



Visit Estes Park
The Destination
Marketing Organization
VisitEstesPark.com

Board of Directors Strategic Plan Retreat February 26, 2016 Minutes

Board Members Attending: Karen Ericson, Steve Kruger, Lindsay Lamson, Jon Nicholas, Adam Shake, Scott Webermeier

Also Attending: Mitch Nichols, Consultant, Nichols Tourism Group

Elizabeth Fogarty, President & CEO
Visit Estes Park Staff Suzy Blackhurst

David Batey
Paul Fishman
Morgan Mulch

The retreat was opened with introductory remarks by Chair Scott Webermeier and Consultant Mitch Nichols. President & CEO Elizabeth Fogarty briefly reviewed contents of materials in binders provided to each participant. She asked board members provide Adam, Jon or herself with any updates to the participation matrix that is reviewed on a quarterly basis. Jon Nicholas asked that statute information be mailed to him.

Nichols introduced the retreat session with a broad overview of strategic plan structure that includes DMAI's DestinationNext research, a view of vision and mission, SWOT factors, goals and tactics and methods of measuring success. A major focus of strategies for DestinationNext is based on defining how to strengthen a destination and obtain community support to maximize potential. It was noted that Fogarty can provide the study to board members.

Vision

In reviewing the vision statement developed in 2012, Nichols asked board members if any refinements needed to be made. Shake pointed out that the vision needs to reflect where Visit Estes Park fits within the community, and he noted that product development had not been a topic of discussion in 2012. Webermeier said the vision statement does not reflect Visit Estes Park's relationship to the community.

Nichols said the goal for the day was not to specifically "wordsmith" the documents. Rather, he said concepts for refinement would be used to provide suggested wording for the board to approve at a future meeting.

Mission

Nichols noted that the mission statement is visitor-centric, and asked if quality of life for residents should be included along with product development. Webermeier said instead of being involved in destination management VEP should note destination development. Nichols pointed out that on a national level, destination marketing organizations have moved to use the term "destination management," which would provide a refinement to the mission statement. Karen Ericson said adding community quality of life to the mission statement would help.

David Batey suggested that adding the term "collaborating with" would mute community concerns about use of the word "management."

Core Values

No changes were suggested for the listing of core values.

SWOT - Strengths

In reviewing the previously developed SWOT, Ericson suggested changing the definition for the CEO from “driven” to “engaged.” Other suggested changes included recognizing the Association Forum. Steve Kruger said quality of life needs to be emphasized. Morgan Mulch suggested noting the amenities that tourism provides. Batey suggested prioritizing the list so there is a focus on outcomes, and strengths can be moved higher on the list

SWOT - Challenges

In discussing challenges it was suggested to remove the statement noting “old school marketing mindset.” Paul Fishman suggested adding state statute requirements as related to allocations of resources. Other challenges mentioned included lack of events center use.

SWOT - Threats

Additional threats noted included over-utilization of the national park, carrying capacity of the downtown district, lack of J-9 workers due to housing shortages, and potentially, new town policies.

SWOT – Opportunities

It was noted that the national park’s 100th anniversary should be removed. Suggestions for additions to the list included broadening the community’s offerings through product development, packaging opportunities that currently exist, adding tours to lodging property offerings, linking food experiences with outdoor experiences.

Goal 1: Board Governance

Issues raised during a general discussion on board governance included moving forward as a cohesive group following discussion of diverse perspectives, the appropriateness of sitting on each others’ boards of directors, ensuring all segments of tourism business industries are represented, and communication that reaches the residential community.

Another topic revisited from past meetings covered minutes and level of detail. Specifically as they present a clear position of the happenings, add relevance to decisions made and put topics in context. It was pointed out that the board had voted for summary minutes, and Nichols summarized the discussion by noting that the ultimate goal is to have consistency in communicating. Fogarty noted that the detailed minutes were provided after receiving a recommendation from legal counsel after a records request was made and ongoing discussions of important conversations and details were being shared at board meetings.

Board members also discussed the group’s strategic direction, which includes product development. Because of limitations posed by state statute, Fogarty said VEP can be a catalyst and partner for new product development opportunities.

Goal 2: Board Effectiveness

Board members noted how VEP activities fulfill the 2012 goals toward board effectiveness, although the appropriateness of the Goal 2 title was questioned.

Goal 3: Board Responsibilities & Committees

It was pointed out that advocacy issues discussed under board effectiveness could be combined with those in Board responsibilities.

It was noted that a goal under the IGA review could be to encourage changing the number of board appointments made by each authorizing organization to three board members being named by the Town of Estes Park, two being named by Larimer County and two board members being appointed by the Local Marketing District board. This is common with other local marketing districts.

It was noted that while the expectation for board participation and attendance is clear, managing any challenges in that area are not. Lindsay Lamson recommended that the organization invest in improved technology to better facilitate participation in meetings remotely.

Goal 4: Destination Management

Advocating for responsible and sustainable destination enhancing development: It was suggested that criteria for making decisions about which projects receive attention from VEP be created. Lamson said he'd like VEP to discuss how to help obtain more funding for Rocky Mountain National Park. Fogarty noted that wellness is an area of continued product development enhancement opportunity. An economic impact study is expected to be conducted this year and Nichols suggested considering using the same vendor as used by the state. Other suggestions for destination management improvements included improving biking opportunities through the downtown area and connecting trails. Nichols said that typically the destination plan, derived from a variety of input sessions with a wide array of perspectives, becomes an industry plan that drives activities of the board. He suggested that the board consider adding a metric to the KPI for measuring advocacy and outreach. He also suggested Visit Estes Park consider how more visitor immersive projects could be initiated at the Visitor Center.

EDC/Avalanche Study

Nichols reviewed the four major areas of Visit Estes Park responsibility suggested by the Avalanche study:

1. A unified Estes brand,
2. Recruit events for the events center and conference center,
3. Creating a "made in Estes Park" trademark and
4. Expand and share a community calendar.

Consensus of the board was:

1. Continued focus and input to maintain a unified brand for Estes and among area organizations will continue,
2. VEP should not be the lead organization for recruiting or running events,
3. A "made in Estes" trademark is something that will be developed by private business, and currently there is not enough product to support a quality and consistent brand (Elizabeth will continue to highlight "made in Estes" product each week at the Estes Park Farmers Market, and lastly,
4. VEP already has expanded and shared a community calendar which continues to perform in the top 5 most-viewed pages on the VEP website.

When discussing business initiatives, Avalanche identified wellness as potential areas for VEP support. It was noted that the Estes Park Medical Center will provide the primary lead for wellness initiatives. Scott and Elizabeth met with the EPMC team and it was confirmed that EPMC would take on a leadership role (not an ownership one), and a partnership approach with the community would continue, including the Association Forum. Already discussed is how EPMC might partner with VEP during the Tourism Summit, and VEP establishing a wellness microsite on VisitEstesPark.com. Rebranding Estes as a wellness destination is not the direction, however, it will continue as a component of the brand. VEP will continue to take a holistic approach to destination marketing, not an exclusive one (and it was shared that it's working). Visit Estes Park will continue to market the quality experiences it can deliver. The wellness brand will evolve as the number of Estes products, services and experiences do.

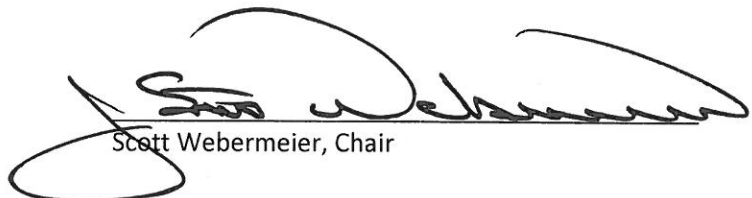
Other Areas of Interest

Shake asked for a recommendation about providing direction on EDC votes made by Fogarty as a member of sitting on the EDC board while EDC CEO Jon Nicholas is a member of the VEP board. Nichols recommended that if Fogarty is voting on behalf of the VEP board, depending on the issue, she could request direction from the board in advance.



Suzy Blackhurst, Recording Secretary

DATE: 3-15-2016



Scott Webermeier, Chair

DATE: 3/15/16