



Visit Estes Park

Board of Directors Regular Meeting
Thursday, January 25, 2023 at 2:00 PM
Via ZOOM Meeting

Board Members Attending:

Chair Sean Jurgens, Vice Chair Deborah Gibson, Director Rich Chiappe, Director Pat Murphy, Trustee Frank Lancaster, Director Nick Smith and Director Jerusha Rice

Others in Attendance:

Kyle Patterson- RMNP
Colleen DePasquale, Chamber of Commerce
John Chmil- VEP attorney
Bill Brown- STR discussion
Jane Livingston- STR discussion
Steve Lane- BAS1S Architecture

VEP Staff:

Kara Franker, CEO
Michael Zumbaugh, CFO
Rebecca Domenico-Gelsinger, COO
Heidi Barfels, CMO
Rachel Ward Oppermann, Director of Advocacy and Sustainability
Kendall Akin, Creative Manager
Dana Paiement, Senior Destination Development Manager
Colleen Sovey, Community Relations Manager
Claire Molle, Communications Manager

Meeting is called to order at 2:02 p.m.

SWEARING IN OF NICK SMITH

Nick Smith is sworn in as a new board member.

DISCUSSION OF NEW BOARD POSITIONS

Director Jerusha Rice volunteers for both Secretary and Treasurer positions.

Nick Smith expresses his willingness to volunteer for a role.

Chair Sean Jurgens volunteers to continue as Chair.

Vice Chair Deborah Gibson expresses her willingness to volunteer as Chair.

VOTING ON BOARD POSITIONS

Chair Sean Jurgens calls for a vote on board positions with Sean Jurgens as Chair, Deborah Gibson as Vice Chair, and Jerusha Rice as Secretary and Treasurer.

All members vote yes, and the board positions pass unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA & MINUTES:

Chair Sean Jurgens requests a motion to approve the agenda; Director Nick Smith and Secretary Jerusha Rice second. The agenda and minutes are approved.

APPROVAL OF MEETING LOCATION AND NOTICE POSTING

A board vote is held to approve the notice and posting of the VEP board meeting locations. Trustee Frank Lancaster moves, Director Rich Chiappe seconds, and the motion is approved.

ATTORNEY REVIEW BY JOHN CHMIL

VEP attorney John Chmil provides an overview of the board's statutory entity status in Colorado, outlining its functions, duties, and adherence to legal provisions. He covers topics such as open meetings law, open records act, bylaws, ethical principles, TABOR, and property taxes.

CALL FOR TOWN BOARD UPDATES:

Trustee Frank Lancaster reports that the town voted to move the Whiskey Warmup to Bond Park due to construction.

EX-OFFICIO UPDATES

Updates are provided by Kyle Patterson of RMNP and Colleen DePasquale with the Chamber of Commerce. John Schnipkoweit with the EDC is not in attendance.

PROGRAM REVIEW:

1. CEO Kara Franker gives her report. Franker says she is in NYC for TravMedia's IMM Summit. She reports that she spoke on a panel yesterday about our efforts in AI and Heidi has been meeting with journalists. Franker says we have sold 1200 tickets for Frozen Dead Guy Days (FDGD) so far and the team has a very robust promotional plan in place. Franker reviews recent coverage of FDGD on CBS Sunday Morning special and says that would have been worth over \$500,000 if you were to purchase this kind of broadcast time. Franker announces that there will be a PBS documentary about FDGD that will air on Feb 11 at 5 pm.

Franker reviews FDGD advertising and creative, and describes how it's different from the marketing our destination usually presents. Franker shows examples of paid ads on social, billboards, print ads, email campaigns, and an Expedia listicle. Franker says the VEP team has been working with lodging partners to put together FDGD packages. She explains that we want people to stay for multiple nights for FDGD and lodging packages help to promote this.

Franker reviews the success of VEP's Catch the Glow events in December. She reports that the Frosty Beer Fest had 907 RSVPs, and Catch the Glow Family Day had 2,592 RSVPs. She says the Sweets Stroll was also hugely popular, so VEP is planning to bring that back for FDGD with a Frozen Sweets Stroll.

Franker reviews data from the State of the American Traveler from December 2023, which shows that AI travel planning tools are continuing to grow, with 3 out of 4 business travelers saying they either use AI to plan their travel or plan to use it in the future.

Franker reviews a US Travel Association study showing the United States at #17 among global travel. She says the data shows that people want to come to the U.S., but other countries have gained market share while we have not. Franker says we will see a big push in the US Travel Association lobbying the federal government to get more of the global market share.

2. CMO Heidi Barfels gives her marketing update. Barfels reports that VEP had the Travel Mom and Tommy DiDario back in town. They gave us national TV coverage and

promoted winter travel. Barfels gives a review of event marketing. She showcases the events carousel, and reviews its higher than industry average results from 2023. Barfels says the VEP website has been rocking with substantial increases across all metrics, especially with Catch the Glow (CTG) Season. Barfels reviews of reels John created for CTG season. She reviews Catch the Glow Family Day and guest Nikki DeLoach, and reviews all the extra coverage Nikki DeLoach gave us on her social media pages and wants to do more in the future.

Barfels reviews Craft Beer Week support, including a blog, reel and paid social media ad that did 11 times better than the industry average. She gives the PR results from the year-end recap, showing that every metric increased dramatically in 2023 and a ROI that almost tripled from 2022 to 2023.

Barfels reviews press releases and recent FDGD media hits and print and broadcast coverage among Denver TV outlets. She shares print media coverage, including an article about boutique hotels showing the Trailborn and an article in 5280 showcasing the First Peoples Festival and and Craft Beer Week, and CNN coverage about Dry January that resulted from a media trip hosting writer Emily Pennington.

3. COO Rebecca Domenico-Gelsinger starts off the community relations report. Domenico-Gelsinger gives an overview of the Community Roundtable that is coming up. Where the team will speak about new initiatives.

Senior Destination Development Manager Dana Paiement gives updates on the plan for Earth Week coming up in April, which will be a collection of different events throughout town, including an event with Nick Molle for an environmental film festival as well as spreading the word about sustainability practices. Paiement gives a review of the Wheel of the World partnership. This is also a great opportunity for some of our local businesses to be featured on Wheel of the World's website.

Domenico-Gelsinger reviews the things we did to support the town's First People's Festival, including marketing and sponsorship dollars as well as a UTE stem exhibit that Rachel Oppermann put together. The team wrote a blog and there was a paid ad. She gives a review of partners that the team connected with this month.

Domenico-Gelsinger reports that Community Relations Manager Colleen Sovey attended the Destinations Colorado Meetings Showcase and collected 280 meeting planner leads. She reviews offers from Beyond Holidays, with some of the top offers

being Castle Mountain lodge scavenger Hunt, 12 Days at Bird and Jim, and Latitude 105's holiday specials. Domenico-Gelsinger reviews the success of Holiday Passport and group sales from December, which showed 12 new leads, 1600 requested room nights, and an estimated value of \$257,000.

4. CFO Mike Zumbaugh gives the financial report starting with a review of the new intelligence dashboard, which is available for the board to use to look at different VEP metrics at their fingertips. Zumbaugh says a research consultant will join us next month to dig into this deeper, and it will be available on the website as well.

Zumbaugh says Rocky Mountain Lodging Report is disbanding, so December 2023 will be the last month we are able to see. He says VEP is looking at other options to gather this data, including gathering it on our own. Zumbaugh reviews STR data, showing that occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR have decreased. He reviews a graph of STR data comparing this year to prior years. Zumbaugh shares the Estes Park Visitor Center count, which we now are able to see a full year by month and compare to prior years.

Zumbaugh reports the revenues for 6E funds at a little over 5 million through November. He reports that lodging tax revenues are down 6.7 percent for the month and down 1.5 percent compared to 2022. Zumbaugh says that compared to budget, we are up 1.9 percent for the month and up 3.2 percent YTD. He shows 2023 lodging tax collections by categories, Mike says with the new dashboard, we will be sharing this data month to month. Zumbaugh shows a new display of lodging tax revenues reflecting the month of stay which gives a little bit more accurate picture than showing when the revenue was collected.

ACCEPTANCE OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Chair Sean Jurgens asks for a motion to accept Financial Statements. Director Pat Murphy moves to accept financials. Director Jerusha Rice seconds. All vote yes. The financial statements pass unanimously.

REPORT BY STEVE LANE ABOUT REVITALIZATION OF 116 E. ELKHORN AVENUE

Steve Lane of BAS1S Architecture presents ideas for revitalizing a property on Elkhorn Avenue, where The Slab has been located and discusses potential uses and costs.

CEO Franker explains that this is just an exploration of ideas, not an effort to move forward with anything yet.

DISCUSSION ON STR LEGISLATION (BILL C)

Bill Brown gives an overview of Bill C and the potential impact it could have on the Estes Valley. Jane Livingston presents concerns about a proposed bill affecting short-term rentals (STRs). The board discusses the potential economic impact and expresses the need to gather more information. The board determines that CEO Franker should reach out to the town and county to gauge their approach before determining whether or not VEP should take any stance. Franker says she will do so right away.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joan Hooper of the League of Women Voters shares that she is concerned about Bill C and the negative impacts that it could have.

ADJOURN:

The meeting is adjourned at 3:55 pm.

Upcoming Meeting: February 22 at 2 p.m. via Zoom.

Claire, Mollé, Recording Secretary

Jerusha Rice, Secretary

DATE: _____

DATE: _____