



Visit Estes Park

**Board of Directors Regular Meeting
Thursday, August 1, 2024 at 2:00 PM
Via ZOOM Meeting**

Board Members Attending:

Sean Jurgens, Deborah Gibson, Pat Murphy, Nick Smith, Kirby Hazelton, Rich Chiappe

Others in Attendance:

Joan Hooper- League of Women Voters
Carlie Bangs- Town of Estes Park
Scott Moulton- Estes Park Housing Authority
Ryan Bross- Bank of Colorado
Colleen DePasquale- Chamber of Commerce
Abbey Irvine- Haynie and Company
Jason Van Tatenhove- Colorado Switchblade
Cato Kraft- Estes Park Nonprofit Network
Greg Rosener

VEP Staff:

Kara Franker, CEO
Michael Zumbaugh, CFO
Heidi Barfels, CMO
Cindy Mackin, CSO
Rebecca Domenico-Gelsinger, Operations Director
Dana Paiement, Destination Development Director
Rachel Ward Oppermann, Advocacy & Sustainability Director
Kendall Akin, Creative Manager
John Berry, Photographer
Claire Molle, Communications Manager

Meeting is called to order at 2:01 p.m.

CONSENT AGENDA & MINUTES:

Chair Sean Jurgens requests a motion to approve the agenda and minutes from the previous board meeting. Director Nick Smith moves to approve, and Director Pat Murphy seconds. The agenda and minutes are approved.

CALL FOR TOWN BOARD UPDATES:

Trustee Hazelton comments on the wildfire situation. She says the town has been receiving emails of concern over whether to tell people to come or not to come. Hazelton says these considerations are all being taken very seriously to balance economic impacts with life and safety. Hazelton asks Visit Estes Park to support the town in this message of balance. She thanks the VEP staff for putting emergency resources on the website and social media.

Hazelton says the Town Board recently posted an update to the B&B ordinance after coming to a consensus and updating the code to better align with how they fit into the lodging community. She says the town is also planning a tentative study session on August 27th about short-term rentals.

Chair Sean Jurgens chimes in that Visit Estes Park is not tourism at any cost in relation to the wildfires. He says Quality Inn is not at the point where it can just cancel people's reservations. They are also trying to take in people who need help, and they are working to strike this balance.

Vice Chair Deborah Gibson says she really appreciated the timely and multiple notices from the Visit Estes Park team each day, which allowed them to keep their guests informed and helped them find balance. She says at Rams Horn they have had a couple of owners leave early, and only one rental guest cancel, while others offered their reservation to people who need shelter from evacuations.

CALL FOR BOARD MEMBER UPDATES:

There are no board member updates.

CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:

There is no public comment.

EX-OFFICIO UPDATES

Colleen DePasquale provides updates from the Chamber of Commerce. She reports

that 57 applicants have applied for direct grants and 82 for marketing grants. She says she is preparing an update on these grants for the Town Trustees.

Carlie Bangs provides an update from the first childcare-specific stakeholder meeting this morning. She says there will be a few public meetings next week and they are working for a draft strategy budget to be ready for August 27th, which will then need to go through the same budget approval process that the Visit Estes Park budget has to go through. She says they are still working on tuition assistance and are thankful for the 6E funds that can continue the tuition assistance. She says they just received the first report from EVICS for the first half of the year, so we can see how these funds have been benefiting the community.

Scott Moulton provides an update from the Housing Authority. He says they have been leasing the Prospector Apartments, are set to close on Beaver Meadows, and are currently under contract to convert all 90 units at Fall River Village to workforce housing. He says this is a very complicated process that would result in 74 or so workforce units at Fall River Village. He says on August 13, they will be in front of the town board requesting the use of the short-term rental linkage fee.

PRESENTATION OF THE 2023 AUDIT

CFO Mike Zumbaugh introduces Abbey Irvine, Audit Manager from Haynie & Company, who will be presenting the 2023 audit of Visit Estes Park, which has been completed, finalized, and submitted to the state of Colorado. She says the deadline was yesterday. She says the audit process starts every year around May which is required of Visit Estes Park. She says the purpose of the audit is to review the amounts and accounts in the financial statements and is pleased to announce that the results were very clean. She says everyone should have a copy of the audit report and she is happy to answer any questions from the audit report. She says they also audit the town of Estes Park.

She reviews the required communications showing that there were no new accounting standards issued this year that were significant to Visit Estes Park. She says the receipt of the 6E funds acting as a passthrough for Visit Estes Park was something new for this year, but was straightforward. She says they determined there were no major changes that needed to occur for this. She says the audit requires them to review more significant amounts in-depth and found all of these to be reasonable and consistent with what would be expected based on the revenue-sharing agreement that is in place. She says they finalized the audit and filed it with the state and says there were no audit adjustments. In terms of internal controls, they make sure that the design of the organization is appropriate and consistent with the size of the organization, which was

all found to be reasonable. She says most government organizations in Colorado are required to report a Tabor Reserve, which is currently around \$292,000, and they have been discussing with CFO Zumbaugh about whether the pass-through 6E funds should be excluded from this. It was determined that it should be excluded, so this will be one small change. She says this doesn't change the bottom line, it will just be a reclassification amount.

Trustee Hazelton asks Irvine to speak more on the discussion about contracts with marketing agencies and more specifically, what the marketing contract conversations were about. Irvine says the conversations were about accounting requirements with governmental funds and whether we should recognize what has been received during the year. She says ultimately, what was decided was that the 6E funds don't fall under this accounting rule as it is an exchange transaction. Hazelton comments that she is thankful for the inclusion of the 6E funds as a passthrough.

Zumbaugh says he will adjust the Tabor Reserve number on next month's financial statements.

PROGRAM REVIEW:

1. Kara Franker gives the CEO Report and presentation of the Operating Plan. She starts by stating that she has been offered a position as President and CEO of the Monroe County Tourist Development Council in Key West, FL. She says she has not officially signed a contract and will share more information as soon as it's available.

Franker says VEP has been working very hard on working to balance the fire messaging and making sure we are getting all the best information out there. She says we are following the crisis communication plan that we have in place. Franker asks for any questions or concerns about how we have been handling this. No one shares any questions or concerns. Franker reviews that some of the team was able to attend the Destinations International Annual Convention, which is the organization that oversees our accreditation. She says Heidi, Cindy and herself all spoke, and John Berry performed with the band at the conference all in front of an international audience. She says she was so proud of how the team shined nationally. Franker reviews some of the news about Sundance. Franker says the team has been assisting Visit Boulder with anything they need in order to be able to land the festival. Franker shares an article from writer Nate Jones cheering for Boulder to be the pick.

Franker moves into a review of the 2025 Operating Plan. She says any suggestion regarding editing the grammar/writing should be handled offline to

save everyone some time and asks that folks stop her for any overarching ideas. She says the board will also still have time to get their comments in after the presentation today because the Operating Plan will not be voted on until the next VEP Board Meeting.

CMO Heidi Barfels says that the deadline for board comments on the Operating Plan is Friday, August 9.

OPERATING PLAN REVIEW

Franker presents the Operating Plan to the board slide by slide. The board is invited to comment as Franker goes through the presentation.

Here are the key takeaways from the presentation of the Visit Estes Park Operating Plan:

1. **Mission and Vision:** The mission and vision remain unchanged, focusing on promoting Estes Park as a destination while emphasizing the importance of destination stewardship.
2. **Destination Stewardship:** The plan highlights a shift from merely increasing visitor numbers ("heads in beds") to a more holistic approach that balances economic benefits, resident quality of life, historical preservation, and environmental protection.
3. **Organizational Stewardship:** Key organizational goals include offering best-in-class experiences, promoting responsible tourism, supporting the local economy, and enhancing partnerships with key stakeholders.
4. **Target Audiences:** The plan targets loyal visitors, active outdoorsy individuals, couples, families, meeting planners, sustainable tourism enthusiasts, digital nomads, and pre-retirees.
5. **Marketing and PR Strategies:** The plan emphasizes digital programmatic advertising, social media, storytelling, and public relations to enhance brand awareness and drive visitation. A new initiative includes creating an in-house influencer, "Claire from Estes," to authentically showcase the destination.
6. **Seasonal and Event Focus:** Extending the tourist season is a priority, with key events like Skijoring, Frozen Dead Guy Days, and the winter holiday season. The plan also focuses on boosting visitation during need periods in April and August.
7. **Budget and Administration:** The financial aspects of the plan focus on maintaining high standards in financial management, human resources, and data-driven decision-making. The budget is designed to be flexible to adapt to changing needs.
8. **Community Engagement and Advocacy:** The plan stresses the importance of community relations, ensuring that residents' and visitors' sentiments are understood and incorporated into planning. It also promotes partnerships with local businesses and organizations.
9. **Strategic Use of Technology:** The plan includes leveraging AI and technology in marketing, storytelling, and customer engagement to improve efficiency and outreach.
10. **Measuring Success:** Key performance indicators (KPIs) include tax revenue,

occupancy rates, stakeholder engagement, and various marketing metrics, with an emphasis on continuous evaluation and adaptation.

Trustee Hazelton asks if the VEP Board ever sees a full media plan for each year. Franker says that we do a media flow-chart with the media buyer, which is included in the board packet when it is ready each year, but it doesn't end up in the Operating Plan because it's too early. Hazelton comments that she thinks it's ok to not hit the KPIs as long as the board knows why the goals were not hit at the end of the year and thinks this would be a fair thing to do. She says she appreciates having the KPI numbers. She says she thinks it would be helpful to revisit the key organizational goals to see which goals we did and did not hit. Franker says that each of these goals are referenced and connected back to the Operating Plan in the Annual Report, and there would be other ways to check in throughout the year as well. Hazelton asks what the ultimate goal is for Frozen Dead Guy Days, asking at what point we decide that the ROI is still justifiable or if we are spending too much on one weekend. Franker says that we won't see the robust effects of an event until years 3 to 5. Franker says the goal is to increase the overnight stays. She says there has also been an off-the-charts PR and brand awareness ROI from Frozen Dead Guy Days. Franker says staff has talked a lot about wanting to communicate the value of FDGD and will continue to have these conversations. Vice Chair Deborah Gibson emphasizes the value of winter brand awareness that Frozen Dead Guy Days has for Estes Park. Kirby says maybe VEP should add one of the Key Organizational Goals for FDGD to be able to decide what the overall overnight stay goal would be for this. Franker chimes in that the value of organic media coverage is over \$363 thousand from FDGD alone. Hazelton asks what the indirect expenses on the budget piece is which Zumbaugh confirms as overhead such as office rent. Hazelton asks if Franker could share how the organization decides on trade shows and who goes where for different conferences. Franker explains that we need to be at regional trade shows where there are opportunities to get in front of smaller agencies who might want to consider Estes Park. Franker says another key strategy for conferences is partnerships, such as the importance of being present at CTO events. Franker asks CSO Cindy Mackin to comment on this because trade shows are so important to her. Mackin says she believes that the best thing you can do for your staff is contribute to their education and that having opportunities to speak at these conferences leaves an enormous impact when our own team is able to talk about the latest and greatest in tourism. Mackin says the IPW conference is one of the greatest areas for opportunity to grow in the international market landscape. Mackin says IPW was a huge success in raising awareness about international travel to Estes Park during our needs periods, and this is just one example of success from attending a trade show and/or conference. Mackin says Visit Estes Park does not attend nearly as many trade shows as Visit Loveland. Hazelton says she will share the rest of her thoughts

about the Operating Plan for later.

2. CMO Heidi Barfels provides the Marketing Report. Barfels shares some of the recent marketing materials from the construction campaign, including creating an Estes Park Shuttle Map showcasing alternate routes and tips for getting around town, which will be paired with an editorial about what's new as far as getting around town. Barfels shares that the construction podcast is also now live. Barfels shares the creative assets from the new Staycation Campaign. She says that the idea is to focus on staycations for the end of August targeted at the drive markets in the Front Range, directed specifically to people in that market. Barfels says there is also strategic placement of photos depending on the age demographics of the different areas. Barfels reviews the new Instant Experience ad, which was just launched on Facebook, which is a unique and interactive ad. She announces that we are launching ads for the Rocky Mountain Roamer which have been designed to look like you are chatting with the travel assistant. She says these will also be at the airport at baggage claim in Denver so people can start planning as soon as they arrive. Barfels presents the launch of the Estes Inspired campaign, which started with Wendy Koenig to align with the Olympics. Barfels shares highlights of recent media coverage, including an article about Estes Park in Travel and Leisure.

2. Cindy Mackin presents the Community Relations report. She announces that the VEP team secured the permit for a giant LED mappable light show tree for the holidays in Bond Park. She thanks the team for getting this done and says that she feels this will be the centerpiece to bring people here and get people excited. She says the tree is the castle and the team will build around it and reminded the group that it will take 3-5 years to build this event up to what it can be and that this is a marathon, not a sprint. She says this will start the extension of the season that goes into Skijoring and Frozen Dead Guy Days. Mackin presents events happening for August Art Month and says the team is hoping to grow this even more for next year. Mackin shares recent connections with partners around town. She shares the first Thank You Activation at the Rooftop Parade which made people happy and allowed us to give back to the community with gift bags filled with local gifts for guests. She shares that the team was also a part of the Larimer County Fair & Rodeo Parade handing out the bags as well. Mackin shares that Lauren Molle has been working around town handing thank you bags out to people visiting and making peoples' day with welcome gifts. Mackin shares the upcoming activation dates for the Thank You Campaign on the 16th and 25th of August.

3. CFO Mike Zumbaugh presents the financial report, beginning with short-term rental data, showing all three metrics for June are up, but the average daily rate is down compared to last year. The month of June showed an increase of over 12 percent in the visitor center count compared to June of 2023. Zumbaugh shows the contribution to the town of 6E funds with over 1.2 million dollars through the month of June. He reports that lodging tax revenues were down for the month of May by 0.8 percent compared to last year, but there were 3 major properties that had not yet remitted their reporting, so with those dollars reported, lodging tax revenues would have been about 10.5 percent ahead of May 2023 and would be ahead about 2.7 percent for May year to date. Compared to budget, we would be 10.9 percent ahead of budget and 6.8 percent ahead of budget, including the extra dollars that have not yet been reported. He shares the tax collections broken down by lodging categories.

ACCEPTANCE OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Chair Sean Jurgens moves to accept the financial statements as presented, and Director Pat Murphy seconds, all vote in favor. The financial statements are accepted.

The meeting is adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

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

Claire Mollé

Claire, Mollé, Recording Secretary

JRice

Jerusha Rice, Secretary

DATE: 08/22/2024

DATE: 8/23/24






July 2024 Board Meeting Minutes_DRAFT

Final Audit Report

2024-08-23

Created:	2024-08-22
By:	Claire Molle (claire@visitestepark.com)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAACDz6AowpmaCCFQHNitgLB1VX8KhBrOYs

"July 2024 Board Meeting Minutes_DRAFT" History

-  Document created by Claire Molle (claire@visitestepark.com)
2024-08-22 - 10:23:06 PM GMT
-  Document emailed to Jerush Rice (jrice@visitestepark.com) for signature
2024-08-22 - 10:23:10 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Jerush Rice (jrice@visitestepark.com)
2024-08-23 - 12:43:16 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Jerush Rice (jrice@visitestepark.com)
Signature Date: 2024-08-23 - 12:44:12 PM GMT - Time Source: server
-  Agreement completed.
2024-08-23 - 12:44:12 PM GMT