

Bellevue-Redmond Tourism Promotion Area Advisory Board
Meeting Minutes

February 24, 2026

Bellevue City Hall

1:00 pm

Room 1E-113 / Virtual

Members Present: Chairperson Caroline Dermarkarian, Wade Hashimoto, Kate Hudson

Members Remote: Rocky Rosenbach, Kim Saunderson, Nate Moore

Staff Present: Lorie Hoffman, Lizzette Flores, Jesse Canedo, Emil King, Community Development

Others Present: Brad Jones, Jane Kantor, Megan Adams, Meredith Langridge, Visit Bellevue; Kristina Hudson, Melody Lanthorn, Audrey Fan, OneRedmond; Dustin Fletcher and Christian Folk, DVA; Kyla Boast, Datafy; Peter Klauser, Bullseye Creative

Minutes: Manette Stamm

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 pm by Caroline Dermarkarian, who presided. All members were present with the exception of Cassandra Lieberman.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

A. Approval of the Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Wade Hashimoto. The motion was seconded by Kim Saunderson, and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes.

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Kim Saunderson. The motion was seconded by Wade Hashimoto, and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Oral Communications – None

4. Action, Discussion, and Information Items

A. Action – Updates to the BRTPA Advisory Board Bylaws

Cultural Tourism Specialist Lizzette Flores reminded the Board that potential bylaw updates were presented at the last meeting. These updates include the frequency and timing of meetings, changing the meeting frequency to monthly to better support budget planning, and reducing the need for special meetings. There were also updates to the bylaws regarding decorum and conduct, which align with the Bellevue City Code.

A motion to approve the updates to the BRTOA Advisory Board Bylaws was made by Wade Hashimoto. The motion was seconded by Kim Saunderson, and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Action – Advisory Panel Applicant Review

Lizzette Flores reminded the Board of a vacancy on the Redmond side of the Board. One application was received from Crystal Pia for this vacancy.

A motion to approve the application for recommendation to the City Manager for appointment was made by Kim Saunderson. The motion was seconded by Rocky Rosenbach, and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Information – Staff Update

Lizzette Flores presented a few updates, including two contracts with Visit Bellevue and OneRedmond for the tourism and promotion of the Bellevue and Redmond TPA zones, respectively. The Bellevue City Council approved the contracts in January of this year, and they are effective through December 31, 2026. Another update included the year's meeting schedule, outlining 7 upcoming meetings. Flores reminded the Board that these meetings can be cancelled if not needed, and additional meetings can be added if needed. At the next meeting, there will be elections for Chair and Vice Chair, a process that occurs annually. There is no limit to the number of times someone can serve in both positions while on the Board. Flores outlined the responsibilities of these positions, and Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman reiterated that those in these positions must attend meetings in person and reminded the Board of the limit of three members attending remotely at each meeting.

Continuing the updates, Flores presented several financial summaries. For the Bellevue zone, the projected 2025 annual revenue was \$2,914,000. The actual remittances for the year were \$2,712,004.39. Visit Bellevue was invoiced for \$2,299,245.54, and at the end of the year (including the 5% TPA administration fee, of which extras are returned to each zone), the Bellevue zone's reserve account balance was \$848,285.31. For the Redmond zone, the projected 2025 annual revenue was \$828,418. The actual remittances for the year

were \$806,806. OneRedmond invoiced for \$829,861.29, and at the end of the year, the Redmond zone's reserve account balance was \$688,154.94.

Flores then presented a summary of the invoiced amounts, month by month, from Visit Bellevue and OneRedmond. Wade Hashimoto asked, based on the information presented, if both zones finished in the clear? Flores confirmed that, yes, with reserves, both zones did. Hashimoto then followed up, inquiring about any concerns about dipping into reserves in the future. Hoffman assured that neither Visit Bellevue nor OneRedmond can exceed their contract amounts for the year, and that good reserves have been maintained. Close communication throughout the year will continue, and Hashimoto noted that the monthly meetings by the BRTPA board will both help stay on budget. Brad Jones from Visit Bellevue shared the concern and reassured the Board that they are monitoring their budget and adjusting as needed.

Kate Hudson arrived at 1:25.

D. Information – OneRedmond 2025 Annual Report

Kristina Hudson from OneRedmond presented an overview of 2025, including visitor spending, the continued partnership with the City of Redmond, two newly launched market tourism programs, swag, and a visitor advisory board, and a reminder that OneRedmond is fully funded through the BRTPA. Hudson continued with an update on hotel inventory, which has remained the same, and a slight dip in guestroom sales and revenue compared to 2024. Hudson wrapped up the overview with a total economic impact of tourism in Redmond of over \$2 million.

Hudson then delved into the OneRedmond program, giving an update on contract expenditures and contingency dollars, which were used to supplement marketing expenses for the new tourism campaigns and pay-per-click programs. New opportunities and needs were identified, and subsequent contract staffing was added. Now, OneRedmond can aggregate and analyze data to create benchmarks for its tourism programs.

Dustin Fletcher and Christian Folk of DVA gave an update on Redmond's destination marketing, notably on the campaign performance for dog tourism and concerts at Marymoor Park. Results show above benchmark engagement, highly efficient spending, and measurable economic impact driven by visitor trips and lodging activity. Folk noted that for every dollar spent, \$34 was returned, generating about \$531,000 in economic impacts, driven by visitor trips and room nights.

Kyla Boast of Datafy provided visitor behavior and insights, tracking where visitors are coming from, where they go, and what they do. In 2025, 3.3 million visitors were welcomed to the Redmond area. Boast gave an overview of where visitors were going, mostly in the Downtown area, with an average length of stay of 2.5 days. 60% of visitors were on overnight trips, and over half were repeat guests. Visitation followed a very clear seasonal trend, with most visitors coming in July. Demographics of visitors were described as middle-aged, a mix of families and 1-2-person households, with annual incomes exceeding \$75,000, all consistent with in-state and out-of-state visitor segments. Top-performing market visitations included Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, Spokane, and Los Angeles. Additional data points included daily rates and occupancy. Boast concluded with an update on where people are going in Redmond: nearly 17% of visitor activity was for outdoor recreation, and visitor spending showed a significant increase in out-of-state spending.

Peter Klauser of Bullseye Creative reminded the Board that their contract is funded through the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC). Bullseye Creative supports Experience Redmond by producing website content, coordinating social media engagement, delivering digital advertising, promoting hotel partnerships, and creating visual and written assets for citywide initiatives. In September of 2025, additional TPA funding was allocated to Bullseye Creative to expand their pay-per-click advertising campaigns to increase paid search visibility, launch expanded display and video ads, target event planners, and strengthen hotel-focused and destination campaigns. Kaluser then went over the impacts of this work, focusing on year-end growth: for digital media, impressions increased 46% year-over-year, clicks increased 310% year-over-year, and the cost per click improved by 1.52%. The overall impact increased website traffic and hotel pageviews. Bullseye Creative helped increase Redmond's visibility across different markets, drive traffic to lodging, and strengthen Experience Redmond's brand identity.

Audrey Fan of OneRedmond reminded the Board of their Port of Seattle SEA Airport tourism spotlight ad in concourse D for dog tourism, which was up for all of 2025. For destination and tourism development, OneRedmond focused on increasing overnight visitation and Redmond's position as an experiential destination.

Melody Lanthorn of OneRedmond gave an overview of wine tourism, helping hotels create packages for wine tasting in Woodinville and targeting vendors who would come to Redmond from Eastern Washington in partnership with Woodinville Wine Country.

Fan gave an update on dog tourism events for the year, including Pup Crawl, Bones, Brews & BBW, Doggie Glam, Costume Parade & Paw-ty, Howl-O-Ween, and Stanta Paws & Claws.

Other engagement included local businesses and partnerships. Additional planning for 2026 took place in 2025, including Poker Pup Crawl, Pupchella, and the Dog Days of Summer. Fan mentioned that toward the end of the year, an agreement was reached with Seattle Theatre Group for Remlinger Farms in Carnation to be the exclusive hotel partner for the 2026 series.

Lanthorn continued updates on 2026 planning, including forest bathing, accessible travel initiatives, and a concierge program. TPA funds were used on ORCA cards for OneRedmond's transportation programs. Fan reminded the Board that Redmond has no conference or large-event venues. OneRedmond is continuing research on sites and building relationships for venue development. Fan also gave an overview of the branded materials that were developed in 2025.

Kristina Hudson closed out the presentation by looking ahead at what OneRedmond has in the pipeline. These include broadly supporting strategic visitor-driven programming to increase overnight stays, expanding partnerships, pursuing niche tourism opportunities, and pursuing high-impact, high-value activations. One of the first of the year includes Cirque du Soleil's ECHO.

Wade Hashimoto asked if Pupchella was tied to the Pup Crawl. Hudson explains that OneRedmond has done a lot of work to set up Pupchella, and Fan added that the event, which will be at the Redmond Town Center, is a mash-up of Coachella and dogs.

E. Information - 2025 Bellevue TPA Annual Report

Brad Jones of Visit Bellevue provided an at-a-glance look at the 2025 annual report. Bellevue hosted over 2.2 million visitors, who spent \$760 million and generated \$2.2 billion in economic impact. Jones reminded the Board that Visit Bellevue operates under a single strategic plan that spans both the lodging tax and TPA, with the TPA being spent on programmatic activities. The plan includes six strategic priorities, some of which were new to 2025: Urban Lifestyle & Placemaking, Arts & Innovation, Recreation & Experiences, Culinary Destination, Conferences & Events, and Built Environment & Enabling Conditions. Visit Bellevue's work program includes destination sales, marketing and communications, visitor experience, tourism development, research, and administration.

Jones launched into key performance metrics, starting with hotel and lodging. A challenge in Bellevue is building new hotels, resulting in very little increase in room supply. Since 2019, revenues and average daily rates have continued to grow. The 2025 room-night total was 71,246, and the 2026 goal is 76,000. The impact of the TPA helped generate over

280,000 overnight visitors, increased hotel occupancy by 9% and weekend occupancy by 6%, and visitor spending is up, further escalating the economic impact.

Jane Kantor of Visit Bellevue noted that the four destination salespeople will continue to attend trade shows. Wade Hashimoto inquired about the World Cup's impact on the total book volume for 2026. Kantor acknowledged that it does impact next year's estimates but ensured that future years will be properly evaluated to stay on track.

Brad Jones discussed marketing and communications for Visit Bellevue for 2025. Growth and optimization were a focus for the year, with the goal of maintaining impressions while further optimizing. There were 1.5 million website views, 1.3 million clicks through social media and content, and about 600,000 clicks through paid media, representing an almost 300% increase. Public relations and earned media remain a high point, with a very aggressive strategy targeting \$8 million in earned media value. In 2025, Visit Bellevue hit \$11.5 million. Email marketing had an open rate of 52%. Jones mentioned that a new website would be launched in June of 2026, which may affect some of the year's goals.

Public relations had planned on 100 placements and ended up with 407 for 2025, resulting in a lot of visibility for Bellevue. The impact of the TPA on this work has helped expand reach and visibility, resulting in 301 million TPA-driven impressions, 1.2 million TPA-driven engagements, and 1.8 million TPA-driven website sessions. Jones commented on the fact that the city is welcoming AI companies, and, in that vein, the Visit Bellevue team is embracing this and studying the impact of AI on tourism, training the algorithms. Jones also reminded the Board that Visit Bellevue received a brand refresh last year, resulting in a new brand architecture and new logo.

Regarding culinary tourism, a new TPA initiative for Visit Bellevue hosted the second season of Bellevue Eats with Chef Shota Nakajima, published a Taste of Bellevue culinary guide, hosted a variety of culinary weeks, and partnered with Radiant Table to host 16 sold-out dining experiences. The overseas market remained strong at the beginning of the year, but tourism was affected by Japan's market collapse later in the year. Visit Bellevue will continue with Japan and launch in South Korea in 2026.

Wade Hashimoto asked how the impact of the marketing rollout is measured. Jones responded that, typically, with brand marketing, you revisit the market a year later to assess brand awareness and whether it has changed people's perception through brand awareness questionnaires and focus groups. Wade followed up to ask if there was a call to action for the hoteliers. Jones responded that Visit Bellevue would like to hear about opportunities in operations to reinforce brand identity and that Visit Bellevue can help develop them in partnership.

Meredith Langridge presented on the visitor experience, stating that the TPA has been integral to building and producing programs. These include Bellhop, which served over 87,000 people. The demand is high, rated highly, but there are issues with wait times that Visit Bellevue is addressing. The Mobile Welcome Center served over 50 events last year, meeting people where they are at, conducting surveys, and engaging visitors. The Airport Shuttle served over 8,000 riders and added two additional stops. Looking ahead, Visit Bellevue will focus on how to continue marketing this service to grow it in 2026. The destination services program worked with the sales team to explore what personalized experiences are available. Visit Bellevue teamed up with Wheel the World to advance accessibility and inclusive travel, verifying accessibility features at 25 hotels, restaurants, and attractions. In 2026, it is planned to grow to another 25 locations.

Kate Hudson asked about the Airport shuttle and whether there would be an offering for cruise lines, too. Langridge affirmed that this is an ongoing conversation with the vendor providing the airport shuttle, and Brad Jones chimed in that there is no contract yet. Hudson requests that, as they put together packets for cohesive experiences, it would be helpful to have this information soon.

Brad Jones reminded the Board of the importance of maintaining positive relationships between residents and tourists. Megan Adams discussed the importance of accessibility, stewardship, and community relations, as well as the programs that support these initiatives. Partner engagement has increased significantly over the last year, with 128 new partner listings in Visit Bellevue's CRM; every day of the week, there is something to do in Bellevue. Adams informed the Board that Visit Bellevue's partner activation meetings are outgrowing their current meeting space.

In 2025, the podcast Bellevue Bound was launched, reaching over 10,000 views. The podcast aims to be a tool for hospitality professionals. It will continue in 2026 with culinary episodes. Adams further expands on Visit Bellevue's partnership with Wheel the World, which helps promote accessible places and features throughout Bellevue. One of the organization's representatives commented that Bellevue is one of the most accessible places they've ever been.

Brad Jones concluded the presentation by presenting Visit Bellevue's outlook for 2026. The highlights include a new website with dynamic content that changes based on your location. The destination sales team will continue to work hard, spending time on the road promoting Bellevue. Other highlights included the future cruise shuttle program, transitions for the bike hop pilot program, a new mobility rental program along Eastrail, expanding tourism marketing into South Korea, and Bellevue Cares, a new CSR program.

Lastly, Jones reminded the Board about the World Cup and the light rail opening the cross-lake connection.

5. **Board Quick Business** – None
6. **Reports** – None
7. **Adjournment**

Caroline Dermarkarian adjourned the meeting at 2:52 pm