



Visit Estes Park  
The Destination  
Marketing Organization  
VisitEstesPark.com

## Board of Directors Minutes December 15, 2015

**Board Members Attending:** Bill Almond, Karen Erickson, Steve Kruger, Lindsay Lamson, Jon Nicholas, Scott Webermeier, Town Trustee Ron Norris, Town Trustee Bob Holcomb, Elizabeth Fogarty, President & CEO of Visit Estes Park

Meeting called to order by Bill Almond at 2:05 PM. Noted Adam Shake was not able to attend today.

**Public Comment:** None

### **Board Comments:**

With the board permission, Bill Almond would like to alter the agenda and table agenda item #4 under Action Items, which is the Approval of Board of Directors 2016-2017 Strategic Plan, as the board is not prepared to take action on this yet.

For item #2 under action items, The Approval of Resolution 03-15 - Adopting a Budget for 2016, Almond advised he and Jon Nicholas had an email exchange about the EDC Contribution. Nicholas will recuse himself of voting on that line item.

Almond asked for updates on the selection and interview process for his successor on the Visit Estes Park Board. Almond was not able to participate in the interviews. There were seven candidates, of which six were interviewed in person and one interviewed on the phone at a later date. Present during the interviews were Commissioner Tom Donnelly, Trustee Bob Holcomb, Trustee Ron Norris, Jon Nicholas and Elizabeth Fogarty. Almond asked how it went.

Board and Town Trustees discussed, at length, the selection process and dynamics involved in filling the county-appointed seat being vacated by Almond. Much concern was expressed over the political pressures driving the process, and how those pressures might not necessarily align with the needs of the district. VEP board and staff recognize that the year ahead will be pivotal for the future of the district, as the primary initiative of 2016 will be revenue increases and impacts for Visit Estes Park. Much concern also expressed over the perceived involvement of Board Member Nicholas in influencing the process through his relationships with Commissioner Donnelly and Stanley Hotel owner John Cullen. The board asked that Almond and Nicholas arrange a follow up meeting with Commissioner Donnelly to share the concerns of the board and discuss options for navigating to a conclusion.

### **A. Action Items**

1. Approval of Minutes from December 1, 2015 Board Meeting

Motion: Scott Webermeier motioned for approval, Karen Ericson seconded, minutes approved unanimously.

2. Approval of Resolution 03-15 Adopting a Budget for 2016

Jon Nicholas asked to recuse himself from this vote.

Elizabeth advised that rent may dramatically increase, based on what was originally budgeted. Elizabeth is still negotiating rates and terms with landlord and will check in with the board when finalized.

Scott Webermeier read Resolution 03-15.

Motion: Scott motioned to approve, Karen seconded.

Lindsay asked if this was the same packet approved by the county and town, if this budget was a living document and if Larimer County had approved the \$25,000 marketing investment.

Elizabeth stated the town approved the Operating Plan and the budget was part of that. Budget has changed due to tax receipts. The Larimer County marketing investment of \$25,000 was approved. Recently Tom Donnelly had mentioned it as well. Jacob Castillo and Elizabeth plan to meet to discuss how best to invest the funds.

Lindsay reminded that \$800,000 included a TABOR reserve and the projected decrease or spending of \$391,757.92 leaves us in the position to spend considerably less in 2017. If we will not have the \$391,757.92 what will be cut? Budget will be 2.2 million instead of 2.6 million.

Scott said it was a great point, but ending fund balance will be significantly higher.

Approval: Board approved Resolution 03-15 unanimously.

Noted - Jon Nicholas recused himself from the vote.

3. Approval of Resolution 04-15 Appropriating Funds for 2016

Scott Webermeier read resolution 04-15 to the board.

Motion: Scott motioned to approve resolution 04-15 Appropriated Funds for 2016, Lindsay seconded, approved unanimously.

Noted - Jon Nicholas was absent for this vote.

4. Approval for Board of Directors 2016-2017 Strategic Plan

Bill read a draft that he distributed in an email to the board. The Strategic Plan is a document which is so vital to the VEP Board and merits a discussion. Bill suggested to table this item and urged the board to discuss the Strategic Plan in the future in detail.

Lindsay asked if the Operating Plan and STRAT plan are on the VEP website. Elizabeth said it yes. Lindsay thinks we should request input from stakeholders. Elizabeth stated that it was in the November Partner eNewsletter.

Karen stated that having a VEP Board meeting at Town Hall, per Scott's suggestion, is a great idea.

Bill said his point is that there needs to be more of a discussion on the Strategic Plan.

Motion: Bill Almond moved to table the approval for Board of Directors 2016-17 Strategic Plan.

Elizabeth asked if there was a need for a facilitator since the document is 3 years old and needs an overhaul.

Lindsay asked if Elizabeth could add to the document.

Elizabeth said she could and is happy to, but she feels as though the vision needs to come from the board.

Bill agreed that the CEO can play counterpoint, but the vision needs to come from the board. This document is foundational to the board's actions and direction. There is an opportunity to speak loudly and clearly in the document about destination product development and marketing. Bill hopes VEP will continue to partner closely with the National Park Service. Bill is concerned VEP success could be the demise of Rocky Mountain National Park. The first responsibility of the VEP Board, as a leader in the community, must be to protect the park and then promote the park. Again, this document merits a lot of discussion.

Scott asked if the VEP board may call in Bill Almond in the future.

Elizabeth asked if she should contact Mitch to facilitate the discussion.

Board agreed she should call Mitch and see if he is available.

Lindsay would like to be sure the board adds a public component before it's approved.

5. Approve 2016 IGA with Town of Estes Park

Motion: Lindsay moved to approve the 2016 IGA with the Town of Estes Park, Scott seconded, board approved unanimously.

6. Election of Officers for VEP Board 2016

Bill said the slate of officers we need to elect are as follows; Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary/Treasurer. Office is one year. Jon Nicholas asked if anyone on the board expressed interest in a position.

Nominations:

Scott Webermeier accepted the nomination for chair.

Karen Ericson accepted the nomination for vice chair.

Lindsay Lamson accepted the nomination for secretary/treasurer.

Motion: With no other nominations, Jon Nicholas moved to approve the slate of nominees, Steve Kruger seconded, and all approved unanimously.

7. Appoint a replacement signatory for accounts at Bank of Colorado and Bank of Estes Park.

Karen Ericson, Lindsay Lamson, Scott Webermeier & Jon Nicholas agreed to be signatories.

Motion: Jon Nicholas moved to appoint Lindsay and Karen as additional signatories and remove Bill Almond, Steve seconded, and all approved unanimously.

## B. Discussion Items and Reports

### 1. RMNP Report – Kyle Patterson

Kyle provided a handout to the board which presented statistics for the Top Ten Visitation Days of 2015. All of the Top Visitation Days for 2015 consisted of over 10,000 vehicles. The busiest day was September 26 and the second busiest day was on October 3. Park shuttles were used by 570,000 people this year. This is a 24% increase from 2014. Sunday of Labor Day Weekend 9,112 people rode the shuttle. September saw the biggest growth with a 49% jump in ridership. The hiker shuttle saw 42,873 riders, which is a 37% increase over 2014. Rocky Mountain National Park visitation as of the end of November was at 4,062,133, up 21% year to date.

RMNP visitation at the end of October was higher than Yosemite. In October they are working with half of the staff. Due to lack of funding, staff will probably remain flat. Back in the day the busy season was May through August. RMNP has to consider guest experience and how traffic will impact resources. They need to figure out how they can continue to sustain this level of visitation safely. Kyle advised there is data on certain areas of the park about parking, visitation, vehicle congestion, and resource damage. These reports will help RMNP determine if they should be reactive or proactive. There is an issue with human waste in the back country. There is simply no more room to dig for privies. The Alpine Visitor Center already hauls 10,000 gallons of water a day.

Trustee Holcomb asked if she felt as though we were getting close to maximum capacity. Trustee Norris said he would like Kyle to speak before town board about this so they can help advocate for more funding. Kyle is eager to come to the VEP Board meetings and to speak to the Town Board. She wants public input and to be very transparent on challenges.

Trustee Norris asked if updates were given to the County Board. Kyle answered yes. Also the message VEP and Rocky gave guests to go to the park early or late worked. The park and ride filled up by 10 AM every day. One day they had to close Fall River road to stop the flow of traffic into the alpine visitor center parking lot. Kyle will send out the social media stats to the board.

Trustee Holcomb asked how the variable message signs worked. Kyle replied there was an 8 to 15% shift in traffic after signs were turned on. They most busy day for the Fall River Entrance was October 3. 50% of vehicles came through this entrance. In an interest of customer service, they waived cars through. They lost a lot of revenue. Lindsay asked if there is communication between the National Forest and The National Park. Kyle said they work very closely and communicate.

Scott offered VEP and the Town lobby for more funding for RMNP. Kyle would appreciate it. RMNP would use the stats provided today to prove the need for more staff. Zion and Arches saw the same trends for fall visitation. Zion had to close their dead end road. Zion and Arches National Parks are looking at public use.

#### Additional Report:

Trustee Norris added that Mayor, Trustee Erickson and Trustee Phipps are not running again. Information Forum will be on January 4. Anyone who has an interested in running should attend. Election date will be set at the Town Board meeting tonight for April 4. Candidate packets will be

available on January 5, 2016. Deadline for filing is Jan 25, 2016. Ballots will be mailed between March 4 and 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016. This is a mail election only.

## 2. Financial Report

Town Lodging tax, minus new 1%, is up 19.14%, VEP 17.7% through September 2015.

October 2015 receipts were \$ 153,171.55 compared to \$ 94,952.64 in October 2014. That's a 61.31% increase in October 2015 compared to the same month last year, and we've now experienced a 20.51% increase this year-to-date through October 2015 compared to the same 10-month period in 2014.

Lindsay asked if we are still #1 with Jackrabbit. Elizabeth said we volley between #1 and #2 with Gatlinburg, so the rankings change almost every month.

Scott asked for clarity with dining sales tax and food tax. Believes we need to share this with restaurant stakeholders to highlight dining, but it's fogged with the food tax and Safeway.

## 3. CEO Report

Content Coordinator position will be offered this week to Adam Concannon. His passion is social media and he is very successful at networking partnerships via social media. For long form copy, we will certainly work with Adam on this, but also contract Myra, Amity and other local sources. After several interviews and discussions with staff, we decided it will be very hard to find someone who is great at social media and also long form writing. We decided to focus on social media for this position, as we can contract out long form writing as needed. Lindsay strongly concurred that focusing on social media was the best decision and direction for this position.

Destination Product Development – Adam Shake is in front of the planning commission today for the Rocky Mountain Performance Center. VEP wrote a letter of support for the Center.

The Estes Arts District now has a formal Board and we are excited to see all they have and will accomplish.

The 2015 EALA Member survey has been sent out. The survey is very thorough, with over 40 questions. Elizabeth will provide the board a formal summary when all the data has been collected. Elizabeth read some of the questions to the board pertaining to VEP. Examples: Wage Analysis, bed counts, partnership with VEP. If EALA does want to partner with VEP for marketing, it will be up to the membership and so far the EALA membership strongly supports this direction.

Scott asked if this was a pass through or pay for partnership. Elizabeth stated that, as an example, social media boost for destination marketing an event. VEP invests dollars in this, but there are budgetary limits, so EALA may want to join in on that buy and increase the budget. EALA has a decent budget to work with. Lindsay suggested enticing the town to do the same.

Elizabeth said bed count data is important because staff receives calls about bed counts from groups and we would like to provide a more accurate number.

Survey also asks about FLAP, so far the majority are against it.

For the DPD question, some ideas members have had are tubing hill, trail connectivity and a zip line, just to name a few.

EALA Members so far support the EALA Board's advocacy by 65%, with just 22 members responding so far.

How can EALA work more effectively with TOEP and VEP? Communication was the common answer.

Members are somewhat supportive of a lodging tax increase, but are focused on DPD with any increase in budget. Elizabeth is starting to see a consistent shift for more DPD. We need to find a way to legislatively allocate part of the lodging tax to infrastructure and enhancements. For example - Buena Vista riverwalk, art exhibits, rock walls, etc.

Michael submitted the Enterprise Product Application to Jacob Castillo at Larimer County.

CTO – Media twist after the SMARI report – Unofficial Denver community member stated that marijuana was the reason tourism is up in Colorado. CTO provided stats and a statement stating it is not due to marijuana. Elizabeth can forward the entire statement to the board. Amendment 64 bans the state from marketing marijuana. What were the 2015 spring/summer research findings about marijuana as it relates to tourism? The latest SMARI report shows the percentage of visitors who stated they visited a marijuana dispensary during their trip was unchanged from last year at 8 percent. Visit Estes park has added a page for marijuana information to the VEP website. It can only be found if someone searches for it.

Applied for two CTO Grants; regional and National Parks. We were not awarded the National Park grant. We will take \$25,000 (five partner contributions) and implement an influencer campaign anyway, as opposed to the \$50,000 we would have had if granted the award.

TIAC Reception & Tourism Day at the Capital is Jan. 25 and 26. Attendees are Kaylyn and Steve Kruger, Sean Jurgens, Adam Shake, Jon Nicholas, Karen Ericson and Elizabeth Fogarty. Scott Webermeier would also like to be included.

VEP will send the left-over 2015 Visitor Guides to 95% of every fourth grade class in the state. Kyle helped with material and statistics to educate the kids about Every Kid in the Park initiative.

Touchscreens are still being researched. The Town asked not to force them, since we shared that most of the technology is very unpredictable and quality is an issue. We will continue to vet the technology to ensure we find the best fit that will provide a quality and consistent experience.



Estes Park continues to receive extensive PR coverage. Ten Best Destinations, Best Winter Road Trips, Ten Best Places to Travel Before They Are Famous, National Park Bucket List, just to name a few.

VEP Responsive Website is working great. Please check out the new home page design.

Lindsay, Jon and Elizabeth attended a VRBO meeting on Saturday. If you want to know more just ask Elizabeth. There were about 100 attendees. Commissioner Johnson advised he will encourage a task force concerning VRBO's.

Elizabeth presented a glimpse at VEP's winter marketing campaign: 14' x 48' billboards on I-70, radio ads on KBCO, Pandora ads. Radio ads will be played on way to and from work, during driving times. Coffee sleeves and bar coasters will be distributed.

2016 Official Visitor Guide is hot off the press. We will be launching them on January 1. The new guide features a perfect binding, thicker paper, more content, sticky notes which feature advertising and VEP branding. Elizabeth passed one out to each board member. This guide was Suzy's project for the recent past, as well as staff input. We fully expect advertisers to see this guide and want to be in featured in the 2017 guide, if they are not participating already. This guide has new RMNP map, Town map, shuttle maps. Lots of upgrades and answers to the most asked questions (we tracked questions at Farmers Market at VEP Booth and asked Ambassadors for input). New photography from Richard Hahn, branded back page, lots of locals as models due to Brooke putting calls out for models on our Facebook page. Activities for every season. All feedback is welcome. These are also featured in Eve's brochure racks. VEP will purchase a rack for anyone who doesn't have one for their lodge, just ask. Guide was a team effort, and we are very proud of the end product.

#### 4. Future Board Meeting Schedule

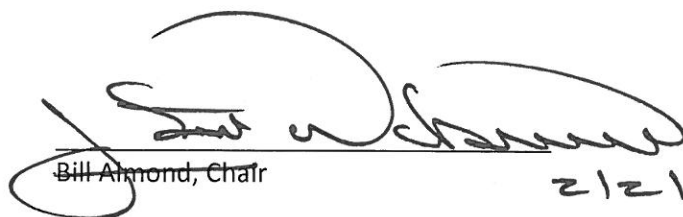
Bill said dates for the next four meetings are on the agenda. CEO will work with the next Executive Chair for those. He encouraged the board and CEO to discuss the Strategic Plan.

Bill asked if Scott and Jon had any time on Friday afternoon to call an executive committee meeting. Scott is open, Jon will check his schedule.

Bill and Jon will connect with Commissioner Donnelly.

Bill motioned to adjourn the meeting, Karen Seconded, All approved. Board meeting adjourned at 4:35.

 2/3/16  
Becky Gruhl, Recording Secretary

 2/2/16  
Bill Almond, Chair