget at the beginning of the year. The Department will also work closely with BTAC and grant applicants to manage expectations for 2021.

Blaine Welcome Center Management Services

Accepting the Chamber's proposal allows Donna Raimsey, the Chamber's Program & Events Coordinator, to join the City's tourism team. The Department believes this will help improve tourism services across the board. Ms. Raimsey has the experience and skill set to be a highly capable manager of the BWC and her website design and marketing ability will be a significant benefit to the Blaine by the Sea tourism program. The Department recommends that the lasting impacts of running a successful and robust Blaine by the Sea tourism program, including developing a greater online presence, will have a more significant effect on the community than any single event. For these reasons, the Department recommends approval.

Budget Implications: Current Budget New Budget Request Non-Budgetary

City Council approved Ordinance 20-2946 on May 26, 2020, which included increased funding for management services for the Blaine Welcome Center (up to \$30,000). The 2020 contract would be prorated over the remainder of the year. 2021 contracting costs are expected to remain the same.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the City Council consider approving Draft Resolution 1818-20, authorizing the City Manager to enter into a contract with the Blaine Chamber of Commerce to provide annual management services to the Blaine Welcome Center and Visitor Information Center.

Reviewed By:

City Manager _____ Finance Director _____ City Clerk _____
(Digital Signature) (Digital Signature) (Digital Signature)

RESOLUTION NO. 1818-20

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLAINE, WASHINGTON, AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH THE BLAINE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TO PROVIDE ANNUAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES TO THE BLAINE WELCOME CENTER & VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER.

WHEREAS, the City of Blaine Comprehensive Plan and Tourism Development and Marketing Plan, approved by City Council Ordinance 19-2929, calls for the operation of the Blaine Welcome Center & Visitor Information Center, and;

WHEREAS, the City previously operated the Blaine Welcome Center & Visitor Information Center using a part-time Blaine Visitor Information Center Coordinator position, and;

WHEREAS, the City terminated the Blaine Visitor Information Center Coordinator position when the Blaine Welcome Center and Visitor Information Center closed until further notice due to COVID-19, and;

WHEREAS, the City expects to reopen the Blaine Welcome Center and Visitor Information Center in the near future as the City of Blaine anticipates moving into Phase Three of Governor Inslee's Safe Start Plan, and;

WHEREAS, the Community Development Services Department issued a Request for Proposals to provide management services to the Blaine Welcome Center & Visitor Information Center, and;

WHEREAS, the Blaine Chamber of Commerce was the sole responder to the Request for Proposals to manage the Blaine Welcome Center & Visitor Information Center, and;

WHEREAS, the Community Development Services Department coordinated with the Blaine Chamber of Commerce to clarify the scope of work and revise the proposal.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Blaine, Washington to authorize the City Manager to enter into a contract with the Blaine Chamber of Commerce to provide annual management services to the Blaine Welcome Center and Visitor Information Center.

ADOPTED by the City Council for the City of Blaine at a regular meeting held this 22nd day of June, 2020.

CITY OF BLAINE, WASHINGTON

Bonnie Onyon, Mayor

ATTEST/AUTHENTICATE:

Samuel Crawford, City Clerk

THE BLAINE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PROPOSAL FOR SERVICES

Management of the Blaine Welcome Center, including optional services

Name of organization: Blaine Chamber of Commerce
Contact person and title: Donna Raimey, Program & Events Coordinator
Organization mailing address: 546 Peace Portal Drive, Blaine WA 98230
Website: blainechamber.com **Email:** info@blainechamber.com & donnaraimsey@gmail.com
Organization Contact phone: 360-332-6484 **Donna Raimey Cell:** 360-201-8471

Service Request & Pricing

- Provide management services for the Blaine Welcome Center
- Provide Blaine by the Sea media postings and maintain tourism related contact list
- Blaine by the Sea marketing materials
- Restroom maintenance

Service	Management of Blaine Welcome Center & Online Marketing Responsibilities	Pricing
Management of the Blaine Welcome Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling, overseeing and training volunteer staff to cover BWC hours of operation from 10am to 6pm daily, including weekends, and; • Unlocking and opening the facility in the morning (10am) and closing and locking the facility in the evening (6pm), and; • Ensuring visitors are greeted in a friendly and welcoming manner, in-person and by telephone, and; • Ensuring visitors are provided with appropriate and accurate information, including training BWC volunteers to provide such information, and; • Ensuring informational items, such as rack cards, are readily available, including ordering and managing inventory. 	\$30,000
	“Blaine by the Sea” website, social media postings & Contact list management	
(Approximately 96 postings annually)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce bi-weekly media postings specific to tourism in Blaine and the surrounding region to the Blaine by the Sea digital platforms including website, Facebook and Instagram (March – October) • Produce weekly media postings to the Blaine by the Sea digital platforms including website, Facebook, and Instagram (November – February) • Maintain a tourism related email list for Blaine by the Sea announcements 	Included in the above pricing
Retail Management: Blaine by the Sea Marketing Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order, purchase, stock and sell approved Blaine by the Sea marketing materials <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	Deferred to 2021 BTAC Grant Proposal: Will submit upon proposal deadline if appropriate & still requested
	Janitorial Services – Professional Bids Received	

Restroom Maintenance 7 days/week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcontracting janitorial services for the Blaine Welcome Center and public restrooms • Ordering, purchasing and stocking appropriate materials, such as toilet paper and cleaning supplies 	Not Included
Restroom Maintenance 3 days/week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subcontracting janitorial services for the Blaine Welcome Center and public restrooms • Ordering, purchasing and stocking appropriate materials, such as toilet paper and cleaning supplies <p><i>Please note: Welcome Center Staff and/or volunteers are not responsible for cleaning remainder of the week.</i></p>	Not Included

Office Equipment Onsite

Equipment supplied by the City of Blaine
IT services and computer equipment will remain in the Welcome Center at this time
Conference room printer will remain in place and the Chamber will maintain ink & paper supplies

Blaine Chamber References:

- Mike Hill (Hills Chevron, 360-332-8412)
- Jesse Creydt (Touchstone Behavioral & Healthy Youth Coalition, 360-510-0221)
- Richard Sturgill (Drayton Harbor Maritime, 360-201-3062)

We look forward to working with the City of Blaine and stand ready to partner with you.

If you have questions on this proposal, feel free to contact us at your convenience. We will be in touch with you next week to arrange a follow-up conversation on the proposal.

Thank you for your consideration.

