



Visit Estes Park
The Destination
Marketing Organization
VisitEstesPark.com

**Board of Directors Regular Meeting
Thursday, July 27, 2023 at 2:00 PM
Via ZOOM Meeting**

Board Members Attending:

Chair Sean Jurgens, Vice Chair Deborah Gibson, Secretary McShan Walker, Director Pat Murphy, Director Jerusha Rice, Director Rich Chiappe and Director and Town Trustee Frank Lancaster

Others in Attendance:

Kyle Patterson
Colleen DePasquale
Jeff Hanrahan- Trail Gazette

VEP Staff:

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

The meeting is called to order at 2:02 p.m.

Meeting begins with the swearing in of Frank Lancaster.

CONSENT AGENDA & MINUTES:

1. Overview of Agenda

Chair Sean Jurgens gives an overview of the agenda items.

Chair Sean Jurgens asks for a motion to approve the agenda and minutes.

2. Approve Agenda

Director Frank Lancaster moves to approve. Chair Sean Jurgens seconds. All vote yes. The agenda and minutes are approved.

CALL FOR TOWN BOARD UPDATES:

Director and Town Trustee Frank Lancaster says there has been discussion about the Farmers Market changing locations which is being resolved and that construction progress around town is going well.

BOARD MEMBER UPDATES:

There are no updates from board members.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

There is no public comment.

REPORTS:

1. Kyle Patterson begins the update on RMNP saying they have just sent out a news release about replacing a section of boardwalk on Sprague Lake. Time Entry system is going well and most visitors are aware of it when they arrive. RMNP is continuing to move forward with environmental assessment. Articles about Yosemite National Park pulling the Timed Entry system and is now experiencing heavy visitor use, resulting in long lines and delayed emergency response. Patterson says National parks close to large populations, like Rocky and Yosemite are not seeing a decrease in visitation. CTO has asked Kyle to speak to the state on visitor use management in which she highlighted visitor use efforts and partnerships with other tourism directors. Kyle ended presentation with the "Do Estes Right" campaign.
2. Colleen DePasquale gives an update from the Chamber of Commerce saying the Chamber has started 100 visits in 100 days program. They go in and talk to business owners and managers and sharing photos and videos on social media. They have already completed about 35 visits. Colleen says the Chamber Golf tournament is coming up on August 11, 2023. The Chamber is creating a new event which will occur in September which will be a mini golf tournament. Colleen says she has also been appointed to the United Way board.

PROGRAM REVIEW:

1. CEO Franker gives her report. Franker says she is in Boston at the summer meeting for the US Travel Association with which she sits on the board of delegates. Franker reviews a slide from the US Travel Association reviewing how the government is failing travelers and their plans to talk to legislators to improve these things. Franker shares a report coming out of Skift's 2023 Travel Report saying they think AI will generate an additional 8.5 billion dollars in opportunities. Franker says VEP is staying ahead of the curve with AI while others are being timid. Franker says VEP is partnering with Intentful which will provide improved content generation using AI. VEP is also working an outward facing AI technology

called Guide Geek. Franker continues with a report on the Destinations International Conference which she, Mike, Heidi and John attended. John attended as a member of the DI House Band. Franker says the team all gave terrific presentation and VEP was also given its DMAP reaccreditation. Franker reports that VEP is a finalist for an award at GovCon for the execution of Frozen Dead Guy Days. Franker presents a study from TripAdvisor and what they are seeing for summer travel. Franker says VEP hosted all of the Colorado CEOs as part of a group called CADMO, who all came to Estes Park. Franker says it was an awesome experience.

2. CEO Kara Franker moves into the review of the 2024 VEP Operating Plan. Franker says she will talk everyone through the big parts and then the board will receive copies to review on their own. Franker reviews key points of the Operating plan including the following points.

Introduction and Future Planning

Visit Estes Park is planning for the future by utilizing the latest technology and data capabilities to reach the right visitors at the right time with the right message to visit the destination. Visit Estes Park is harnessing the power of artificial intelligence to create meaningful content sharing our community values.

Visit Estes Park will have new opportunities to encourage visitor dispersion, deliver safety updates, and educate guests on responsible ways to enjoy our environment while making memories to last a lifetime.

Destination Stewardship

Destination Stewardship is a huge piece and a top priority for the organization.

Destination Product and Experience Development

The organization is committed to creating more event and product experiences for visitors.

The AI is figuring out new KPIs as the organization moves forward. Sustainable travel is a top priority for the organization.

Mission and Vision Statements

The board members were asked to review the mission and vision statements and ensure that they represent the leaders of the community.

The mission is to be a year-round family-friendly tourism and event destination that supports the vibrant mountain town with a balance of financial success, positive and memorable experiences for guests, and a meaningful quality of life for the community.

Brand Attributes

The brand attributes launched last year are still adequate for this year.

The board members were asked to do a deep dive and ensure that the brand attributes are still adequate or even above that for 2024

Visitor targeting continues to evolve

Visitor targeting continues to evolve and morph as the company analyzes data from partners like Epsilon and Expedia. In addition to digital marketing, the company has launched in-person visitor intercept surveys to gather demographic information. Key organizational goals include increasing funds and marketing for Frozen Dead Guy Days and late August events, as well as creating a holiday winter wonderland experience in Bond Park

Organizational Goals for Community Relations and Services

Key organizational goals were discussed, with a focus on budget and KPIs. Marketing communications, community relations and services, and finance and administration were identified as the main columns for budget allocation. Heidi, Rebecca, and Mike were identified as the heads of each column.

Feedback on Operating Plan

Feedback on the operating plan was requested, with a deadline of August 15. Changes would be implemented by the August board meeting and approved by the joint town county meeting in September.

Suggestions were made for including more visuals in the presentation, such as graphs and pictures.

3. CMO Heidi Barfels gives the marketing update. Barfels shows some of the recent paid media efforts including gamified ads and the partnership with Expedia. Barfels also reviews recent social media engagement. Barfels shows some new content including a new blog about safety in Summer storm completed in a partnership with RMNP. Barfels discusses Instagram's new social media platform Threads and displays some recent reels the team created. Barfels explains a campaign completed with The Travel Mom which showcased Estes Park to tv audiences across the country in target markets. Barfels shares some recent articles featuring Estes Park including things like Elk Fest and the new Trailborn property.
4. COO Rebecca Domenico-Gelsinger gives her update on VEP's Community Relations efforts. Domenico-Gelsinger says the team has been visiting partners around town. She says Ole International Kitchen has open up, Vista Host Hotel Management will open in late spring at the Elkhorn Lodge location, and a new distillery, Hogback has opened. She says the Wapiti has moved to bigger locations, and the YMCA received a grant which will help support rehabilitation efforts following Covid19. Domenico-Gelsinger says Beyond Summer offers are going very well with great community participation. Domenico-Gelsinger says Colleen recently attended the CSAE Conference. Domenico-Gelsinger explains efforts on Extend the Season, with Dana spending a lot of time on it. She shows a card that Kendall created to help connect business owners to lighting and Simpy Christmas to help them decorate. She moves on to show the

Isabella Bird landing page and says Dana is still working on details for the celebration which will be added to this page. Domenico-Gelsinger reminds everyone of the Community Picnic taking place August 23. Domenico-Gelsinger shares VEP sponsorships including the Estes Park MTB Team, National Philanthropy Day, and Estes Park Cycling Coalition. She then reviews group sales numbers showing 7 leads in June with about 23-hundred room nights and estimated economic value of \$429,999.

5. CFO Mike Zumbaugh gives financial updates. Zumbaugh begins with the Rocky Mountain Lodging Report. The team reported positive results in terms of occupancy and revenue per available room, and they plan to reach out to more lodging partners to participate in the Rocky Mountain Lodging Report. Zumbaugh also discusses the lodging tax dollars sent to the town for workforce, housing, and childcare processes. Zumbaugh reports year-to-date collections showing actual stay month of stay collections are down 8.6% from 2022, but some properties were missing from their May remittances, which may explain part of the decrease. Year-to-date collections are down 9% from 2022 figures but up 2.4% compared to the budgeted amount. The 2023 budget was planned with a 1.5% decrease from 2022 figures. There is discussion on the lodging tax revenue. The lodging tax figure for the town includes sales tax from all business activities of the lodging properties, which makes a true comparison between the two sets of figures impossible. There are discrepancies in the entities that the town shows as lodging properties but have not remitted lodging taxes, which is being investigated. Zumbaugh adds the annual audit for 2022 will be presented at the board meeting in August.

ACTION ITEM: Accept financial statements as presented

Secretary and Treasurer McShan Walker requests to approve the financial statements as presented. All vote yes. Financial statements are approved.

ADJOURN:

The meeting is adjourned.

Upcoming Meeting: Regular Board Meeting on August 24 at 2pm, 2023 via Zoom.

The town should have sent out a calendar invite for the Town & County joint meeting on September 26 from 4:30 to 6 pm via Zoom.

Claire Molle

Claire Molle, Recording Secretary

Mcshan Walker

Mcshan Walker (Dec 5, 2023 11:19 MST)

Mcshan Walker, Secretary

DATE: Dec 5, 2023

DATE: Dec 5, 2023










VEP July 27, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes by Claire_for signaure

Final Audit Report

2023-12-05

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