CALL TO ORDER
Mayor Don Anderson called the meeting to order at 8:13 a.m. Mayor Anderson and new City Manager John Caulfield provided introductions to the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC).

ROLL CALL
LTAC Present: Tasha Bishop, Holiday Inn Express; Mario Lee, Candlewood Suites; Phillip Raschke, Lakewood Playhouse; Lakewood Mayor Don Anderson, Chair; and Linda Smith, Lakewood Chamber of Commerce

Staff Present: Economic Development Manager Ellie Chambers-Grady, Economic Development Specialist Becky Newton, and Administrative Assistant Melody Perrussel

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 17, 2012
The minutes of December 17, 2012, were unanimously approved at the last meeting.

LODGING TAX GRANT CHANGES EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2013
Assistant City Attorney Matthew Kaser highlighted three new State law changes that were effective on July 1, 2013.

1. Under the new legislation, LTAC recommendations can be passed or denied by the City Council only. Recommendation amounts and program identification can not be changed by our Council. This committee’s role is significantly broadened, which is fairly unique to city boards and committees. LTAC alone is the fund gatekeeper.

2. The new law is fairly broad and applies to programs designed to attract tourists if the LTAC can find a way the program will bring them here.

3. Reporting requirements have been shifted to be the grantee’s responsibility.

Mayor Anderson added that basically this committee decides the amounts recommended, and the City Council says yes or no.

2013 GRANTS STATUS & FUND BALANCE
LTAC reviewed the 2012 Final Lakewood Jurisdictional Report showing last year’s lodging tax grant payments. The 2013 uncommitted balance effective August 31, 2013, is: $119,932.28 plus $200,000.00 which has been placed in a safe high-yield account.

The city estimates 2014 lodging tax grant fund earnings to be $430,000.

GRANT PROPOSAL PRESENTATIONS
Mayor Anderson asked LTAC how they conduct presentation interviews. He plans to advise each candidate of the ten minute presentation and five minute question and answer period before they begin.
Economic Development Manager Ellie Chambers-Grady stated all organizations who inquired about laptop availability for PowerPoint presentations were asked to bring 11 paper copies instead to save on set-up time. She stated that Lakewood moved to a new 2013 grant application which was closely aligned with Pierce County’s. More regional jurisdictions plan to move in that same direction in 2014. City Manager Caulfield decided to allow LTAC to review all grant applications so it was the committee alone making all the final funding decisions.

**Historic Fort Steilacoom Association**

Joseph Lewis, Secretary, said his organization’s four buildings are the oldest structures in Lakewood and date from the U.S. Army’s occupation in 1858. The houses still sit at their original locations on the grounds of Western State Hospital.

The Historic Fort Steilacoom Association uses print, an online website, banners across Steilacoom Boulevard, and now Facebook to market. They celebrate Armed Forces Day by sending their antique cannon to Fort Lewis to be shot.

Prior to his death, State Representative Mike Carroll negotiated a quarter million dollar grant to keep the Association’s building maintenance up, and Mr. Lewis listed painting, exterminators, fixing the foundation of one house, and new fire and burglary alarms as currently needed. The Association is working to get a 10-15 year lease with the Department of Social & Health Services to be paid with volunteer labor. He thanked Representative Carroll for thinking of his organization's needs.

Mr. Lewis suggested that Lakewood attractions get together to create a brochure showing all the fun things to do here.

Since this is the Civil War centennial, more visitors are coming to see how people lived back then. Fort Lewis soldiers come to learn about the Army’s history.

Mr. Lewis stated he thinks the Association’s best marketing is to local businesses and retail. They partner with the Lakewood Historical Society & History Museum and Grave Concerns. All their grant funds are spent locally for advertising and marketing.

**Lakewood Economic Development Promotion & Outreach**

Ms. Chambers-Grady stated that about five years ago, Lakewood’s image was not positive. She asked management to start a media campaign to re-brand the city with positive stories about businesses and events. She arranged for a Seattle firm, with a top reputation, to start *telling our story* to see what happened.

Staff works directly with the media firm to write and publish stories, which are created around Key Messages the city wants to be widely known. In the beginning, it was difficult to get newspapers and magazines to use our releases, but we now get more stories in print every year.

One of the primary reasons we need positive media is that Lakewood has a small middle class, and tourist dollars can help fill in the demographic gap that exists because of lacking a larger middle income group. We can map tourism. If tourists have a great time here, they talk about it. By partnering with other partners, we can tell our story as a positive place to visit. An example of this is the Fort Steilacoom Dog Park.
We get events and send media releases for publishing. It’s almost like the media is hungry for our news. The city pays separately for stories around economic development out of the city economic development budget. Tourism stories are paid out of the city Hotel/Motel budget.

Staff is working to reshape how people think about our community. Golfers will be coming to play the Chambers Bay Golf Course next year, and the U.S. Open is coming in 2015. We want to get the message out that Lakewood is a great place to visit and stay. Tourism is important to the city. Tourism brings people returning on repeated trips.

Staff is working on a great opportunity to promote the International District with banners and signs. We are the only city on the West Coast to have three large cultural markets so closely spaced.

**Northwest Cultural Foundation – 2014 International Friendship Festival**

Ms. Kyong An talked to LTAC through her Korean translator, Kathy. She stated that as much as they’ve been focusing on festival cultural entertainment, they want to bring more international performers and visitors to Lakewood.

In the past, visitors from out of the local area didn’t spend the nights here as much. She wants to invite more people from out of the area to encourage more overnight stays and wants to make suggestions to boost our local economy through the festival. Earlier, overnight stays in Lakewood and restaurants were limited because our businesses didn’t want to make good deals.

In May-2014, 27 foreign visitors will come from Korea to stay and eat for about ten days in Lakewood. They are working with hotels and motels to make arrangements. The visitors are all professionals and entertainers. She’s not sure if all their lodging will be in Lakewood.

The 2014 International Friendship Festival will be in May-2014 at Clover Park High School, pending final work on the dates. The last festival she created was in 2010. Her total 2013 budget is $170,000 and comes from bringing exchange students from primarily Korea. They studied at local colleges in primarily language-related classes. Exchange students will help at the 2014 festival. The exchange students weren’t able to come to a good deal with local hotels and motels, so they stayed in private homes.

**Asia Pacific Cultural Center (APCC) – 4th Annual Samoa Cultural Day**

Ms. Faaluaina Pritchard, Executive Director, told LTAC that this is her third request to them for grant funds. Her organization held their festival in Tacoma in 2013 because turf was being replaced at Harry Lang High School. The turf job is complete, and APCC wants to have their 2014 event in Lakewood.

Her 3rd Annual Samoa Cultural Day in Tacoma was successful and drew about 5,000 attendees. She is expecting another 1,000 to attend the 2014 celebration. Her goal is bringing people together and teaching people about the Samoan culture.

The 4th Annual Samoa Cultural Day will run from Thursday-July 3rd through Saturday-July 5th with the main festival being the last day. Examples of where attendees travelled from this year are: New York, California, Oregon, Washington D.C., and Vancouver, Canada. Samoan retailers attended with their families, and a lot of people stayed overnight and ate in Lakewood restaurants.
People usually come to the Cultural Day and stay longer to visit and eat. A LTAC hotelier stated an American Samoan stayed at his Lakewood hotel.

**Tacoma South Sound Sports (TSSS)**

Tim Waer, Executive Director, relayed that his organization has totally changed over to Tacoma South Sounds Sports and the branding resulted in unique events that are branded with them. TSSS gets Tourism Promotion Area funds and also work with local jurisdictions.

TSSS is working on our Triathlon, which is attached to SummerFEST, with Lakewood’s Parks Department. They work to market events and try new locations. When an event is not tied to some organization, then they can move forward in new ways.

$50,000 is the baseline for keeping the services the city has today, some of which is for the Triathlon. The $5,000 growth is for new events at Fort Steilacoom Park and Pierce College, and increased uses in Lakewood with Triple Crown Sports. The other part is a venue development piece. “Any city who’s not talking about working on (creating new) venues is losing money?” TSSS is working with Metro Parks to rejuvenate the Sera Athletic Fields. They are bringing in reoccurring events and looking for new events to keep fields busy. They are also being more active to foster sports.

A LTAC member said she thinks it would be great to have a 3-on-3 basketball tournament in the unused parking lot behind Barnes & Noble in the Towne Center.

Mr. Waer said TSSS staff worked with city Parks staff on every element of the Triathlon and have sponsored multi-day soccer events in numerous local locations.

**Lakewood Historical Society & History Museum (LHS)**

Vice President Glen Spieth, Treasurer Gary Fowler, and President Becky Huber provided introductions and handouts of their activities. The LHS was formed in 1998, have 380+ members and 600+ Friends of the Society. LHS developed a business sponsorship this past year and have permanent and rotating displays along with an artist’s corner.

Their visitor count increased this past year and there will be a new military display in May-2014 as well as continuous updates. They have monthly programs at St Mary’s Church, booths at festivals and fairs, and are participating in all local events.

Mr. Spieth stated they have completed ten permanent, heavy, bronze markers with two more in the works. They are working with the city’s Landmarks & Heritage Board on historical sites and assisting with a driving tour brochure along Steilacoom Boulevard that shows historic details and the placement of future markers.

Mr. Spieth indicated LHS received a $3,000 Pierce County grant and is working to raise more of their own funds each year. Their annual fund drive is out now, and LHS is doing better to close the gap of what they earn and spend each year.

**Daffodilians Inc. dba Daffodil Festival**

A presentation time was reserved when it was requested, but no representative attended. LTAC waited for the presenter and moved to the next one when they arrived.
Tacoma Regional Convention + Visitor Bureau (TRCVB)
President + CEO Bennish Brown noted that TRCVB uses all approved grant funding to draw tourists in collaboration with many partners and the Lakewood Chamber. He stated 2013 has been a success with contracts signed bringing two events here; the Hope Summit at Clover Park Technical College’s McGavick Center and training at Pacific Lutheran College which will lap over into Lakewood.

Mr. Brown stated there is a lot of competition battling for tourism customers and the Pierce County region places fifth out of six in Washington, even behind Spokane, at about $1.6 million.

TRCVB utilizes direct one-to-one sales with Meeting Planners, Tour Operators, at trade shows, site visits and at other activities to secure reservations. They have created a community brand and promote our region with advertising and on their website. TRCVB links Meeting Planners with enhanced destination values and extend delegate stays to improve our resulting economic impact. TRCVB partners to provide visitor services and affordable training as well as secures media coverage of compelling tourism stories in around Lakewood and Pierce County visits.

The TRCVB is asking for a 10% increase in 2014 grant funds to assist in driving three times as many unique visitors to our region. They are moving away from a membership model and will highlight all tourism destinations found in our region as well as continue to improve their search engine, website traffic, and digital outlet capabilities.

Lakewood Chamber of Commerce
Linda Smith, Present/CEO, advised she has been blessed in coming from a Convention & Visitor Bureau background and promoting local businesses during the past 15 years. The Chamber publishes on their website and in hard copy local monthly and seasonal events calendars showing what there is to see and do in our area. They produce guides relating to where to eat, sleep, and stay overnight locally.

Ms. Smith talked about her Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) Newcomers Orientations, where servicemen and their families are welcomed to our region and given goodie bags filled with ideas of what to do locally and restaurant discounts. She stated that soldiers have been a ‘key’ to local tourism.

-Chamber staffs created, produced, and are running 600 30-second TV spots on Comcast about Lakewood, targeted for showing 30-45 miles away and farther, and are participating in discussions with restaurants and lodging around the 2015 U.S. Open.

Mario Lee, Candlewood, stated younger military contractors often stay in Lakewood while older ones often stay in Lacey.

Lakewood Sister Cities Association (LSCA)
Connie Coleman-Lacadie, President, introduced new LSCA member Soonyoung Redden. She talked about the 2013 festival, the South Korean entertainers her group brought over, their use of local vendors, the support of partners in providing media blasts, and the money spent in Lakewood on food and lodging.

LSCA is working with Lakewood Sister City Okinawa, Japan, to secure entertainers for the 2014 International Festival to be held at Pierce College on April 25th through 27th. They are partnering with the Lakewood Arts Commission to create a diverse, free, three
day event. Ms. Coleman-Lacadie estimated this year’s event attendance at 1,000 with expectations for an increase in 2014.

Discussion ensued on the wonderful Okinawa drumming group performance sponsored by LSCA earlier this year.

**Lakewood Parks, Farmers Market**
Recreation Coordinator Amanda Richardson and Farmers Market Manager Arielle Carney distributed purple bags which were used as marketing lures on the first day of Lakewood’s 2013 Farmers Market on Tuesday - June 4th. The year-old pilot project grew from eleven weeks with sales of over $25,000 in 2012 to 16 weeks with sales of over $130,000 in 2013.

The 2013 market ran on Tuesdays from June 4th-September 17th with live entertainment and cooking/canning demonstrations every other week. This was the first year to be able to accept WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program checks for low income families and seniors and allowed an even larger customer base from throughout our community to have access to fresh local fruits and vegetables.

The market brings visitors to the Towne Center, provides a fun community atmosphere, and encourages individuals to shop more here. Twelve percent of market vendors travel over 175 miles to participate in our and other regional markets each week. This generates overnight stays here over the 16-week market season.

Ms. Richardson indicated they believe a new and large banner hung over Bridgeport Way would bring more people to the market. They expect to have St. Clare Hospital’s sponsorship in 2014 and are working to obtain additional sponsors for next year.

**Lakewood Parks, SummerFEST 2014 Triathlon**
Lakewood’s Triathlon began in 2012 as a collaborative project between city staff and Tacoma South Sound Sports Commission to complement SummerFEST’s two-day festival. It was successful, and the 120 or so participants praised the event and city staff that planned and worked on it.

The 2013 Triathlon had the benefit of ten partners along with more planning and marketing time and elements. In 2014, Parks, Recreation & Community Services Director Mary Dodsworth stated they want to separate the Triathlon from SummerFEST to allow it an opportunity to grow and be highlighted as a unique, regional event. They expect to have the same level or more of support and sponsorship. She added that if they can get a featured super star in 2014, they can build the event to two days with more marketing to the military and the addition of a vendor fair.

Lakewood’s Triathlon is already developing a reputation as a destination event with the course, pre-race and post-race elements, and event atmosphere creating a positive perception. This is also the only urban Sprint Triathlon in the area that occurs on the second weekend in July.

**Lakewood Parks, SummerFEST 2014**
Recreation Coordinator Amanda Richardson relayed that 2014 will be the 12th annual SummerFEST. Staff decided to go back to a one-day festival, beginning next year, combined with multi-day athletic events. They found that a two-day festival doesn’t encourage a lot of overnight attendees and the operational cost of the event is much higher.
SummerFEST includes all the fun things that people want such as 125 food, art, and music vendors. Staff hopes for 14,000 attendees next year if the weather cooperates. Discussion ensued on the great support provided to SummerFEST by JBLM; Ms. Dodsworth will ask if the military wants to access to our vendors for their Freedom Fair.

SummerFEST 2014 will be on July 12th and 13th. A competitive sports tournament will run from Friday-July 11th through Sunday-July 13th at Fort Steilacoom Park.

**Lakewold Playhouse, Marketing**
John Munn, Managing Artistic Director, and James Venturini, Developer of Advertising, Marketing and Grants, passed out their redesigned 75th Anniversary Brochure highlighting contact information for the city’s lodging in a cleaner format. They displayed recent postcards, newsletters, bookmarks and other attractive marketing tools the Playhouse is using to bring in new customers.

The Playhouse plans to provide Lakewood hotel/motel contact information in their newsletters, brochures, inserts and on a new sign in their lobby to encourage more overnight stays. Their *Shop, Eat, Stay, Play* message is prominently shown on all printed pieces and in their electronic promotion and they have seen corresponding growth between hard copies mailed and play attendees. Their education program is growing, and family members are attending to see their grandchildren perform.

The Lakewood Playhouse has invested in new, more comfortable theater seats and is working to fill all of them. Mr. Munn stated they could not expand their many programs without city support.

**Lakewold Gardens**
Stephanie Walsh, Executive Director, relayed that Lakewold Gardens values the financial consistency and the ability to try new things to lure people. Their research keeps saying it’s about the visual: television spots and garden brochures. They used the 2013 elongated summer television shows to promote a longer Garden viewing season. It’s not just about spring flowers at Lakewold.

They have found time for effective attendee tracking by county, by state, and by country. They average between 30-60 tours per year with 37 in 2013 so far. Visitors from all over the world who could have chosen Canadian gardens to view have travelled to Lakewold Gardens instead. Brides and grooms return to revisit where they were married. The docent program is going well, and Lakewold staff work hard to create a great experience for everyone.

Lakewold received a generous contribution and will be adding an Asian-inspired garden next to Gravelly Lake Drive. 2014 is their 25th Anniversary, and a new picnic area adjacent to their Garden Shop has been created to encourage people to stay longer.

Ms. Walsh described working with four other gardens to create a new 2014 brochure. Lakewold’s coffee table books are available for sale in the Garden Shop, and their next annual event is the Beautiful Tables.

**Lakewood Economic Development, Program & Personnel**
Ms. Chambers-Grady advised LTAC that Economic Development staff started logging their lodging tax grant work a few years earlier. The amount requested is a reflection of
staff time worked with grants: putting together meetings, Noticing grant availability in The News Tribune, working with the grant application, documents about the process going to the City Council, yearly contracts, and review of reimbursement requests and their authorization for payment.

Due to changes in the Washington State law effective July 1, 2013, this year has had additional staff time working with the city’s Legal Department to clarify issues and deliverables of the new law. The requested amount is what was budgeted in the 2013-2014 bi-annual budgets. The consequence for funding the program and personnel at less than 100% is unknown, and could mean less hands working on grants next year.

**Lakewood Economic Development, Promotion & Outreach**

Ms. Chambers-Grady advised that the city contracted with a media consultant 4-5 years ago to work closely with staff to evolve perceptions and raise visibility of the city among travelers and tourism influencers. Ms. Chambers-Grady remembered that it was difficult to get Lakewood stories published in the beginning because of the perception that our city was dangerous.

Perceptions of Lakewood have evolved to where our stories and news releases are now welcomed by the media. Our strategy is to encourage tourism through a targeted and proactive media relations campaign. This effort continuously defines specific topics for the media based on travel trends, such as Lakewood’s recreational opportunities, quick trips and canine travel.

The media consultant pursues local, regional and national media including relevant daily papers, plus consumer and lifestyle publications. They research, write, and distribute tourism news, work with the Tacoma Regional Convention + Visitors Bureau and respond to media inquiries relating to tourism and connecting reporters, writers, and editors with appropriate staff and/or local businesses.

The city also contracts with the same media consultant to evolve perceptions, raise visibility of the city among target industries, and promote Lakewood’s economic development in the media. The tourism and economic development deliverables are tracked, and paid separately and out of different funds. The requested amount is for the tourism portion of the 2014 contract.

**GRANT FUNDING DECISIONS**

Lakewood Finance Manager Mary Ann Norquist joined the meeting to assist in tracking LTAC’s funding recommendations. Group discussion ensued on the 2012 hotel/motel final earnings being $487,782 and the 2013 estimated earnings being $430,000 and based on doubling the first two quarters of the year. The city receives its share of lodging tax from Washington State two months after it is earned. Ms. Chambers-Grady instructed the city has recently closed some substandard hotels which, we can see from the estimated earnings, had obviously been paying their lodging taxes.

Mr. Lee informed that Candlewood Suites’ April and May 2013 earnings were low because of the sequestration. He also expects October’s Federal Government’s shutdown to hurt his hotel’s earnings, as contractors are going home.

Group discussion ensued on setting their 2014 recommendation top funding limit. Following are the 2014 LTAC recommendations and not in any order:
Historic Fort Steilacoom Association: Full funding recommended. The Association is doing a good job of promoting their historic sites, re-enactments, and presentations. A member suggested they add marketing to folks at least 30-45 miles away.

Lakewood Historical Society & History Museum: LTAC appreciated the outreach increase and growth of the Society this past year and that it continues to improve their programs. It was agreed to recommend full funding for this organization.

Lakewood Playhouse: LTAC thought the Playhouse was doing a great job in producing professional and entertaining plays and encouraging overnight stays in Lakewood. They hesitated giving more than last year’s amount because the grant fund’s lower than expected earnings, and instead recommended funding the same amount as 2013.

Lakewold Gardens: LTAC talked about how much this organization contributes to our city and appreciated their skills at leveraging and partnering with so many. They recommended full funding.

Lakewood Chamber of Commerce: LTAC appreciated the Chamber’s community outreach and Visitor Center. They recommended full funding.

Lakewood Sister Cities Association: LTAC was happy the International Festival was moving to be part of a three-day event. They indicated there are several festivals requests, and the LTAC hoteliers weren’t aware of overnight stays book in their hotels because of them. They recommended funding the same amount as in 2013.

Tacoma Regional Convention + Visitor Bureau: LTAC thought Mr. Brown gave a polished presentation, and they did get overnight stays due to TRCVB work. Because the estimated grant fund earnings are predicted to be lower than expected, they recommended funding the same amount as in 2013.

Tacoma South Sound Sports Commission: The two LTAC hoteliers stated they rented overnight stays because of the events this organization creates. LTAC recommends funding the same amount as in 2013.

Asia Pacific Cultural Center: LTAC asked if APCC had their 2012 event in Lakewood. Ms. Chambers-Grady responded yes, and reminded them APCC didn’t apply for 2013 funds because Harry Lang Stadium’s turf was being replaced. A member said they hold weekly events and movies; a LTAC hotelier thought July can be a difficult time to look for hotel lodging. Members thought APCC will hold a 2014 event, but with the lower than expected estimated earnings, they recommended allocating $5,000. They hoped she would find additional funding from another source.

Northwest Cultural Foundation: A member talked about going to an earlier Friendship Festival and didn’t see many attendees. The two LTAC hoteliers hadn’t seen any lodgers for this event. The requester talked about not being able to get a ‘good deal’ from Lakewood hotels, and LTAC was unsure how low the proposed room rates had been. LTAC decided to table this request for 2014 since the estimated earnings were lower than expected.

Daffodil Festival dba Daffodilians: Members recalled seeing the Daffodil Princesses in more places these past couple of years. The LTAC hoteliers didn’t see a direct benefit from the Daffodil Festival for the city. They decided to table the request for 2014.
A LTAC hotelier stated she gets reservations and lodgers from the TRCVB and TSSS events. The other LTAC hotelier agreed and added that the Chamber also sends some.

**Lakewood Parks, Farmers Market**: LTAC talked about the Parks Department wanting more poles and banners. They stated staff has done a good job complying with Council requests. They extended the days and hours, found sponsorships, and some merchants in the Towne Center have reported increased sales on Market days. The volume of sales at the Market isn’t necessarily related to an economic development influence. At $10,000 per year, LTAC thought there will still be a Market. Because of the low estimated grant earnings, LTAC chose to hold the 2014 at $10,000.

**Lakewood Parks, SummerFEST 2014 and Triathlon**: LTAC agreed to hold the line at the 2013 funding levels for these two events due to the low estimated lodging tax grant earnings.

**Lakewood Economic Development, Program & Personnel and Promotion & Outreach**: LTAC discussed what may happen if the program and personnel weren’t funded, and that it is unknown if there would be a 2014 grant program without approval. They thought about the reduced funding on other requests. They appreciated the positive tourism stories and media attention given to Lakewood.

LTAC talked about grant funding that had been spent on these two requests for the past 4-5 years but they had been unaware of it. With the state law changes, these two have to come before the committee for approval. They decided to approve both requests and have the funding come out of the uncommitted fund balance, which is where it has been coming out of all these years. They felt it would be unfair to ask other organizations to be funded less when this is the first time LTAC has known about these expenses.

LTAC discussed their recommendations. A LTAC hotelier asked Mayor Anderson if he could explain the proposals to the City Council. He responded yes: Revenues will increase as hotels are built, and he appreciated the insights on working with the hotel/motel budget.

Phillip Raschke motioned, and Tasha Bishop seconded, to approve the LTAC recommendations as decided at today’s meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

**OTHER BUSINESS**
Mayor Anderson relayed LTAC will be notified when the date is set for their recommendations to go to the Lakewood Council. He thanked members for their service.

**ADJOURNMENT**
Mayor Anderson adjourned the meeting at 2:39 p.m.
2014 LAKEWOOD LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS
October 2, 2013

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** tour