BELLEVUE-REDMOND TOURISM PROMOTION AREA ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES

May 26, 2026 1:00 p.m.	Bellevue City Hall Room 1E-113 / Virtual

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Chairperson Wade Hashimoto, Kate Hudson, Henning Nopper, Kim Saunderson
MEMBERS REMOTE:	Cassandra Leiberman, Nate Moore, Crystal Pia
MEMBERS ABSENT:	Rocky Rosenbach
STAFF PRESENT:	Manette Stamm, Lorie Hoffman, Lizzette Flores, Jesse Canedo, Department of Community Development
OTHERS PRESENT:	Megan Adams, Jane Kantor, VisitBellevue; Kristina Hudson, Audrey Fan, OneRedmond; Seraphie Allen, Vanessa Kritzer, Jackie Lalor, Philly Marsh, Redmond LTAC
MINUTES SECRETARY:	Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Chair Wade Hashimoto who presided. All members are present with the exception of Kim Saunderson, who arrived at 1:07 p.m., and Rocky Rosenbach

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Kate Hudson. The motion was seconded was by Henning Nopper and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the April 28, 2026, minutes as submitted was made by Henning Nopper. The motion was seconded by Kate Hudson and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION, DISCUSSION AND INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Information - Staff Update (Financial & Budget Process & Reserves in July)

Cultural Tourism Specialist Lizzette Flores informed the Board that the city has partnered with BEST to provide free anti-human trafficking training to local businesses. The city has purchased 1000 virtual training spots and encouraged Board members, particularly those connected to hotels and hospitality businesses, to share the opportunity widely with their staff and industry contacts in Bellevue and Redmond. In addition to the virtual option, an in-person certification training is scheduled for June 1 at Bellevue City Hall at 11:00 a.m.

Chair Wade Hashimoto asked how communication regarding the training will be distributed to the hotel community beyond the Board itself. Lizzette Flores said information is available through a webpage and can be distributed directly by email. Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman added that the details will be proactively shared with the Board. Both the virtual and in-person trainings will last approximately one hour.

Lizzette Flores reminded the Board of where things stand in the budget process, noting that the meeting would focus on the BRTPA Board's 2027 budget discussions, including an updated presentation from OneRedmond with additional information as requested by the Board. A formal communication from the City of Redmond's the LTAC committee will also be presented, and it will include recommendations related to the Redmond zone. The finalized budget will be presented to the Bellevue City Council on July 28.

Lizzette Flores provided a brief financial update, noting that additional details are included in the meeting packets. For VisitBellevue, the remittances totaled approximately $689,000, of which approximately $681,000 has been invoiced, leaving the program generally balanced. For the Redmond zone, the remittances totaled approximately $237,000 while the invoiced amount was approximately $297,000. The variance is expected because the 2026 Redmond budget includes a planned withdrawal from reserve funds.

B. Information – OneRedmond Budget Presentation

Audrey Fan stated that the executive summaries are unchanged from the earlier submission and therefore would not be discussed. The primary revisions involved adjustments to the expense distributions based on updated reserve figures and meetings held with the City of Redmond and its LTAC committee. The funding priorities are also the same. The proposed 2027 budget totals $985,269, which combines the projected revenue and the reserve funds to be drawn. It includes a ten percent contingency allocation.

Audrey Fan explained that marketing and communications continues to be a top priority. The funding remains focused on agency support, paid marketing and advertising, social media and related initiatives, though the distribution of funds will ultimately be determined by the Redmond stakeholders. The organization partnered with DVA Advertising and PR, a destination marketing-focused agency, toward the end of last year. A number of collaborations are being worked on with Redmond, Green Rubino, and Bullseye Creative to ensure consistent messaging and collaborative promotion efforts intended to support Redmond hotels. Additionally, the use of data-driven marketing tools, including Datafy, geofencing technology, Seeker, and BookDirect widgets was emphasized.

With regard to tourism development, Audrey Fan explained that because Redmond lacks a conference center or large convention venue, the organization relies on creative tourism strategies to drive overnight visits. The overall approach remains consistent with the previous presentation, only the budget allocations have been adjusted. One major initiative involves wine tourism partnerships associated with Woodinville Wine Country in collaboration with the City of Redmond to encourage leisure overnight stays. Also described was the growing focus on dog-related tourism. A pilot program was launched in 2025 and the organization plans a full-scale rollout in 2026 featuring activations scheduled during shoulder seasons. A recent TripAdvisor trend report identified travel with pets as one of the top niche tourism categories, which reinforces the organization's strategy.

Audrey Fan further discussed plans to expand entertainment tourism partnerships aimed at attracting leisure visitors, including collaborations with Seattle theater groups and Eastside concert venues such as Remlinger Farm. OneRedmond intends to pilot a wellness travel initiative centered on Shinrin-yoku, or forest bathing, which is another tourism trend identified by TripAdvisor. The concept was discussed during a Washington State Tourism training session that highlighted the positive occupancy impacts achieved through similar programs in the Smoky Mountains. The organization plans to test and refine the program over the coming year. Additional tourism development priorities include expanding youth sports opportunities utilizing local fields and conducting research into accessible travel initiatives.

Addressing transportation initiatives, it was stated that funding for the category had been increased compared to the original proposal in order to give Redmond hotel stakeholders greater flexibility in selecting projects to support. The adjustment also responds to the LTAC requests related to funding Redlink mobility transportation services. Many stakeholders value the flexibility provided through Orca card programs, which contributes to the increased transportation allocation.

Audrey Fan said OneRedmond intends to continue offering supplemental grant funding in conjunction with the LTAC allocations. Unlike the LTAC's annual review process, however, OneRedmond's program will provide year-round funding opportunities for external festivals and event producers who missed the formal annual application cycle. The intent is to create an additional mechanism to support and expand events capable of generating overnight visitation.

One of the highest priorities identified by Redmond hotel stakeholders is destination sales. Because Redmond has fewer sales missions and fewer opportunities for outside group business than neighboring markets, the organization has sought to increase its presence at trade shows and industry events. Funds have already been allocated in the 2026 budget for participation in Tour Connection, an event focused on entertainment buyers connected to outdoor concerts at venues such as Chateau Ste. Michelle, Remlinger Farm, and Marymoor Park. Many touring groups currently book accommodations in Seattle and Bellevue, and OneRedmond's objective is to redirect more of that business into Redmond hotels. The organization plans to continue attending trade shows and to pursue additional conferences, meetings, and events with the goal of increasing exposure to group business buyers and strengthening Redmond's segment of the hospitality market.

Audrey Fan explained that the administrative and overhead expenses have increased, in part due to the ACH deposit fees associated with the reimbursement-based funding structure. Because OneRedmond incurs expenses before reimbursement from the City of Bellevue, the organization must temporarily carry significant financial obligations. OneRedmond has asked the City of Bellevue to streamline the reimbursements, though the process carries additional fees. Another contributing factor is the transition from twice-monthly reimbursements, which happened in the latter part of 2025 to the city of Bellevue's standard, once-monthly reimbursements beginning in 2026, which increases the financial burden on the organization by extending the period during which expenses have to be carried internally. Highlighted was the importance of maintaining various research and data platforms, including CoStar, for tracking average daily rates and occupancy levels, along with geofencing and other analytical tools that are used to verify the effectiveness of marketing strategies and broader organizational direction.

Audrey Fan referring to page15 of the submitted memorandum and explained the revisions made to the budget by noting that the updated proposal reduces the previously submitted budget by nearly $300,000 in order to align spending more realistically with available reserve funds and projected revenues. It was also noted that the revised proposal incorporates several requests from the LTAC committee into various budget line items, although not every request can be fully accommodated. The stakeholders and Board advisors from the Redmond zone will continue to provide guidance regarding final spending priorities.

Turning to the issue of reserve balances and projected expenditures, it was stated that the proposed budget anticipates spending nearly one million dollars, including the reserve drawdowns. Audrey Fan acknowledged that practical limitations related to cash flow and reimbursement timing will likely prevent the organization from fully expending those funds during 2026. As a result, reserve balances entering 2027 are expected to be substantially higher than originally forecast. The 2027 budget is aspirational and several external factors could affect future spending decisions, including the Tourism Promotion Area sunset clause scheduled for July 1, 2027, and broader economic conditions following several major events. The organization will continue monitoring financial conditions closely on an ongoing basis to ensure fiscal responsibility.

Chair Wade Hashimoto asked for an estimate of the projected surplus remaining at the conclusion of 2026, noting that the anticipated reserve balance entering 2027 was listed at approximately $207,000. Audrey Fan estimated that an additional $100,000 to $150,000 could potentially remain in the reserves based on the 2026 budget. The projection depends largely on spending capacity, cash flow management, and the reimbursement process.

The Board members are reminded by Lorie Hoffman that the meeting materials included both the original and revised budgets, allowing for a direct comparison between the two proposals.

Henning Nopper commented on the significant changes reflected in the updated proposal and raised questions concerning the transportation-related allocations for Redlink and ORCA transit cards and asked how the ORCA card program is intended to support hotels and overnight visitors. Audrey Fan explained that for 2026 OneRedmond has purchased rideshare cards and ORCA cards, but the initiative originated in 2024 when Redmond hotels expressed a strong interest in airport shuttle services similar to Bellevue's airport transportation offerings. OneRedmond had also explored transportation services connecting overnight visitors to Woodinville wine country and regional concert venues. However, after conducting feasibility studies, the organization concluded that traditional shuttle systems lack the flexibility desired by stakeholders. Consequently, the organization pivoted toward rideshare cards, which hotel stakeholders believe will provide more adaptable transportation options for visitor packages tied to wineries and concerts. Because the original 2024 proposal specifically referenced airport transportation, OneRedmond had to submit a memorandum to the City of Bellevue documenting the revised approach. In 2025 OneRedmond also evaluated the Air Porter transportation service and consulted with VisitBellevue regarding its pilot program. However, after reviewing costs and the anticipated return on investment, the stakeholders determined that continuing with the rideshare gift cards and ORCA cards remained the preferred approach. The ORCA cards are viewed favorably because of their integration with Sound Transit connections and their usefulness for visitors traveling to destinations such as Seattle cruise terminals, sporting events, and other regional attractions that VisitBellevue also promoted. The current budget allocates $70,000 for the transportation initiatives. The City of Redmond will soon present information regarding Redlink, a mobility transportation system comparable to Bellevue's BellHop service. Hotel stakeholders still have questions regarding the Redlink usage data, particularly whether the service primarily benefits overnight visitors or local residents. The opinions among Redmond hotels are not unanimous. OneRedmond will ultimately follow the stakeholder guidance and voting outcomes regarding transportation priorities.

Cassandra Leiberman asked for clarification regarding the differences between the original and revised budget proposals. Lorie Hoffman explained that the Board packet contained the corrected and updated budget proposal from OneRedmond. No separate comparison document was prepared. Audrey Fan reiterated that the revised proposal is approximately $300,000 lower than the original submission.

C. Information – Redmond LTAC Presentation

Redmond City Councilmember Vanessa Kritzer noted currently serving as Chair of the Redmond the LTAC, as a Board member for One Redmond, and as Chair of the Finance, Administration and Communications Committee for the Redmond City Council. Appreciation was expressed for the ongoing partnership and investment provided by the hotel communities in Redmond, Bellevue, and the broader region. The region's growth as a destination for visitors has been exciting to watch. The economic and community benefits generated by tourism, business travel, sports travel, and special events are important in supporting local businesses, strengthening the regional economy, and enhancing community vibrancy for residents and visitors alike.

Vanessa Kritzer referenced the memorandum included in the meeting packet that had been sent to Redmond Zone TPA members following the LTAC's initial budget meeting on April 28. It was noted that the memo summarizes the ongoing discussions concerning partnership investments, shared priorities, and future collaboration opportunities extending into 2027 and beyond. Because Redmond operates on a biennial budget cycle, the LTAC planning also follows a biennial structure. Aligning the LTAC and TPA work plans and budgets reflects goals identified during the development of the city's tourism strategic plan. The tourism strategic plan, which was adopted by the Council in 2024 after extensive stakeholder engagement, focuses on advancing tourism development within the community. Part of that process involves examining how the city's two tourism-related funding sources could be aligned more effectively to maximize collective resources. The conversations have included participation from Board members who also serve on the LTAC, including Kim Saunderson.

Jackie Lalor, Tourism and Economic Development Staff Program Administrator for the City of Redmond and the individual responsible for managing the LTAC, stated that the recommended budget outlines partnership opportunities. The comprehensive tourism plan was developed over the course of nearly a year of stakeholder engagement. The resulting five-year plan contains 64 initiatives, approximately 70 percent of which have already been started or completed. Two initiatives are directly related to the LTAC and the TPA. Initiative 2.8 calls for collaboratively developing annual work plans between the LTAC and the TPA, while Initiative 2.9 proposes exploring a memorandum of understanding between the two entities to clarify respective responsibilities for tourism initiatives. Unlike Bellevue, Redmond currently operates with two separate tourism-related entities, which creates additional complexity. The strategic plan therefore encourages coordinated efforts to ensure all stakeholders are moving in the same direction.

Jackie Lalor said there are several broad strategic goals, including continued implementation of the five-year tourism plan; strengthening marketing; advertising, and public relations through aligned investments and shared strategies; reducing duplicative contracts and initiatives; and supporting a unified tourism brand and platform for visitors. Emphasized was the importance of directing visitors toward the established "Experience Redmond" tourism brand while maximizing the effectiveness of advertising dollars by reducing internal competition within shared tourism markets.

The city wants hotel stakeholders to actively participate in directing tourism strategies, budgets, and marketing priorities. There are several existing opportunities to see that happen, including bi-monthly meetings organized through the Experience Redmond brand and jointly led by Bullseye Creative and city tourism staff, all of which are open to hotel representatives. There are also meetings hosted by the mayor with hotel stakeholders that which include participation from OneRedmond and other tourism partners. Additional feedback mechanisms include direct communication with tourism staff; participation on tourism committees such as the LTAC and the TPA; potential annual or biannual strategy sessions involving all Redmond hoteliers; anonymous hotel community surveys; and even the possibility of revisiting or modifying the Experience Redmond branding if stakeholders believe changes are necessary.

D. Discussion – Budget and Scope of Work

Jackie Lalor explained that several categories have been identified as opportunities for joint investment between the LTAC and the TPA in order to maximize the impact of available tourism dollars. The LTAC preliminarily identified approximately $250,000 in requested Redmond Zone TPA funding to support various collaborative program areas. The proposal consists of both new investment opportunities and continued support for existing partnership initiatives already under way by the TPA. The new investment opportunities total $190,000 and they include a proposed $85,000 contribution from the TPA toward the Experience Redmond marketing and branding contract, which itself totals nearly $200,000 annually funded through lodging tax dollars. Also proposed is an investment involving a $35,000 contribution toward a public relations contract with a total annual cost of $75,000. The LTAC proposed a $70,000 investment in Redlink, the free shuttle system comparable to Bellevue's BellHop program.

Jackie Lalor said the ongoing partnership investments the LTAC supports continuing alongside the TPA include wine tourism partnerships associated with Woodinville or other wine destinations, which the LTAC views as especially valuable during the winter months. The LTAC also supports continued concert-related partnerships involving venues in and around Woodinville. In both cases, the LTAC proposes continuing funding at approximately $30,000 while encouraging the TPA to maintain comparable support levels. Experience Redmond advertising previously received $25,000 in TPA support, and the LTAC now proposes increasing both its own contribution and the requested TPA contribution to $30,000 each. The LTAC appreciates the support for OneRedmond's continuing event grant programs.

Regarding the Experience Redmond marketing and brand management program, Jackie Lalor explained that the tourism brand has existed for more than 20 years and has grown to include over 30,000 followers, nearly 200,000 annual website visitors, and more than 1000 niche program webpages. Because city procurement rules require competitive bidding for contracts exceeding $50,000, the city issued a formal request for proposals in 2024. Nine proposals are submitted and evaluated by a seven-member scoring panel that included representatives from OneRedmond and the hotel community, including Audrey Fan and Kim Saunderson. After two scoring rounds, Bullseye Creative was unanimously selected. Bullseye Creative's responsibilities are extensive and include management of the tourism brand; website administration; event marketing and lead management; social media operations; electronic newsletters, media and photography production; and advertising design. The substantial scale of the contract was emphasized and it was reiterated that Experience Redmond remains the city's established tourism brand. Continuing support for the expansion of the brand was recommended as the central tourism platform for Redmond as a way of leveraging the already significant audience reach.

Following the prior LTAC budgeting discussions, the city conducted a competitive request for proposals for public relations services. The process, initiated in March of 2025, included input from OneRedmond regarding the scope of work. Ten responses are received and evaluated by a six-member scoring panel that included two hotel representatives serving on the LTAC and the TPA, including Nate Moore and Kim Saunderson. Since Green Rubino was selected and brought on board, the firm has generated more than 143 million media impressions in just nine months, along with approximately 690,000 estimated views and 13 coordinated media visits. Green Rubino's scope of work includes media and press relations; influencer marketing and management; status reporting to the LTAC and hotelier meetings; and management of extensive coverage reporting. The performance goals include multiple print media placements, digital media placements; local broadcast coverage; social media placements; and hosting media journalists and content creators. Green Rubino has exceeded many of its benchmarks during the first nine months of service. The Bullseye Creative and Green Rubino agreements are structured as three-year contracts with options for renewal for an additional three years. The city retains the ability to terminate or rebid the contracts earlier if necessary, though under standard city practice the contracts can remain in place for up to six years before a new competitive process is required.

RedLink is a new transportation program being implemented by the City of Redmond. The program's total annual operating costs are estimated to be $660,000. Eight of Redmond's ten hotels fall within the designated service boundary. The early performance data from the pilot period for the period between March 8 and April 30 shows an average wait time of approximately eight minutes and fifty seconds, with nearly 3000 total passengers and almost 400 hotel-related passenger trips during the first six to seven weeks of operation. Officials from Woodinville has expressed interest in developing a similar transportation program and has been connected with Redmond's transportation staff to discuss implementation possibilities. The city hopes to eventually establish some form of transportation connection between Redmond and Woodinville in response to hotelier feedback, though details remain under development. The RedLink pilot is currently funded through a combination of grant funding and lodging tax dollars and is expected to continue through June 2027. The recommended TPA contribution toward the program is $70,000, with the remainder is expected to be funded primarily by the city, pending final Council budget approval. If full city funding cannot be secured, sponsorship opportunities similar to Bellevue's BellHop funding model might be explored.

Jackie Lalor described the city's budgeting structure, noting that ongoing lodging tax revenues are budgeted separately from one-time reserve fund expenditures. The Experience Redmond contract carries a base annual cost of approximately $178,000, with the total operational expenses rising to roughly $193,000 when software and related operational costs are included. Under the proposed arrangement, the TPA will contribute $85,000 while the LTAC will cover approximately $93,000 plus additional operational and tax-related expenses. The public relations contract, which totals $75,000 annually, has a proposed TPA contribution of $35,000, and the remaining balance is funded through city lodging tax revenues.

Regarding the advertising budget, Jackie Lalor explaining that TPA support for Experience Redmond advertising is not a new request but rather a continuation of prior investment. Previous TPA contributions have ranged between approximately $22,000 and $25,000, while the current proposal seeks an increase to $30,000 for 2027. Repeated feedback from hotel stakeholders consistently has emphasized the importance of increasing investments in marketing, public relations and advertising, and the revised budget reflects those priorities where feasible. The LTAC's continued support for strategic marketing partnerships already is being funded collaboratively with the TPA.

OneRedmond has requested that the LTAC participate in funding several tourism-related software platforms. The LTAC budget already includes $35,000 allocated for VISA spend reports intended to provide international visitor spending data. OneRedmond subsequently requested shared funding support of $7,000 for Seeker, $15,000 for DataFi, and $5,000 for BookDirect, all of which are software platforms OneRedmond has implemented and which the city has also been utilizing collaboratively. The requests will be presented to the LTAC after receiving the supporting contracts and current invoices from OneRedmond. If the LTAC approves the shared investments, it might be necessary to eliminate the VISA spend reports because of overall budget limitations, effectively requiring a one-for-one budget tradeoff.

OneRedmond has also requested a $10,000 investment toward the Remlinger Concert Series. The LTAC had previously contributed $5,000 toward the concert series but chose not to continue funding during the most recent budget cycle due to limited available success metrics. As a result, the LTAC requested additional information from OneRedmond, including updated performance metrics and clarification regarding the proposed increase from $5,000 to $10,000. The LTAC is interested in understanding the additional value generated through the larger proposed investment and that further discussion will occur after supporting information was received. It was reiterated that one-time reserve expenditures will fund the RedLink shuttle program and that the proposed TPA contribution for that initiative remains at $70,000.

Chair Wade Hashimoto invited Kim Saunderson to share impressions regarding the evaluation procedures. Kim Saunderson described the selection procedures as highly impressive and thoughtfully organized. The interview questions, evaluation scope, and scoring processes were carefully designed to ensure consistency and comparability among competing firms while balancing hotelier priorities against each company's proposed scope of work. The process was been both educational and professionally impressive.

Nate Moore remarked that Green Rubino had clearly distinguished itself from the competing firms during the evaluations and said the collaborative review process ultimately produced a strong consensus among the participants. The evaluation process was thorough. The city had clearly selected the appropriate agency.

Cassandra Lieberman asked if the Experience Redmond contract pricing remains consistent throughout the contract term or represents a change from prior years. Jackie Lalor responded that the three-year contract maintains fixed pricing through 2027. After the contract term expires, the city will generally anticipate annual increases between three and five percent under normal conditions, though actual increases could vary depending on broader economic circumstances. Because pricing is held steady over the contract term, vendors occasionally request slightly larger adjustments at renewal, though the city generally attempts to negotiate within the anticipated range.

Cassandra Lieberman asked if the city and OneRedmond have established specific divisions of responsibility between Green Rubino and DVA, the separate public relations firms engaged respectively by the city and the TPA. Jackie Lalor acknowledged that those roles have not yet been formally defined. The city has requested greater coordination between the agencies. A first combined meeting took place during the previous month, but further clarification regarding responsibilities is still needed.

Cassandra Lieberman asked about the possible future expansion of the RedLink program, particularly whether the service to and from Woodinville represents the primary expansion concept currently under consideration. Jackie Lalor stated that no additional service boundaries have yet been established. Under the current configuration, the program continues to serve eight of Redmond's ten hotels unless additional funding becomes available.

Saraphie Allen, Deputy Director of Planning, elaborated on RedLink expansion planning by explaining that the city's immediate priority is stabilizing and maintaining reliable service within the existing service area. While additional investments and service expansions, including possible Woodinville connections and broader neighborhood coverage, have been discussed, significantly enlarging the service map could substantially increase rider wait times and reduce overall ridership. The city therefore intends to first stabilize current operations while simultaneously evaluating the costs and feasibility associated with future expansions into additional areas.

Vanessa Kritzer added that the Overlake neighborhood already benefits from Metro Flex service, a Metro-operated app-based transportation system similar to RedLink. Because Metro Flex serves that portion of the city, RedLink's current emphasis remains concentrated within the Downtown-to-Marymoor corridor. The city views RedLink, Metro Flex, and traditional transit routes collectively as an integrated transportation network and continues advocating for improved transit frequency through Metro.

Councilmember Kritzer reiterated that rather than creating a dedicated Redmond-to-Woodinville shuttle, the city is exploring whether the existing RedLink infrastructure could potentially be expanded through collaboration and investment from the City of Woodinville. Conversations with Woodinville Councilmembers have revealed enthusiasm for exploring such a partnership opportunity.

Chair Wade Hashimoto asked if Woodinville has a TPA of its own. Jackie Lalor allowed that they do not. They do have a relatively small LTAC budget. However, Woodinville recently added several new hotels, which could lead to future budget growth.

Chair Wade Hashimoto asked if with the recommended contributions from the TPA, the LTAC budget will continue operating with a $9,000 deficit. Jackie Lalor confirmed that and allowed that funds will be pulled from the reserves to meet all of the expenses. If the TPA does not invest, more will need to be pulled from the reserves.

Councilmember Kritzer added further context regarding the LTAC reserve policies by explaining that the LTAC maintains a formal minimum reserve policy. At one point, the reserve balance had grown larger than the Council believed necessary. As a result, the LTAC intentionally spent down portions of the reserve through strategic tourism investments while adopting a policy to maintain a minimum reserve threshold moving forward. The current budgeting approach seeks to preserve the minimum reserve while still investing available resources into tourism initiatives capable of producing meaningful impacts.

Saraphie Allen added that the City Council had previously allocated federal ARPA funds to cover several tourism-related initiatives, including staffing support associated with the LTAC operations. In recent years, however, those funding arrangements have changed, and historically the LTAC itself has not directly covered staffing or administrative expenses connected to the tourism budget. Councilmembers Kritzer said that in addition to the LTAC contributions toward major initiatives such as RedLink, the city's general fund and broader municipal budget also contributes supplemental funding to ensure the success of those programs. The contributions are an additional city funding match supporting the tourism initiatives.

Cassandra Lieberman then sought clarification regarding the LTAC reserve usage, asking whether reserve funds are already being utilized or whether reserves will only be drawn upon if the proposed investments are not approved. Jackie Lalor explained that the LTAC previously held approximately $1.2 million in reserves and that the City Council had directed the LTAC to determine an appropriate target reserve level because the existing balance was viewed as being excessive. The LTAC adopted a policy, approved by the Council, establishing a reserve target equal to approximately 60 percent of projected revenues, which translates to roughly $400,000. During the previous budgeting cycle, the LTAC intentionally invested reserve funds into several tourism initiatives, including geofencing technology, increased advertising, public relations efforts, and approximately $136,000 over two years toward the RedLink program. The LTAC anticipates maintaining approximately $700,000 in reserves entering the next budget cycle, leaving an estimated $300,000 available for future strategic use if necessary. The remaining reserves could be used to cover expenses should additional funding needs arise.

Cassandra Lieberman asked when TPA will formally notify the LTAC regarding investment decisions within the various proposed funding categories, and whether any of those proposed investments have already been incorporated into the OneRedmond budget. Lorie Hoffman said the Board will engage in detailed discussions regarding funding priorities later in the meeting. Staff will subsequently gather and evaluate the Board's feedback and then prepare and present a revised budget proposal at the June meeting reflecting the Board's expressed priorities and strategic direction. Once approved by the Board, the TPA budget recommendation will be communicated to the LTAC and subsequently forwarded to the City Council for final approval in July.

Audrey Fan explained that transportation funding and other categories corresponding to hotelier priorities, such as destination sales, have been included broadly within the revised budget categories. However, the budget intentionally does not specify exact allocations toward the LTAC requests because OneRedmond wants to preserve flexibility for hotel stakeholders and Board advisors to determine final funding priorities.

Lorie Hoffman asked for clarification on whether the entire $250,000 request is reflected in the TPA budget proposed by OneRedmond. Those proposed allocations align with the Board's strategic direction. Audrey Fan elaborated by saying the relevant funding amounts have already been embedded into the broader budget categories, although the budget does not explicitly identify which amounts will ultimately be directed toward the LTAC-related initiatives. Fan stated that within the marketing and communications category, approximately $236,389 has been allocated overall, though not all of that amount corresponds directly to the LTAC requests. The website and marketing line item includes approximately $39,389, while the Green Rubino-related agency category contains approximately $72,000, allowing for flexibility should stakeholders decide to direct $35,000 toward the LTAC's public relations proposal. Similarly, the paid advertising category already contains $50,000, exceeding the LTAC's requested $30,000 contribution. The funds could be allocated flexibly depending upon Board direction and collaborative planning between OneRedmond and the LTAC.

Audrey Fan explained that the tourism development allocations already encompass partnerships such as Woodinville Wine Country, Seattle Theatre Group collaborations, and other co-sponsored arrangements. Transportation funding likewise includes the requested $70,000 allocation, the final distribution decisions remain subject to input from the Redmond Board advisors and hotel stakeholders. Those transportation funds could potentially be divided between the RedLink and ORCA card initiatives.

Chair Wade Hashimoto asked how much more of the recommended TPA contribution of approximately $180,000 would need to be allocated to make sure the OneRedmond budget is property funded. Jackie Lalor responded that the LTAC budgets are expected to be approved by mid-June. Staff had hopes to present some form of consensus recommendation to the LTAC during its June 2 meeting.

Lorie Hoffman emphasized the desire of the City of Bellevue staff was to achieve some level of consensus during the meeting due to the relatively tight timeline leading up to City Council review in July. The budget approval process involves a lengthy pre-Council preparation period, making it necessary to have the proposals substantially finalized within the next several weeks.

Cassandra Lieberman asked Audrey Fan to offer personal thoughts and suggestions to help initiate the conversation. In response, Audrey Fan summarized feedback gathered from extensive meetings held with Redmond hoteliers following receipt of the city memorandum earlier in the year. Regarding transportation funding, there was not enough data to yield a full consensus. Several hoteliers believed there was insufficient operational data available to justify immediately committing the full proposed $70,000 toward RedLink. Some stakeholders had asked whether a partial contribution might be possible rather than an all-or-nothing decision, though staff had indicated that a more immediate commitment was likely necessary. The situation was characterized as requiring to some degree of "leap of faith" because the program is still in its early stages and lacks extensive performance data. Some hoteliers also expressed concern that RedLink usage appears to trend more toward residential transportation needs rather than overnight tourism and visitor-related activity, which is a significant consideration for stakeholders evaluating whether tourism funds should support the program.

With regard to the agency and public relations discussions, Aubrey Fan explained that although the city has acknowledged that the roles of the DVA and Green Rubino have not yet been formally delineated in writing, OneRedmond remains committed to avoiding duplication of efforts between the agencies. DVA is particularly well suited for destinations that lack traditional tourism infrastructure such as large conference centers or headquarters hotels with extensive meeting space. DVA's is experienced in selling more challenging or nontraditional markets and has demonstrated a more resourceful and adaptable approach to destinations like Redmond. While acknowledging prior positive experiences working with Green Rubino, the final determination regarding agency funding priorities rests with the hotels themselves.

Audrey Fan explained that OneRedmond has previously provided supplemental support to the Experience Redmond and Bullseye Creative initiatives. For example, OneRedmond funded the creation of a Tour Connection microsite within the Experience Redmond platform to support destination sales efforts. OneRedmond also funded expanded dog tourism content, including additional guides, collateral materials, and enhancements to the existing niche tourism microsite. Jackie Lalor clarified that the pet tourism initiatives are already incorporated into the current Bullseye contract.

Continuing, Audrey Fan explained that advertising remains one of the highest priorities identified by the hotel stakeholders, which is why the OneRedmond budget already includes approximately $50,000 in advertising funding. Much of the discussion is centered not on whether funds exist within the budget, but rather on how those funds should ultimately be allocated. During the hotelier outreach process conducted during the formation of the TPA, many hotel stakeholders specifically expressed a desire to have a stronger voice in guiding tourism strategies and spending priorities. The TPA structure is intended to represent and amplify those hotelier perspectives. The increased engagement now occurring among multiple tourism-related organizations is ultimately positive for the hotel community because it encourages greater listening and responsiveness to stakeholder needs.

Cassandra Lieberman observed that the TPA contribution to LTAC will function as a supplemental funding source rather than the sole basis for the program, and indicated support for the initiative based on the success demonstrated thus far. RedLink is one area for which to advocate support. With regard to the public relations discussion, Cassandra Lieberman stated having been impressed by Green Rubino's work and liking the direction and initiatives the agency has pursued. An inclination was expressed toward eventually consolidating tourism promotion under a single agency representation model, though perhaps not immediately for 2027. It would be good to have a clear outline of what each agency is covering and which responsibilities will belong to Green Rubino versus DVA. DVA might possess particular expertise in certain niche areas.

Regarding the proposed $85,000 Bullseye Creative contribution, Cassandra Lieberman noted that the TPA already provides some support to Bullseye. Continued funding will be accepted provided the resources directly supported the hotelier priorities such as wine tourism and concert-related initiatives. General support was voiced for the broader concept of unifying tourism efforts under the Experience Redmond brand and creating a more cohesive tourism strategy overall.

Audrey Fan was asked if there were other areas in the budget from which funds could be pulled should there be a desire to move things around a bit. The response given was that additional time would be needed to review the budget in detail before providing a complete answer. The budget was intentionally constructed to support the priorities identified by stakeholders, but adjustments could be made if the Board directs OneRedmond to proceed differently.

Cassandra Lieberman reiterated support for the Experience Redmond brand and expressed appreciation for the efforts to create a more unified and cohesive tourism strategy across the various initiatives.

Kate Hudson returned to the earlier discussion regarding funding for the Remlinger Concert Series and referenced the prior the LTAC contribution of approximately $5,000. The new request is for $10,000, though there are substantial investments already being made in Tour Connection and related concert-oriented initiatives. The question asked was if some funds could potentially be shifted among those concert-related programs in order to accommodate the requested increase without requiring substantial new funding allocations. Audrey Fan explained that Tour Connection falls under destination sales and is focused on conferences and trade shows involving entertainment buyers, which directly supports group business opportunities for hotels. By contrast, the Remlinger Farm concert partnerships are categorized under tourism development because their purpose is to attract leisure overnight visitors who might attend concerts, extend their stays into weekends or weekdays, and explore Redmond while staying in local hotels. While both initiatives relate to entertainment tourism, they target different visitor segments and therefore occupy separate strategic budget categories. Supporting both categories reflects the broader strategic direction outlined in the tourism plan, which ultimately aims to evolve toward a single destination management organization structure similar to VisitBellevue. At present, however, the tourism framework consists of separate committees, advisory groups, and funding structures. Despite the organizational differences, all involved parties share the same overall mission of driving overnight visitation into Redmond.

Councilmember Kritzer expanded on the discussion regarding the long-term vision for a destination management organization and explained that the tourism strategic plan adopted by the city specifically contemplates the eventual creation of a unified destination management organization capable of cohesively coordinating tourism-related work across both the LTAC and the TPA. Until such an organization formally exists, however, the immediate goal is to align budgets and investments as closely as possible in order to scale up tourism advertising and other proven initiatives more effectively. The city budget will likely support the future development of such a destination management structure.

Cassandra Lieberman raised concerns regarding oversight and accountability for any TPA funds invested into the LTAC-supported initiatives. Some hotel stakeholders worry that once funds are transferred, the hotels might lose influence over how the resources are ultimately spent. The question asked was if there could be safeguards, conditions, or oversight mechanisms to ensure that TPA-funded dollars remain focused on programs benefiting tourism and hotel demand rather than unrelated initiatives. Philly Marsh stating that the requested TPA investments will be specifically earmarked for the outlined programs, including the Bullseye Creative and Green Rubino contracts. The city actively encourages continued hotelier engagement and input regarding tourism initiatives. The city views hotels as critical on-the-ground partners who directly observe visitor patterns and market trends. The city is already two years into implementation of the tourism strategic plan and anticipates updating or refreshing portions of the strategy, especially given the transformative impact of the new light rail connection to Seattle.

Returning directly to Cassandra Lieberman's question, Councilmember Kritzer reiterated that hotels are invited to participate in bi-monthly meetings where the staff report on campaign metrics, discus future work plans, and solicit feedback regarding the effectiveness of ongoing tourism initiatives in supporting the hotel demand. Hotel input remains an important component of evaluating which campaigns and strategies should continue or be adjusted in the future. The city has independently invested approximately $2 million from general fund resources into preparations and promotional efforts related to the upcoming World Cup. The investments are intended to position Redmond as a key destination for World Cup-related visitors and events. Enthusiasm was expressed regarding the opportunities and long-term lessons the city expects to gain from the substantial tourism investment. The funding has come from general city resources rather than LTAC tourism dollars.

Chair Wade Hashimoto asked the LTAC representatives if the proposed TPA contributions of approximately $180,000 represent a one-time request intended to help launch collaborative initiatives, or if the LTAC anticipates seeking ongoing TPA contributions in future years as well. Jackie Lalor responded that the LTAC hopes to continue partnering with the TPA on broad tourism contracts over the long term. The Bullseye Creative and Green Rubino agreements have specifically been identified as ideal opportunities for ongoing collaborative investment because both contracts support overarching tourism promotion activities benefiting the entire destination. RedLink funding might warrant a separate discussion in the future, but the tourism branding and public relations contracts have been selected with long-term partnerships in mind.

Henning Nopper asked how the tourism functions historically were funded before the LTAC began seeking TPA contributions. Jackie Lalor explained that the city independently funded the contracts and programs for many years using lodging tax revenues. However, when the TPA was created, the LTAC anticipated eventually developing collaborative funding partnerships that would allow both organizations to expand tourism promotion activities beyond what either entity could accomplish independently. Such collaboration did not fully materialize during the prior budget cycle because the TPA was still relatively new, but the LTAC views the current budget cycle as an opportunity to begin that partnership in earnest.

Henning Nopper indicated sensing some hesitation around revising the budget again after already having reduced it substantially. Audrey Fan acknowledged that the budget had already undergone significant revision based initially on updated reserve information, which required approximately $300,000 in reductions from earlier projections. After the LTAC's memorandum was received, additional adjustments were made to incorporate the city's requests and hotelier priorities. The current budget functions largely as a flexible template designed to support the broad categories that stakeholders have collectively identified as priorities, including marketing, destination sales, tourism development, analytics, and foundational data systems. While the overall funding categories are already established, the exact allocations within the categories could still be shifted and reworked depending on Board direction.

Henning Nopper returned to the RedLink discussion and asked if the city has data showing how much of the program's ridership consists of hotel guests versus local residents. Jackie Lalor said the preliminary data indicates approximately 13 percent of rides involve trips to or from hotels. The TPA's proposed $70,000 contribution represents only a small portion of the overall $660,000 program cost. The remainder is funded through non-tourism sources.

Seraphie Allen added that the program remains new and usage patterns could change substantially as the service matures, especially during the summer months. An openness was indicated toward adjusting future contribution levels as additional operations data becomes available.

Jackie Lalor said the city currently only tracks rides directly involving hotel pickups or drop-offs and cannot not yet determine how many visitors staying elsewhere or already within the system might also be using RedLink for destination-to-destination travel within the service area.

Crystal Pia asked if the city has any information indicating whether RedLink users are primarily corporate travelers, leisure visitors, or another category of rider. Saraphie Allen said Circuit, the transportation provider, has been collecting survey information from riders, although the data is not yet available for review. When users first sign up for the service, they complete a form similar to Bellevue's BellHop registration process which asks riders about the purpose of their visit. The city plans to implement an optional rider survey to better evaluate program success, rider behavior, and overall ridership trends. Highlighted was an operational initiative involving the training of RedLink drivers to become more knowledgeable about Redmond tourism offerings. Drivers will receive tourism-related information and training so they can share recommendations and information about Redmond attractions with passengers during rides. That type of direct interaction could become an additional tourism promotion tool.

Lorie Hoffman reiterated that a formal vote on the budget will occur at the June meeting. Staff nevertheless needs guidance regarding the Board's overall direction so they can continue developing the proposed budget.

Cassandra Lieberman voiced support for funding the entire the LTAC proposal. The only caveat indicated was the need to understand where shifts will occur in order to allow for the spending.

Lorie Hoffman encouraged the Board members to share their priorities within the larger buckets such as marketing and communications, destination sales, festivals and events, and the related areas. Doing so will help staff and the zone administrator better understand where members prefer to see any reallocations occur.

Kate Hudson returned to the earlier discussion regarding the Remlinger concert funding request and asked if the proposed additional $10,000 request is already included in the existing $30,000 TPA allocation, or whether it represents an additional request that will increase the total concert-related funding to $40,000. Jackie Lalor clarified that only $15,000 of the previously referenced $30,000 allocation has actually been committed to date, leaving approximately $15,000 still available for additional use.

Kate Hudson explained that the Remlinger request was the only aspect of the budget proposal that raised concern. OneRedmond previously received $5,000 for the concert initiative and is now requesting double that amount without providing substantial information regarding the outcomes or effectiveness of the earlier investment. Support was also for the broader budget proposals and for transportation funding, particularly given Bellevue's positive experience with the BellHop program. If budget reallocations become necessary, increasing support for RedLink will likely be a reasonable priority.

Henning Nopper agreed that the LTAC funding requests are generally reasonable and difficult to oppose. RedLink remains too new for definitive conclusions, but Bellevue experienced many of the same concerns and discussions when BellHop was first introduced. One of the primary concerns among hotel stakeholders involves ensuring that transportation resources funded by tourism dollars primarily benefit hotel guests and visitors rather than local residents or businesses. There is clearly a challenge involved with balancing the concerns while the program remains in its early stages. A concern was voiced regarding whether the TPA will ultimately retain sufficient funding to accomplish its own broader tourism objectives. Destination sales and marketing remain the most important priorities because attracting visitors requires first ensuring that people know about Redmond and understand what the destination offers. Tourism development initiatives such as festivals and events are valuable, but ultimately they are secondary to establishing strong destination awareness and effective marketing. Any future budget adjustments will need to preserve adequate funding for destination marketing and sales efforts in order to achieve the Board's long-term goals. Even so, full support was voiced for LTAC's overall funding request.

Kim Saunderson stated strong support for moving toward a unified destination marketing organization structure and viewed the proposed investments into Green Rubino and Bullseye Creative as important intermediary steps toward achieving that long-term goal. Stressed was the importance of ensuring that tourism marketing and public relations efforts remain focused on generating hotel occupancy, commonly described as "heads in beds." The proposed collaborative investments are a necessary progression toward greater coordination between the tourism entities, though there is a need for ongoing conversations about accountability and strategic direction. The highest priorities center on marketing and communications investments, strategic partnerships, and grant programs supporting events within the Redmond area. While generally supportive of the RedLink proposal, caution was expressed regarding support for that component. Additional clarity is needed regarding the funding amount and operational details. Also echoed was the earlier concern about understanding what changes or reductions will be necessary within the existing OneRedmond budget if all of the LTAC requests are approved.

Chair Wade Hashimoto agreed that the Board appeared to be moving toward broad support for the LTAC's proposals, particularly in regard to the marketing and destination sales initiatives. Speaking personally, Chair Wade Hashimoto voiced support for those categories and emphasized their importance in attracting visitors and communicating the region's tourism offerings effectively. While also supportive of RedLink, the Chair acknowledged some reservations because of the program's early stage and the evolving ridership data. Transportation programs such as BellHop and RedLink have contributed positively to community identity and regional pride by demonstrating tangible visitor services funded through tourism initiatives. The transportation services are beneficial additions to the overall tourism ecosystem, provided ongoing oversight and monitoring continue as additional operational data becomes available.

Crystal Pia confirmed support for the proposed initiatives, including RedLink, while acknowledging that the program remains new and represents a significant funding request. Additional survey data and operational feedback will be valuable as the program continues developing. Emphasized was the importance of understanding where budget reductions or reallocations will occur within the OneRedmond budget if all the LTAC requests are ultimately funded. Increased coordination could potentially produce cost savings over time while strengthening Redmond's identity as a destination. The shared objective should be increasing overnight hotel stays. Further discussions regarding the budget allocations and the implementation details will be important moving forward.

Chair Wade Hashimoto thanked the Board members for providing thoughtful input regarding the proposed the LTAC support and TPA collaboration.

Councilmember Kritzer expressing appreciation for the Board's consideration of the LTAC's requests and stated enthusiasm regarding the future possibility of bringing the tourism entities together in a more unified manner to strengthen tourism development efforts in Redmond.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Visit Bellevue Q1 Report
B. OneRedmond Q1 Report

A motion to edit the agenda to move the presentations on both reports to the next meeting was made by Kim Saunderson. The motion was seconded by Kate Hudson and the motion carried unanimously.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Wade Hashimoto adjourned the meeting at 2:49 p.m.