Minutes of the Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Lava Hot Springs, Idaho held Monday, April 11, 2011 at 5:30 p.m., Lava City Hall, 115 West Elm Street, Lava Hot Springs, Idaho.

Present: Marshall Burgin, Mayor
Rita Anderson, Councilperson
Phil Beeson, Councilperson
Newt Lowe, Councilperson
Cathy Sher, Councilperson

Guests: Mike Vice, Evelee Hill, Mark Lowe, Corey Leafty and Vicky Lyon

The mayor called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to consider the 1% tourism enhancement fund proposals and that each presenter will be given 3 minutes to present their proposal.

1% Tourism Enhancement Proposals
A) Lava Chamber of Commerce Marketing Project – Evelee Hill Rush, Project Presenter and Chamber Representative

Evelee Hill reported that she had downloaded the minutes from when the proposal was initially presented. She said that she would try to address the concerns that were brought up at that meeting. She addressed the concern that the committee was mostly lodgers and reported that there are 84 Chamber of Commerce members and 38 (46%) of the members are lodgers. Of the 38 members that are lodgers, 13 (35%) are outside of the city limits. The ones outside the city limits are not required to collect the local option tax. Several of the lodgers outside the city are not even in the 83246 zip code area.

Another concern that had been brought out was that the committee had not gotten enough bids or information. She stated that perhaps they should have submitted all the bid documents that they had received. Ms. Hill presented information on some of the bids which the committee had received, one of which was Duo from Logan, UT with a bid of $1,800 per month, another from Total Destination Management the bid was from $55,000 to $80,000. She assured the council that the committee did explore many consultants.

Another question that the council had was why they hadn’t considered an agency from Idaho. She stated that Lava’s largest population base is in Utah and the stats show that most of Lava’s customers come from Utah; therefore the committee tried to find an agency from Utah because they would know the Utah marketing the best.

The council wanted to hear all three proposals before making a decision on funding.

B) Lava Chamber of Commerce Seasonal Banner Project – Mark Lowe, project Presenter and Chamber Representative.

Mark Lowe presented the proposal to purchase seasonal banners and brackets to be attached to the East Main Street decorative street lights. The company recommends that there be two (2) brackets. The banners last much longer when there are two (2) brackets. The Chamber feels that the banners at Christmas and for Fire and Ice dress
up Main Street and don’t infringe on private property. The Chamber proposed purchasing four (4) additional sets of seasonal banners (spring, summer, fall, winter) which will make a five (5) banner rotation including Fire & Ice. The banners make the town more attractive and friendlier. Banner sizes 25 x 36 and 25 x 42 are available. Councilperson Beeson questioned which size they are requesting. Mr. Lowe stated that the size would be up to the city’s discretion. The brackets will be banded on to the poles. The city would own the banners. It would be to the city’s discretion if they will change the banners or hire someone to change them. It was the feeling that the banners should be on each pole. The city and the chamber will work together on the design of the banners.

The mayor stated that three minutes was not sufficient time to discuss the proposals therefore he offered to give Ms. Hill additional time to present information on the marketing proposal after the other proposals were presented.

Multiple bids were received. The material is very durable with a 2 year guarantee unless displayed seasonal and then 5 year guarantee. The chamber has a storage area which could be utilized to store the banners. Maintenance needs to be a joint effort between the city and the chamber.

C) Lava Chamber of Commerce Search Engine Optimization Project – Mark Lowe, Project Presenter and Chamber Representative.
Mark Lowe presented the proposal on a search engine optimization project. The chamber is proposing to contract with Web Impakt which is the original designer of the chamber’s website. The website is very useful in getting return customers that search for Lava Hot Springs. The next step is to do a search engine optimization which will link people to the chamber’s website when they are not looking specifically for Lava Hot Springs and search for: recreation in Idaho, vacation in Utah, hot springs, etc. The search engine would bring them to the chamber website.

Mr. Lowe reported that the chamber requested proposes from several consultants. Web Impakt guarantees that if the chamber does not see results within the first eight (8) months, they will finish out the year free of charge. Mr. Lowe and Vicky Lyon voiced that the company did a great job on the chamber’s website and the company has a great rapport with the chamber. There will be some ongoing maintenance after the project is up and running. The maintenance will be turned over to Ann Yearsly, webmaster. Mrs. Lyon stated that this project is a natural progression for the marketing proposal. It would be a great tool for the community.

Councilperson Sher stated that she attended a chamber meeting when Web Impakt was getting the website up and running and they seemed very agreeable to helping the webmaster get up to speed. Cory Leafty stated that Web Impakt has been very good to work with.

A - continued) Lava Chamber of Commerce Marketing Project – Evelee Hill Rush, Project Presenter and Chamber Representative
Ms. Hill was given a few additional minutes for her presentation. She addressed concerns regarding having her own personal focus group. She reported that she had reservations in her lodging for two weekends in November; therefore she offered
several of her customers that had stayed in her facilities 15 times or more a free weekend. She required each of them to complete a questionnaire on their impression on Lava Hot Springs. She shared some of the comments from the questionnaire.

Ms. Hill also reported that she had questioned Sun Valley about why they had chosen the marketing firm they did. She was told that it was because they had some past experience with the firm and the firm is in the market area that Sun Valley wants to attract. She reported that she has Sun Valley’s whole marketing proposal which can be shared as a resource with the marketing firm Lava hires. She reported that the Sun Valley marketing plan is eight hundred thousand ($800,000) dollars. She suggested that the city fund the first phase of the study and then see how they like what the firm has produced for Lava Hot Springs and then proceed with the next phase if pleased.

Councilperson Beeson questioned the Chamber of Commerce’s support of the marketing committee. Vicky Lyon, Chamber of Commerce president, stated that the search engine optimization should come first and will lead to the marketing plan. Evelee Hill and Mark Lowe stated that concurrent search engine optimization and the marketing plan projects would be beneficial to the community.

Councilperson Anderson stated that there needs to be a concerted effort to make sure that Lava’s businesses, streets, etc. are clean and attractive before actions are taken to increase tourism. Mark Lowe stated that possibly the chamber needs to look at the IdahoSt program which is to train the front line workers on customer service. The group discussed other possible solutions such as: a rating system, inspections before the business license is renewed each year, proof of insurance, etc.

Mayor Burgin commented that businesses have to be able to make money in order to make improvements.

A motion was made by Councilperson Sher to fund the Lodging Development Committee proposal at $14,000; Seasonal Banner proposal at $9,329.40; and Search Engine Optimization proposal at $12,000. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Anderson. All voted aye, unanimous.

The mayor reported that the Center Street project has been funded and the street will be totally rebuilt.

Adjournment
A motion was made by Councilperson Lowe to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilperson Sher. All voted aye, unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

Trish Avery, Transcriber

Marshall N. Burgin, Mayor

Canda L. Dimick, City Clerk (proof read)

Approved May 12, 2011