

W. G. C.

AGENDA COVER MEMO

Date: February 9, 2005
TO: Lane County Board of Commissioners
DEPARTMENT: Public Works, Parks Division
PRESENTED BY: Todd Winter, Parks Division Manager

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: **IN THE MATTER OF ALLOCATING \$70,000 IN TRANSIENT ROOM TAX SPECIAL PROJECT FUNDS TO PUBLIC WORKS PARKS DIVISION, FUND 216, FOR AN E-COMMERCE PROJECT TO IMPLEMENT AN ONLINE RESERVATION SYSTEM FOR PARKS.**

I. MOTION

Move to authorize the allocation of \$70,000 in TRT Special Project Funds to Public Works, Parks Division Fund 216 for an e-commerce project to implement an online reservation system for Parks.

II. ISSUE OR PROBLEM

Lane County Parks operates three overnight campgrounds at Baker Bay Park, Richardson Park, and Harbor Vista Park. Additionally, Parks Division has fourteen reservable picnic shelters in Armitage, Richardson, Baker Bay, Hendricks and Orchard Point parks. Marinas are maintained at Richardson, Orchard Point, and Baker Bay parks as well.

The only methods currently available for citizens to make reservations are by telephone or in-person contact with the Parks Division office or Campground Host. Due to the limited hours staff and hosts can be available to the public, as well as a countywide strategic effort to improve e-commerce, an online reservation system is a high priority for the Parks Division.

III. DISCUSSION

A. Background

Public Works strategic objectives include implementation of an e-government initiative to provide round-the-clock online information and services. Monitoring, evaluating and improving service to the customer are also high priorities for the department. Parks Division has been exploring the application of e-commerce in the parks system for the past two years. There is significant potential for improved customer service, better data collection, increased occupancy/tourism and staff efficiencies with the development of an online reservation system.

State Parks, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other government agencies have been using online campground reservations systems for several years. Lane County is far behind comparable parks organizations in the e-commerce area. This project would afford us the opportunity to come in line with the current industry standards in this area.

In the first two weeks of camping reservations for the 2005 season, approximately 200 reservations have been received via in-person or telephone contact with customers. It is our belief that if reservations were

available through an online system, this number would be significantly increased and provide greater customer satisfaction and convenience.

B. Analysis

Parks Division is a Special Revenue Fund, which must continually balance the operational needs and customer desires. There is a strong interest from Parks Division and the public for increased e-commerce activity, but our present financial situation does not allow for funding such a project through Parks operating funds.

Lane County Information Systems Department has done a project analysis of the reservation system. The current cost estimate for a suitable system is \$61,600, with an additional 10-15% for Technical Service, Networking and other staff time.

Parks Division is requesting a one-time allocation of \$70,000 of TRT Special Projects Funds to develop and implement an online reservation system in support of countywide e-commerce initiatives. Parks Division currently lacks the operational funds required to finance a project of this size. In an effort to achieve Division, Department, and County e-commerce goals in the near future, alternative funding sources have been researched.

Parks Division pays Transient Room Taxes each month at the designated 7-8% rate, based on campsites occupied. In 2004, Parks Division paid \$15,146.76 in Transient Room Taxes. Parks Division believes an online reservation system will increase campground occupancy rate, thereby increasing the total amount of Transient Room Taxes paid by Parks, and continuing to fund the Special Project Grant Program.

This allocation would in no way impact the Tourism Special Project Grant Program and its' planned allocation of \$132,000 this year. Currently, the TRT Special Projects Fund has a reserve balance of \$150,000 over and above the expenses currently budgeted. Adequate funding for this request is readily available.

Parks personnel have reviewed this issue with the Finance & Audit Committee and received their endorsement to bring the issue before the Board of Commissioners for consideration.

C. Alternatives/Options

1. Approve the allocation of \$70,000 of TRT Special Project Funds to Parks Division.
2. Approve the allocation of some amount other than \$70,000 of TRT Special Project Funds to Parks Division.
3. Do not approve the allocation of \$70,000 of TRT Special Project Funds to Parks Division.

D. Recommendations

Parks Division recommends option 1. Failure to fund this project will result in further delays in our e-commerce efforts. Online reservations systems are currently the 'norm' in the Parks business.

E. Timing

Camping reservations for the upcoming season are already in progress. Upon Board Order approval, the LCIS staff will add the project on their active list and schedule development of the system as soon as practical. Development time is estimated at 6 months.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

Development of the system will commence upon Board Order approval, with implementation planned by the 2006 season. Reservations begin in January 2006, and we expect the system to be online at that time.

V. ATTACHMENTS

Parks Reservations System Project Plan – prepared by LCIS

Todd Winter
Parks Manager
Lane County Parks Division

IN THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF LANE COUNTY, OREGON

ORDER NO.) IN THE MATTER OF ALLOCATING \$70,000 IN TRANSIENT
) ROOM TAX SPECIAL PROJECT FUNDS TO PUBLIC WORKS,
) PARKS DIVISION, FUND 216, FOR AN E-COMMERCE
) PROJECT TO IMPLEMENT AN ONLINE RESERVATION
) SYSTEM FOR PARKS)

WHEREAS, the Lane County Parks Division operates three campgrounds in Lane County; and

WHEREAS, the County has strategic objectives regarding e-government initiatives; and

WHEREAS, currently citizens can only make campsite reservations by telephone or in person; and

WHEREAS, the Parks Division, in keeping with industry standards, recognizes the need to implement an online reservation system; and

WHEREAS, Lane County Information Systems Department can develop an online system for an estimated cost of \$70,000; and

WHEREAS, the Parks Division operating funds are insufficient to support this development effort; and

WHEREAS, the Transient Room Tax Special Projects Fund has adequate reserve funds to support this development effort; and

WHEREAS, reallocation of Transient Room Tax Special Project Funds requires the approval of the Board of County Commissioners.

NOW THEREFORE IT IS ORDERED that \$70,000 of Transient Room Tax Special Project reserve funds be re-allocated to Public Works, Parks Division, Fund 216, for an e-commerce project to implement an online reservation system for Parks.

Dated this _____ day of February 2005.

Anna Morrison, Chair,
Lane County Board of Commissioners

1-31-05
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Parks Reservations System

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Project Scope

A parks management system which provides online, internet reservations by the public, site configuration, reservation management and reporting by park hosts and Parks management.

Objectives

- Replace current, standalone campground management and reservation software with an integrated parks management system.
- Public can place reservations online using internet reservation system with immediate reservation conformation.
- Reservations are for any campground site, picnic site or marina moorage.
- Configurable by park hosts and parks management. Staff can add, remove and update sites, set site parameters such as fees, dates and when sites can/cannot be reserved.
- Park hosts and parks management can enter and manage advanced reservations and same-day check-ins.
- Configurable security to establish who has access to add or change information and settings.
- Predefined reports which can be run by park hosts and parks management.
- Parks hosts systems data will be synchronized with central data.

Specifications

Reservations

- Reservation period will cut off a set (configurable) number of days before a given date to assure immediate reservation acceptance before requested dates, e.g. require reservation made at least three days in advance. Reservations made on / before cutoff date could only be made online or through the main office. Reservations or cancellations after cut off date would have to be made by calling the park's host.
- Provide all camping sites for online selection
- Online customer would have an immediate confirmed reservation
- Advanced reservations will require real-time access to the reservation database. Advanced reservations can only be made online or by calling the main office: a central phone number to staff that has constant, immediate access to online schedule.

Park Host Client

- Park host will need access to County network via RAS to access secure online systems for uploading/download data and possibly accessing internal applications.

For network access Technical Services will likely require regular configuration control and updates of park host workstations to assure network integrity: e.g. up to date virus scanning software, workstation firewalls.

Alternately, some type of extranet architecture could be designed and developed for extended privileges by external users over the internet.

Using extranet park host would either:

A. Upload/download information via an internet site to their client system
or

B. Access a web application where they could view and update information.

There are increased security and privacy concerns for access by external user who can upload/download information or view and manipulate information online.

Additional research will be required to identify and address the security issues for this component.

- Central reservation system and park host client will not have real-time coordination without access to dedicated phone lines. Client will need to dial in at least once per day to upload/download.

Management

- Central office will be responsible for updating site schedule to block out sites and dates that have been reserved by mail, phone or drive-in and remove requests that have been cancelled. This is primarily for logistical reason as it's easier to have one phone / mail point of contact for off-line reservations and cancellations.
- Caretaker would need to routinely log onto a web application to review online reservations: probably log on at least once per day. This may be part of the upload/download

Reports

- System provides reports as defined.
Current defined reports:
 - Daily Occupancy report
 - Revenue report
- Reports can be run by Parks management and park host.

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Parks Reservations System

Cost

Costs are rough estimates based upon current, known concepts and design specifications. There are many aspects of this project which require more substantive research and which place a high degree of risk on this estimate: the final cost could increase or decrease.

Project Component	Development Days	Cost @ \$50/hr
Analysis, Design & Research	10	\$4,000
Reservation/Scheduling Engine	15	\$6,000
Reservation Web Site - Internet	30	\$12,000
Management Client	20	\$8,000
Sub Total	75	\$30,000
Park Host Client	60	\$24,000
Client / Network Sync	15	\$6,000
Sub Total	75	\$30,000
Reports	4	\$1,600
Sub Total	4	\$1,600
Total Days	154	\$61,600

* Excludes time required by other IS staff. Technical Services and Networking staff time will also be required. Time includes design, development and testing.

** Cost excludes additional software or hardware components which may be required, especially for Park Host client software.

Risks/Issues

- Client Park Host Software
 - What is used to develop client software? IS has not yet used .Net for client applications. Additional time may be required to learn aspects of client development, address technology issues and possible need for third party add-on software. *(Parks Division note: .Net client applications are new to LC IS, but they are confident technical issues that arise could be resolved quickly.)*
 - What will be used client system database (SQL, Access, Custom, other)? How is it managed, developed? *(Parks Division note: specifics on development and management of the database will be determined as the project progresses – if funded)*
 - How will client software access the central database to download/upload changes to/from client system? RAS? Web service? *(Parks Division note: methodology for client access to software is to be determined as project progresses – if funded)*
 - How often is data synchronized? *(Parks Division note: at least daily, perhaps continuously, depending on how database is managed – details of database management to be determined as project progresses, if funded)*
 - How is central system secured for remote access? Technology? Security? *(Parks Division note: Security issues will be addressed as part of the database management development.)*
 - Backup / recovery of information? *(Parks Division note: backup/recovery procedures are yet to be determined.)*
 - Update distributions? *(Parks Division note: Process will to be determined.)*
 - Will Park host computers need to be managed by County IS to assure configuration, security? *(Parks Division note: Yes, if accessing the County intranet or network. No if reservations are managed in a central location.)*
- Reservations
 - Policies may need to be reviewed to determine is changes are needed to accommodate online reservation.
- Billing
 - What is the policy for billing an online reservation? *(Parks Division note: customers are currently billed for a reservation fee plus first nights' stay upon making the reservation. We anticipate this would still occur with an online system.)*
 - Who determines the policy: County, banks or govt laws regulating credit cards and/or ecommerce? *(Parks Division note: It is our understanding that LC IS and County Counsel are working these issues with the bank and other payment processing providers.)*
 - Is the customer charged the full amount of reserved site or just a deposit? *(Parks Division note: Deposit of one nights' stay, plus reservation fee.)*
 - If deposit only, is balance paid at site? *(Parks Division note: YES) If not paid at site, how is balance paid?*
 - Refunds? How are refunds issued? Who has authority to issue refund? *(Parks Division note: Refunds are currently granted per the LC Finance guidelines; additional policy language may be required to deal with online reservation refunds.)*

Parks Division note: Questions raised in this section were for discussion between Parks and LC IS. As the online reservation system is developed, all of the above questions will be addressed. At present funding is not available to further research the detailed answers.