



Visit Estes Park
The Destination
Marketing Organization
VisitEstesPark.com

Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

September 1, 2020 at 6:pm
Via: Go To Meeting

Board Members Attending: Chair Person Deborah Gibson, Vice Chair Sean Jurgens, Treasurer Tonya Humiston, Secretary Pat Murphy, Trustee Marie Cenac, Trustee Scott Webermerier, Director McShann Walker

Also Attending:

Kyle Patterson, PIO Rocky Mountain National Park
Eric Lund, President & CEO, Visit Estes Park
Kevin Benes Vice President & CFO, Visit Estes Park
Krystin Campion Executive Admin Assistant
Josh Harms Marketing Director

The meeting was called to order by Chair Deb Gibson at approximately 6:03 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment

REPORTS:

Kyle Patterson gave a report entailing an update of Rocky Mountain National Park. Patterson stated that the July visitor stats were down by 25.7%. This was due to the Covid-19 regulations. The reservations system will be going away as of October 13, and the old system of entering the Park will be back in place. With the start of school there should be more availability to gain entry while the permit system is in place. September is usually the third busiest month of the year for RMNP. Patterson gave an update that the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center is having the H-vac system revamped due to the considerable age of the building. The Beaver Meadows Visitor Center has moved out of the building. They have a trailer outside where the store front will continue to operate out of while weather allows.

Patterson also gave an update on the Cameron Peak fire. They have closed the northwest part of the Park, which is not highly used or populated. Moisture has helped with putting the fire out but until there is a season ending event of rain and/or snow this fire will be longer term due to the amount of beetle kill in the area. This fire will be a full suppression fire. Two teams of fire fighters have been on this fire. There is a hot shot team on this fire as well. We are lucky to have the Hot Shot Team on the Cameron Peak fire for now, as they could be pulled to another fire at any time. Trustee Webermerier expresses his gratitude for the Hot Shot Team. Lund thanks Patterson for her consistent updates.

Town Board update was given by Trustee Cenac and Trustee Webermeier. Cenac mentions that they are focused on the Covid-19 number making sure they stay down by working with public health and Larimer County. Trustee Webermeier mentioned that they are looking to Visit Estes Park on how to pull out of the Covid-19 situation. He also expressed his pleasure in being a part of the Board.

CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE:

Chair Person Gibson announced the regular meeting of the Board of Directors Visit Estes Park (VEP). She wants to bring to attention issues with the Operating Plan for 2021. This is one of the most important responsibilities of the year that must be submitted to the Town and the County Commoners per the IGA no later than September 30th. The VEP yearly timeline requires that the CEO present the Operating Plan by the August meeting to allow the Board discussion and feedback before the September deadline. Chair Person Gibson stated that she could not find the timeline. Vice Chair Jurgens mentions it was sent out in December of 2019. Chair Person Gibson requested that it be resent out before the next meeting. The 2021 Operating Plan draft was not received by the August meeting. Because of this, we will need another meeting in mid-September.

Chair Person Gibson motioned to approve the agenda;

Moved by Trustee Cenac; Seconded by Trustee Webermeier.

Roll call was taken of the sworn-in board members; motion is passed.

Chair Person Gibson then begins the swearing in of Director Mcshan Walker as a new board member. Chair Person Gibson reads the oath and Director McShan repeats after her. He is officially sworn in. Chair Person Gibson also takes a moment to welcome Trustee Webermeier to the board as well.

PRESIDENT & CEO:

Eric Lund starts his CEO report with the meeting he has attended on behalf of VEP including Estes Park town meetings, the EDC and the Estes Park Chamber. He also met with the Colorado Tourism Office regarding upcoming grants, as well as the Covid-19 crisis. VEP has also launched the management dashboards to track effectiveness and trends. These dashboards have been added to the transparency page on VEP's website and will be incorporated into the Operating Plan. VEP is currently working on the fall/winter marketing program. Given the Budget preparation for the remainder of 2020, the focus will be to continue to market the rest of the 2020 year given the exception return VEP saw on the Summer season's marketing. VEP is still going to continue to carefully watch the lodging demand as it is slowly coming back into normal numbers. A link to the forest fire information and air quality has been added to the website for users to have current information. VEP's Covid-19 page is also staying up to date with businesses best practices in regards to safely enjoying Estes Park. VEP is also helping host the Elk Fest this year. Most will be virtual with contest and prizes. The new name will be Elk Fest 2.0 Virtual. By doing this, we can help spread the demand out from mid-September to mid-October. As for Community Engagement, VEP is looking at diversity internally and externally in marketing efforts. These efforts include staff training as well as how to translate diversity to our audiences. The mask program that VEP started is still running, and the masks are still being offered to Stakeholders complimentary and for re-sale as well. Lund updated the deadlines for approval of the Operating Plan and Budget for 2021 in the share folder.

Chair Person Gibson clarifies which timeline and acknowledges that Lund changed from what was sent out in December of 2019. Trustee Webermeier asked what those changes look like for filing. Lund mentions the changed timeline has until the September 30th deadline to submit to the Town and County along with the Budget. This means the board will need to approve the Operating Plan between the 15th and the 22nd of September, which is only giving the Board of Directors about 15 to 22 days to review and approve the Operating Plan. Gibson defers to Jurgens for an idea of what needs to be submitted. Jurgens mentions that per the IGA, it is a hard deadline for the Operating Plan or we cease to exist. At this point, the Operating Plan should have been finalized. It needs to be a final draft not a working draft, and the planning meeting should have been held back in July. He states, we are 6-8 weeks behind right now. Trustee Cenac states that in the previous years' process, the VEP Board had to approve the plan before it could go before the Town and County boards. Vice Chair Jurgens mentions the timeline process and that we must have it to the Town and County by September 30th. Then they will have 30 days to review it and suggest changes. If they want changes, VEP will have until December 5th; but the true hard deadline is September 30th. Chair Person Gibson states that the Board needs to give feedback and then Lund can give a more final draft by the 10th of September and again to another meeting on Tuesday the 15th of September.

PROGRAM REVIEW:

Benes states that the financial update on lodging is down, which is to be expected. Back in May 2020, with the 4 different plans to look at for forecasting the year, the best case was lofty, but we actually exceeded that plan. The reason we were able to exceed this best-case scenario was due to multiple factors. The first factor was a discretionary spending freeze, which allowed for very strategic spending of advertising, giving VEP a large advantage in the leisure travel market. The second major factor was the Board of Directors' decision to increase reserves back in 2019. This not only gave VEP the ability to keep staff but also gave the resources to continue to market efficiently. The third factor was VEP's staff resolve to cutting costs, learning new skills outside their main roles, and the ability to create organic content. All of these factors have impacted the ability to stretch every dollar spent. VEP expected to be down 50-60% but current data shows only a decrease of 39.5%.

Harms brings in the marketing update with information about the transition of summer to fall marketing. This fall campaign focusing on Elk Fest 2.0 will help Estes Park stay at the top of minds. Website highlight is the YOY and is up significantly; and the brand awareness is key. The PR is on a great track and out ranking YOY stats. Cenac asked for elaboration on the stats. Harms explains that it is key that the target of the right avenues are being reached with this current plan.

Lund gives the Group's' sales update, saying that, overall, the group marketing targets are all up--YOY. Vice Chair Jurgens asks about the YOY when in 2019 it is not really counted since this was not a real program in 2019. The point being that YOY numbers are not accurate due to not tracking the last years. Trustee Webermeier asks why weddings are part of the group marketing? Lund states that they are groups. Trustee Webermeier states, adding weddings, tips the scales and to him, groups are groups and weddings are weddings.

Stakeholder Services is presented by Lund. They have been doing really well in the website services, and numbers are much better than expected.

During the discussion, Trustee Webermeier requested to see actual forecasts for 2020 and 2021 in the 2021 Operating Plan. Chair Person Gibson also addressed the commitment to replenish the reserves in 2021 saying they could be pushed back to 2022 and maybe even 2023 to allow VEP to help the community, the town and the businesses here to recover from the Covid-19 crisis and to allow for more marketing to assist in this.

Lund then stated the 2021 Operating Plan presentation: The vision and key goals are the same as last year. Vice Chair Jurgens mentions that the goals need to be adjusted because of the group and international travel goals since Covid-19 prevents these goals. Chair Person Gibson draws attention to what she is seeing in her business of a focus of Covid-19 safe destinations. Estes Park meets those type of requirements and wants to see promoting the healthful safe environment. Lund moves into the media targeted audiences. Vice Chair Person Gibson brings up the 2019 plan for rebranding winter and developing the 4-season destination. Lund accepted feedback. Vice Chair Jurgens asks about the group sales staffing item, which is 1.25 staff member per team. Trustee Webermeier asks about the additional training for Stakeholders, wanting to get more Stakeholders to use the free offering of VEP advertising. Lund mentions Benes overhaul of the Visitor Guides. Benes asked for this topic to be addressed at another board meeting and for the new board members to be brought up to date, since this will be a big change. The presentation transitions to the 2021 Budget. Trustee Webermeier is requesting the 2020 anticipated actual budget numbers. Benes agrees to have the budget numbers to the Board by the next morning to review with their morning coffee. Given the new requests by the Board and the 2021 Operating Plan, only being a draft, another Board of Directors Meeting will be set for September 15, 2020.

Chair Person Gibson brings attention to the agenda item of reviewing the pay freeze. Lund presented that there are 3 new hire employees that have yet to receive their 90-day reviews. The total impact of these raises would be \$6,000.00. Benes says that this is just a way to make up the 90-day review that is due to the Covid-19 pay freeze. All present Board members agreed that these employees should get this and is fair at this point and time.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Trustee Webermeier motions to approve the Minutes from August 4th meeting. Treasure Humiston Seconds this motion and the motion is passed unanimously across the Board.

BOARD COMMENTS.

None were given

ADJOURN.

Chair Person Gibson adjourned the meeting at 8:12pm

Next meeting:

September 15

October 5

November 3



Krystin Champion, Recording Secretary



Deborah Gibson (Oct 19, 2020 10:10 MDT)
Deborah Gibson, Chair Person

DATE: 10/19/2020

DATE: Oct 19, 2020