



Visit Estes Park
The Destination
Marketing Organization
VisitEstesPark.com

Board of Directors Regular Meeting March 1, 2016 Minutes

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

Also Attending: Ken Arnold, Carrie Arnold, Kay Kruger, Charlie Dickey, Paul Fishman, Kirby Hazelton, Ron Norris

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

The meeting, held in the Town of Estes Park Board Meeting Room, was called to order by Chair Scott Webermeier.

Public Comment.

Ken Arnold, 750 South Lane, thanked Visit Estes Park for making the tourism economy thrive. He said he owed a debt of thanks to the staff and board for doing a great job. He said Ken Larson, who sought Arnold's signature to get the local marketing district ballot formalized, said he couldn't imagine anyone other than Elizabeth Fogarty as being the VEP CEO.

Board Comment.

Lindsay Lamson reflected on the February 26 board retreat saying the session had been extremely productive.

Chair Webermeier asked that discussion about a representative for the town-county vacation rental task force be conducted prior to the CEO Update. Lamson moved that the agenda be accepted as revised. Steve Kruger seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Items and Reports.

1. Rocky Mountain National Park – Kyle Patterson

Patterson said based on January visitation and other economic markers such as gas prices, the park anticipates visitation similar to that of 2015. Backcountry backpacking permits for the 2016 season opened with strong reservations. She said she appreciated being asked to attend the Strategic Planning Retreat, and continues to look forward to working together to preserve, protect and promote the park. In response to board questions, she noted that staffing has not increased at the same pace as visitation, and in the current fiscal climate, that is not expected to change. She also noted that Rocky has one of the largest volunteer pools in the nation. She said it is potentially feasible that private donations could be accepted, but the park would need to be mindful of what the donation is meant to support. She noted that Rocky currently is able to keep 80% of entrance fees collected, but that in 2017, 55% of those fees would have to be spent on deferred maintenance. Rocky sells 35,000 annual passes each year, more than any other park in the region.

2. Town-County Vacation Rental Task Force – VEP Representative

Lamson said he would be interested in serving on a joint Town-County Vacation Rental Task Force, but wanted to request input from the board. Adam Shake moved that Lamson be nominated to serve on the task force. Steve Kruger seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Town Board Update – Trustee Ron Norris

Norris noted that during its work session, the Town Board would discuss the vacation home joint task force and smart metering. During the regular board meeting, he said the board would receive an update on the status of construction on Dry Gulch Road, conduct a public hearing on water tap fees, and make transportation committee appointments.

4. CEO Update – Elizabeth Fogarty

Fogarty provided an in-depth review of staff activities, winter campaign, and discussion of enhancing quality of life for the community. Using a PowerPoint presentation that included several videos, she described the winter campaign that includes Pandora, 5280 on-line, billboards on Interstate 70 in the Denver area, bar coasters and coffee sleeves. Fogarty stated that community feedback has been frequent and supportive.

The Public Relations campaign includes proactive pitching about Estes Park being a base camp for high, medium and low adventurers. VEP continues to host journalists and influencers who cover Estes Park and Rocky Mountain National Park. Continued work on developing partnership opportunities and co-branding is ongoing.

She also discussed the impact contracting influencers has on the program's reach by showing examples of postings by Tyler Sharp, an influencer who recently experienced Estes Park and RMNP via hiking, skiing, fly fishing, horseback riding and relaxing at a lodge.

VEP also has been working with Great Divide Pictures who created a feature film "Heart of the World – Colorado's National Parks." The film will premier on March 29 with a showing at Reel Mountain Theater. VEP received valuable footage from Great Divide as a thank you for helping with the film, which will be used for short video clips for commercials and marketing assets.

Locally, Fogarty said, the organization started Travel Buzz last month, giving stakeholders the opportunity to participate in industry-relevant webinars. With over 17 people in attendance, the kick-off was hugely successful. The topic was the economic impact of tourism. The upcoming buss is creating revenue for events and nonprofits.

The fourth grade outreach has been so successful, the program is being expanded by providing backpacks stuffed with items for the children and their families. Local fourth graders also will be included in the backpack giveaway.

The annual VEP survey of stakeholders will be launched in about a month. EALA's survey is concluding and the organization will be sharing the info. with Visit Estes Park.

Fogarty shared website statistics showing continued exceptional growth. While continuing to make improvements to the site, Fogarty said VEP was keeping an eye on future developments anticipated in websites. One of those advancements is artificial intelligence similar to the IBM-developed learning system called Watson. Fogarty showed a video clip of Watson's ability to play the game show "Jeopardy" exemplifying the ability for a website or other online tools to be taught info., as opposed to entering each listing for guest requested info.

Growth in social media also was reviewed, along with statistics showing users' engagement with Estes Park continues to out-perform other CO destinations.

"The power of tourism in Estes Park" will be the focus of a locally based video slated for filming later in 2016, likely following a financial impact study that also has been budgeted. This is a creative way to show area residents the positive impact of tourism to their daily lives, besides the ongoing data that is shared through stats and key performance indicators.

Additional grant funding may be possible, Fogarty said, as Jeff Kraft, Director of Business Funding and Incentives at the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade has announced that \$700,000 will be made available to 19 CO counties. The application process is expected to begin within the next one to two months and Jeff will keep Elizabeth posted.

Board members thanked Fogarty for the presentation and stated it was very interesting, exciting and inspiring. They encouraged her to consider presenting the PowerPoint again to other area groups.

Lamson thanked Ron Norris, Paul Fishman and Charlie Dickey, all candidates for Town Trustee, for their attendance, saying VEP appreciates the partnership with the town.

Scott also thanked the visiting public for attending.

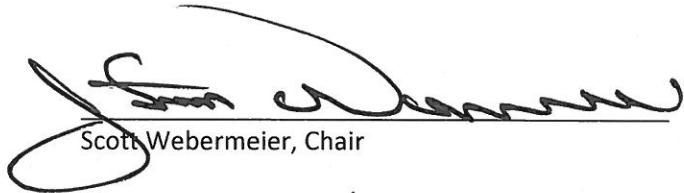
5. Adjourn.

Shake moved that the meeting be adjourned. Nicholas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.



Suzy Blackhurst, Recording Secretary

DATE: 3-15-16



Scott Webermeier, Chair

DATE: 3/15/16