



Visit Estes Park
The Destination
Marketing Organization
VisitEstesPark.com

Board of Directors Strategic Planning Session Minutes

Tuesday, June 18, 2019, 12:00 p.m.
Conference Room, 1230 Big Thompson Ave

Board Members Attending: Sean Jurgens, Deborah Gibson, Pat Murphy, Tonya Humiston, Todd Jirsa, Marie Cenac (arrived late)

Board Members Absent: Pat Murphy

Eric Lund, President & CEO, Visit Estes Park
Wendi Bryson, Office Manager, Visit Estes Park

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sean Jurgens at approximately 12:00 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT.

None

CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE.

Jurgens went over the discussion item. Jirsa moved to approve the agenda, Humiston seconded. With no further comment, the motion passed unanimously.

PRESIDENT & CEO.

Lund gave a brief overview of results from IPW and an expected upcoming festival at the Dao House. He then shared that he and Benes were working on a survey to put together a PACE report on how lodging properties are doing compared to 2018. That is expected to go out next week.

PROGRAM REVIEW.

Lund went over the strategic planning process and the expectations for the meeting. He read off the current mission statement for the organization, and asked the board how they would shorten the mission to make it more concise and easier to understand. Jirsa mentioned that he didn't have a problem with the proposed revision, but that he thought it was important to include the part about economic growth. Jurgens agreed that was important to include. Lund suggested making it something along the lines of "We drive sustainable year-round visitor demand and economic growth" or "economic growth and visitor demand."

Gibson shared that she didn't get the packet until the last minute and there was not enough time to review it before the meeting. She asked if there was a protocol for how soon before a meeting the packet is supposed to go out. Jurgens explained that it had to be sent out at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. Gibson explained that it's a lot to take in and she has other things going on. She asked if it was possible to get the packet four days before the meeting. Jurgens agreed that the deadline could be moved up, and Gibson stated she didn't think it needed to be a hard and fast rule. Bryson explained the deadline for packet materials was the Thursday or Friday before the meeting, and she tries to get the packet out the same day. That was not possible the last two meetings, due to personal reasons. Gibson asked if the deadline could be pushed up, and any last-minute things could be the exception to the rule. Lund suggested that the board could take some time to think about making a change to the packet deadline at the next meeting. Gibson explained that it didn't need to be a hard and fast rule, but more of a recommendation whenever possible. Lund apologized and said he didn't realize that it went out that late. Jirsa explained the standard timeline for the Town Board packet is the Thursday before and for the Platte River board is a minimum of a full week. He suggested that the deadline be pushed up to Thursday. Lund went on to tell the board that he had intended to have the Sandy Hall report included in the packet as well. Bryson apologized for the mistake on her part, and started printing off copies of the report for the board to review as well.

Cenac suggested changing the proposed mission statement to “We drive sustainable year-round economic growth by encouraging visitor demand.” Lund asked if everyone agreed with that statement, and they all agreed.

Next Lund read off the current vision statement, and that ideally that should be much shorter. Jurgens offered that he liked that the original statement included higher quality of life for the community and suggesting including that in the revised statement. Gibson thought that they needed to include something in regards to year-round tourism or at least tourism to illustrate what the purpose is behind what the organization is doing. Jirsa disagreed with the community’s quality of life being the responsibility of the local marketing district and that he felt that was more the Town’s responsibility to manage. He explained that it’s not that he thinks it isn’t an incredibly important issue, just that he was not sure that was the job of the marketing district. Gibson shared that there had previously been push back from local residents in regards to tourism, but the argument was made that the quality of life in terms of services offered was improved because of tourism. Jurgens went on to explain that it ties into the perception of tourism at all cost in the community. Jirsa thought there was a better way of saying the same thing without including quality of life. Bryson suggested something along the lines of “To offer the highest quality Rocky Mountain experience in a sustainable manner,” and that would cover the tourism aspect and the local quality of life. Jirsa was not a big fan of the word sustainable and felt it was over used. Lund shared that in regards to quality of life, that the tourism industry provides more than 50% of the jobs in the Estes Valley. Cenac expressed concern over using the highest quality Rocky Mountain experience, Jirsa disagreed. Gibson thought it could talk about economic health, but that was included in the mission statement. Cenac suggested taking the original statement and changing it to “To offer positive and memorable experiences for quests and quality of life for our community.” The board agreed that was a good first draft for the vision.

Lund then went over the purpose of the goals and objectives. The first proposed goal was “Create stronger leisure market visitor demand as a year-round destination that is sustainable and provides the highest quality experience possible for visitors.” Eric suggested making this shorter and more concise and asked the board for their thoughts. Cenac pointed out that the language in the goal was part of the mission statement. She questioned if it needed to be included in the goals as well. Gibson mentioned that she had received an email from a stakeholder that has a summer only business and one of their questions is if we would ever anticipate visitation in January like it is in July. Probably not, but the questions were if the push would be to build the off season at the expense of the summer season. She went on to explain that was never her intention. She asked if that should be a goal. Cenac added that she thought that was outlined in the mission and vision and thought that could possibly be broken down further as a goal. Gibson went on to share that part of the discussion the previous year with Sandy Hall was to focus more on guests that stay a longer amount of time and therefore spend more during their stays. As a result, the plan was to use more targeted marketing. Cenac suggested that increasing visitation in the off season could be a goal. She and Gibson offered suggestions on how that could be measured. Lund explained that goals were generally a statement that can’t be measured, but there would be a whole set of objectives to achieve the goal that should be measurable. He suggested that the objectives would be where to call out increasing off season visitors. Jurgens clarified that goals then were meant to be broad overarching statements and the objectives should be how to achieve the goals, Lund agreed. Jirsa expressed concern about including the wording for highest quality experience in the goal. Lund explained that language was there to focus on encouraging returning guests. Jirsa thought since that was measurable through survey data, that it should be an objective rather than a goal. Cenac thought the quality guest experience should be a separate goal instead. Jurgens suggested shortening the goal to “Create stronger leisure market visitor demand.” The rest of the board agreed. Lund went on to go through the suggested objectives for the goal 1 and example outcomes. Cenac thought they should focus on the goals first.

The second proposed goal was “Build a strong Group Marketing Program that improves visitor demand during shoulder and off seasons.” Cenac suggested making it “improve visitor demand during shoulder and off season through marketing.” Jurgens thought those should be an objective rather than the goal. Cenac thought the goal was too similar to the first one since they were both marketing focused. Lund pointed out that the group market was different than the leisure market. Jirsa asked for clarification on what was considered the shoulder and off seasons. Lund explained that the shoulder season was the months immediately before and after peak season and the off season was the months in between the fall and spring shoulder months. Bryson suggested just making the goal “Build a strong Group Marketing Program.” Cenac thought the language should be adjusted to

better match that of the first goal. She suggested changing it to "Create stronger Group Marketing Program."

The third proposed goal was "Engage stakeholders and the community in authentic experiences that Visit Estes Park can provide visitors through community events, marketing, data sharing, visitor services and promotions." Lund explained the intention of this goal is increased transparency to stakeholders and the community. Cenac suggested shortening the goal to "Promote stakeholder input." Gibson thought it should be involvement. Jirsa suggested making it engagement. Jurgens agreed. Cenac then suggested "Promote stakeholder and community engagement."

The fourth proposed goal was "Grow and improve awareness of Estes Park as an authentic Rocky Mountain destination experience in national and international markets." Lund explained this more along the lines of program outreach. Cenac asked what the difference was between this and the first goal. Lund explained that this could be group and leisure, but is focused more on the PR aspect and building awareness. Cenac suggested making the focus the awareness aspect then and removing the language about "rocky mountain experience" as that makes it sound like you are faking it. Humiston thought it could be changed to add historic Rocky Mountain experience. Bryson suggested taking the brand messaging out of the goal completely and making it awareness of Estes Park since brand messaging changes by season. Jurgens agreed and thought it should read "Promote Estes Park in national and international markets." Cenac wanted all the goal language to be similar and thought they should include the Rocky Mountain Experience. She suggested making it "Promote awareness of Estes Park as the premier Rocky Mountain destination in national and international markets." Jurgens and Lund both expressed concern with calling ourselves the best or premier destination and that it might give the impression that we were not. Cenac then suggested "Promote the Estes Park experience in national and international markets."

Lund suggested looking at the previous strategic plan to see if there were any additional goals the board would like to add. Cenac thought that one of the goals needed to address efficiency and effectiveness with respect to funds, but she was not sure how to write that. Jurgens added that was defined in policies, but could be included as an objective somewhere. Cenac disagreed and thought it should be a goal. Lund pointed out that efficient use of funds should just be a fact, and that the goals were intended for what we want to accomplish moving forward. He went on to explain that should be policy driven. Jirsa brought up that he thought an investigation into absorbing visitor services under the LMD should be added to the strategic plan. Gibson mentioned that would require an increase in funding for the organization to make it feasible. Lund suggesting looking into a 1% increase in the lodging tax in order to take over the operations of the Visitor Center. Gibson wondered if the Town would help supplement the cost for that like when the LMD was first established. Jirsa mentioned that the Town would use those funds for other things in the community and it would help them with their strategic plan as well. He went on to explain that it doesn't make sense for the Town to manage the visitor center. The visitor center is the very first experience many visitors have as a guest in Estes Park, and it makes more sense for VEP to manage it in order to provide a more consistent guest experience. The board agreed that should be added to the strategic plan as the fifth goal. Gibson suggested something along the lines of improving the quality of the guest experience. Cenac was looking for a better to state taking over the visitor center. Lund suggested "Vertically integrate visitor services and improve marketing capabilities through a 1% lodging tax increase." Jurgens thought stating a lodging tax increase in the goal would be a bad idea. Gibson suggested changing the language to looking for opportunities since there were a number of things that would need to happen with the organization before the visitor center could be integrated. The other board members agreed that was a good point. Cenac suggested changing the language to "Explore opportunities to integrate visitor services." The other board members agreed.

The board then went back to Goal 1 to discuss objectives. Lund went over the suggested objectives. Gibson was concerned that summer was not mentioned in the first suggested objective, and it was important to stakeholders that the summer business stays busy. Cenac asked if the first objective should be increasing the length of stay. Lund suggested increased length of stay and average daily spend for visitors. Cenac asked if that was measurable. She then suggested that since the marketing focus changes depending on season how to break that out. Gibson agreed it needed language to allow it to be flexible based on the marketing needs for each season. Cenac suggesting making the first objective under Goal 1 "Define target markets for each season and promote effectively to them." Gibson questioned how this objective would be measured since an increase in summer when the Town is almost at capacity would likely be less than an increase in January

when there was a lot more availability. She felt that there needed to be an average or variable expected increase as the measured outcome rather than a set amount. Cenac asked if the expected outcome had to be a number or if it could be a percentage, Lund agreed it could be a percentage. Jirsa wondered if it would be better to let Lund take the Mission, Vision and Goals the board had already agreed on back to the staff to provide their recommendations for the objectives and outcomes to achieve the goals since the staff are the marketing experts and not the board. Then after receiving the recommendations the board could decide what would work best moving forward. The other board members agreed that was a great idea. Lund finished up the discussion by going over a summary of current income and expenses. The income he showed did not include grant funds since there were none in 2019. Bryson mentioned that there would not be any grant funds until next year. Lund went over some of the grant programs available for destination marketing organizations. Humiston asked why we could not get grant funds until next year. Bryson explained that in the previous year VEP returned grant funds to the state due to the massive amount of upheaval in the organization at the time. After VEP returned the funds to the state the grant management was taken over by another entity, but as a result of returning the funds VEP lost our eligibility for other grants. Gibson asked if we would be eligible next year, and Bryson agreed. Lund explained that the grant was a collaborative marketing effort and was for \$25,000. Jurgens clarified that VEP could be listed on a grant, but could not be lead on it.

BOARD COMMENTS.

None

ADJOURN.

Jurgens adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:00 pm.


Wendi Bryson, Recording Secretary


Sean Jurgens, Chair

DATE: 7/2/19

DATE: 7/2/19