



Visit Estes Park
The Destination
Marketing Organization
VisitEstesPark.com

Board of Directors Strategy Retreat Minutes November 17, 2015

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

Also Attending: Mitch Nichols, Nichols Tourism Group

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

Statement defining the DMO role

Board members suggested a few changes in a written statement defining Visit Estes Park's role in marketing, including the difference between event promotion verse destination marketing that will be provided to Town of Estes Park representatives during an upcoming negotiation session concerning the Intergovernmental Agreement.

Intergovernmental Agreement with Town of Estes Park, including defining roles & destination product development.

Mitch Nichols counseled the board that Visit Estes Park is experiencing the same examination as other destination marketing organizations throughout the county. Mitch advised to stay the course and the conversations VEP are currently experiencing from marketing vs. management, event promotion, funding and definition of roles is all part of the process in moving the community forward and understanding how it must evolve to remain competitive. He complemented VEP for being progressive and being in tune with Destination Marketing Assoc. International's "DestinationNext" blueprint for how to guide a DMO successfully into the future. Mitch confirmed that part of the evolution of a successful DMO is a "chapter" where there is confusion with town and other organizations within the community as to just what destination management means.

Service Level Agreement with the Town of Estes Park

It was agreed that until an IGA has been accepted by both the Town and VEP, talk of an SLA is premature, although Elizabeth confirmed that the Visitor Center discussions continue to go well and she anticipates an agreeable conclusion with those SLA items.

Board Self Evaluation

Steve Kruger and Karen Ericson reviewed findings of the Survey Monkey survey completed by board members, stating there was general agreement with minimal dissent expressed. Following general discussion, it was agreed that if any board member has issues with board processes, communications, etc; those concerns should be addressed individually with the Chairman.

VEP Board Committee Review

A revised matrix showing board and staff member community involvement were reviewed.

Fogarty suggested an additional section be added documenting what presentations have been made by herself and other board members to area organizations so we can manage accordingly and request to be added to area Agenda's that we have not shared with in over a year.

Scott Webermeier suggested the board consider conducting quarterly board meetings at Town Hall in 2016 in an effort to reach out to the stakeholders in a more public environment.

Jon Nicholas noted that the board has talked about having committees function more with producing additional work. Webermeier noted that without having staff support for committee work, results may be spotty. Almond added that it's a fine balance, --leaning on staff too much can debilitate organizational operations fairly quickly, yet board time to follow through on tasks is always a challenge as well. It was determined that the scope of work for each committee should be revisited and that committee names be reviewed.

Chair Almond noted that seven individuals have applied for the upcoming vacant board position (county seat): David Batey, Sean Jurgens, Jackie Love, Jenna MacGregor, Morgan Mulch, Doug Sacarto and Nikki Schultz. Commissioner Donnelly requested Bill Almond and Jon Nicholas to participate, as they are the two current county seats. Jon plans to attend, and Bill is unable due to a schedule conflict.

Avalanche Report: Executive Summary

Mitch Nichols reviewed the Avalanche executive summary saying VEP had been named on the first and fifth goals. Separate from that, there are 12 priorities and 19 additional activities noted in the Avalanche Report. He recommended that before becoming involved in any one project, Visit Estes Park should develop criteria such as seasonality, likelihood of projects moving forward, and what high-value segments or clusters VEP is trying to promote. Mitch also stated that the EDC should consider a competitive analysis before moving forward with any of the projects. The report calls on VEP to take a lead role in marketing with the priority of communicating a unified brand. He said the implications of the report provide limited lead roles for VEP in tactical steps and although some direction is provided, the report doesn't provide strategic priorities for the EDC or supporting organizations to maximize organizational effectiveness. Nichols recommended that VEP can certainly support Avalanche recommendations in general, but focusing on developing its own strategic priorities, particularly as related to Destination Management and Product Development initiatives should continue to be VEP's priority.

Destination Management

Nichols said next steps in destination product development are to prioritize potential opportunities both with and without financial and political limitations as a means to begin dialog, and obtain research analysis before any formal decisions are made. He also said that moving forward, it would be important to determine the entity or structure providing direction and oversight; develop and refine criteria for prioritized initiatives, identify roles and resources to stimulate targeted projects and pursue targeted initiatives.

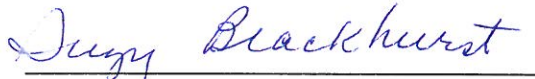
Review of the destination product development survey to vet out initial DPD ideas which surfaced from the DPD Retreat hosted by VEP back in March 2015 was analyzed.

Mitch explained that destination product development could be undertaken as an element of work of Visit Estes Park; an element of work of the EDC; or by a new hybrid entity encompassing the EDC, the Town of Estes Park and Visit Estes Park, better known as the commission model. Preliminary meetings with Elizabeth and each of the VEP Board members revealed a large majority supported the commission model. Following a lengthy discussion, the board directed CEO Fogarty to continue pursuing destination product development within the umbrella of destination management at VEP, while also cultivating relationships with the EDC and Town to provide education and encourage partnership for the commission model long-term.

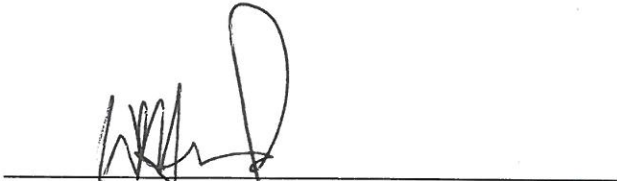
Mitch went on to share that the DPD discussions must be heavily influenced by the organization that is closest to tourism, as that is where the expertise, research and analysis is. Without that focus, projects and goals become diluted and/or side-tracked.

Lodging Tax Increase

Board members reviewed the current tax structure for Estes Park, noting that the sales tax collected inside the city limits of Estes Park totals 10.55%, which is about 2 points below the mean of 30 destinations studied. Board members reviewed their views on acceptable levels of lodging taxes and talked of the need to have clarity as to how resources would be deployed if an increase becomes a ballot issue in the future.


Suzy Blackhurst, Recording Secretary

DATE: 12-1-2015


Bill Almond, Chair

DATE: 12/1/15