

ALBANY COUNTY TOURISM JOINT POWERS BOARD
210 E. CUSTER ST., LARAMIE, WY
MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2020

Present via Zoom: Kathleen Bertoncelj, Page Malmstrom, Kaley Holyfield, Rebecca Walsh, Mike McShane, Pat Gabriel-Laramie City Council Liaison, Brad Jackson, Scott Larson-Executive Director, Lyndee Johnston-Office Assistant
Absent: Sara Haugen-Marketing Manager, Terri Jones-Albany County Commissioner
Guests: Sarah Brown Matthews, Shawn Faxon

1. Regular Board Meeting called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Interim Chair Mr. Mike McShane

a) Confirmation of a Quorum - YES

b) Introduction of Guests if Any – Sarah Brown Matthews from the Pilot Hill Project. Shawn Faxon from This Is Laramie.

2. Additions and/or Corrections to agenda

a) Mr. Larson stated that Ms. Bertoncelj had sent some minor corrections which he will change.

3. Consent Agenda

a) May Minutes

b) Profits and Loss Budget vs. Actual – Mr. Larson reported that we surpassed the total projected income for the fiscal year which is great. Total expenses for the year came to 81.8% with marketing expenses contributing 81.2%.

c) Advertising and Grants – Mr. Larson stated that the only other notable item on the report was the ViaMedia March Madness ad which Mr. Larson was able to repurpose that money towards another advertising opportunity instead of watching the money go to waste.

Motion by Mr. Jackson, seconded by Mr. McShane that the Consent Agenda be approved and that each specific action on the Consent Agenda be approved as indicated. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Old Business

a) Pilot Hill Project – Mrs. Matthews presented to the board that they did go in front of the state board of land commissioners and the Pilot Hill land exchange was approved. At the end of June the lease agreement will get finalized and they expect to close on the property around the end of July or beginning of August. Mrs. Matthews is optimistic that around July/August they will become an active recreation area. She also stated that her team has been working hard on getting the master land use plan completed. Part of the grant that the tourism board gave to the project was used to promote the meetings to establish this plan. Mrs. Matthews stated that they had 200 participants in person, 100 people in side meetings, and approximately 95 people participated online since they have been promoting the project throughout the community. She also presented an ad that has been running in the Boomerang newspaper as well as on social media with the “All Trails Lead To Laramie” logo attached informing the public of the Virtual Summit on 6/17/20. The public will be able to ask questions and review the plans. Mrs. Matthews stated that they have around \$1,000 left of the grant. She reported that the overall plan ended up being 130 pages long which also features the ACTB logo and she can provide the board a printed document of the plan. Mrs. Matthews then showed the board the satellite plan of the trail systems. They are adding an additional 43 trails in the area once the project is completed. There will be some trails designated for just pedestrians and accessible for all abilities and some trails will be education-based. Mrs. Matthews stated that in Phase 1 they are focusing on the pedestrian only trails initially, but would like to complete one trail that stretches to the top of the mountain by this fall. By September and October she expects the ground work to begin and that it will take three years to fully complete Phase 1. Phase 1 is the largest section with the most trails and will be the most expensive portion of the plan out of all three phases. They are currently working with the Forest Service and the Wildlife Habitat Management Area to build out trails – this will be a part of Phase 3. Ms. Holyfield asked what Mrs. Matthews’s advice is for folks if trails aren’t built, but the area is open to the public. Mrs. Matthews stated that they will label the routes that are constructed and will be announcing to the public when the other regions are available. Lastly, Mrs. Matthews stated that they had been planning a “thank you” event for all the community partners who made this possible, but they will instead be making a video to celebrate with the community. This will also feature the “All Trails Lead To Laramie” logo. With this all of the funds granted will be used by the end of the year.

5. Financial Reports

a) Condensed FY 2020-21 Budget – Mr. Larson included the article and proposed budget that was printed in the paper on June 8th. ACTB is legally obligated to announce this to the public. Mr. Larson asked the board members to approve the proposed budget. The board had no adjustments at this time, but Mr. Jackson stated that it should be considered a living-breathing document so it may be changed if needed and that in September the budget should be reviewed again. Mrs. Malmstrom reported to the board that the Hilton is currently down 30% for June with the room rate down significantly and that usually the hotel is booked for all upcoming UW football games, which is not the case this year. She anticipates this trend lasting for another couple of months. Mr. Larson asked if the decrease lodging tax was due to losing the UW graduation weekend or if it was due to COVID-19 reasons. Mrs. Malmstrom stated that COVID-19 is what has caused their numbers to drop. She also stated that over graduation weekend they did have a high amount of traffic. Mr. Jackson made a motion to approve the budget as published this last Wednesday in the Boomerang. Mr. McShane seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

b) Lodging Tax Collections 2019-2020 - Mr. Larson reported that the tax collections for the month of May was not great. Albany County was down 35.7%, Natrona County was down 51%, Sheridan County was down 54%, Carbon County was down 62%, Park County was down 66%, and the state as a whole was down 58%.

6. New Business

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a) Marketing Dashboard & Updates – Mr. Larson also reported that the state office has resumed their marketing which helps everyone. Right now, we are participating in a co-op road trip program with them encouraging people to drive around the state. Mr. Larson stated to the board that we have a lot of interested travelers focusing on our area, but he's not sure when they will be arriving. The website traffic and engagement sessions confirm that. Mr. Larson showed the board a table on the BookDirect Traffic which clearly shows the lull in traffic starting in March and ending at the end of April. It has since resumed to pre-COVID levels. Mr. Larson reported that the staff is getting creative in the messaging that is put out and are trying hard to encourage other ways people can visit until they feel comfortable. Mr. Larson reported that Mrs. Haugen did a great job with a recent marketing campaign where she crafted each message based on the targeted demographic and the video featured. The message is ultimately "We Are Open" so that we stay at the top of people's minds when they are ready to travel. Mr. McShane stated that we should be focusing on increasing our follower count on Instagram and Twitter rather than Facebook because the engagement rates are much higher and those social media platforms are gaining more traction than Facebook. Mr. Larson explained that Facebook and Twitter are static in their growth rates while Instagram grows dynamically. Since Mr. Larson started he has been focusing on Instagram growth and it has been growing well and continues to since Mrs. Haugen started. Mr. Larson also explained that the demographics are completely different on each platform, but we are posting each day on all three. Facebook viewers tend to spend more money compared to Twitter and Instagram because parents spend a lot of time on there. Mr. Larson moved on to webpage traffic which the where to stay (+705%), biking (+7,709%), and fishing (1,837%) pages are the top three most visited pages in May. This is primarily because of the campaigns that were organized throughout the month. Mr. Larson also stated that the cost per click was down dramatically when everyone else turned their marketing off while we kept ours on. Mr. Larson pointed out that the visitor guide page was up 37% which wasn't impacted by any of the email marketing, AdWords campaigns, or social media promotions – it is all organic traffic to that page. The travel interest is there and people are planning. Mr. Larson stated that from all of the hotels he has contacted, that most of their traffic consists of walk-ins or close-in bookings. Mr. Larson reported that ads were placed in a device id campaign that ran last year and did well so we did it again. Ms. Johnston put the ads together. Mr. Larson explained that the goal this year was to spend more in this campaign, but with COVID-19 that did not happen. Ms. Bertoncelj stated that she has seen quite a number of out of state plates at some of the quilt shops because they stayed open compared to other states. Mr. Larson agreed that not going quiet like other tourism boards, we have had a great number of people from out of state searching for activities to do. Ms. Bertoncelj pointed out that the topics that Mrs. Haugen have put together are great and they really speak to all demographics, especially the flexibility on bookings post. Mr. McShane stated that seeing these numbers will be awesome for us and thanked Mr. Larson and the staff for their hard work. Ms. Johnston shared her experience with a person interested in traveling to Wyoming. The man was from Georgia and had asked if Wyoming was open to the public. He had previously called Vermont and Colorado locations who were on lock down, so it was a good decision to stay open.

b) Website RFPs – Mr. Larson reported to the board that we have narrowed down the search from eight total responses to our website RFP to three. Mr. Larson has sent follow up questions to the finalists and would like to make a decision by the end of next week. The goal is to put down a payment before the end of the fiscal year and then, since we are in a tight budget year next year, to work with the final choice on financial options. The current website needs to be updated, should be more user friendly, and should be more cost effective going in to 2020-21. Mr. Larson stated that with how slow this year will be it seem to be the perfect time to go through a rebrand and website design.

c) Board Positions – Mr. Larson reported that there are three city seats and one count seat that are up for renewal. Mr. Larson has talked to the city and feels comfortable that there are some good candidates. He hasn't gotten a hold of the county, yet. Mr. Larson reminded the board that Mr. McShane's six year term is over at the end of June and thanked him for his time and service with ACTB. The staff and board provided Mr. McShane a gift for all that he has done.

d) Summit Closure - Mr. Larson reported that he and the staff made the decision to close the center this year. It is in the budget for May and June of 2021 at the moment, but it did not make sense to open it this 2020 season. Mr. Larson stated that the state decided to close ten rest areas across the state as well. If it is important to have information at the Summit, then the staff can stock brochures up there. Mr. Larson reported that the northeast and southeast centers will open up this weekend with scaled down operations. He has not heard any news about the state tourism run centers in Sheridan and Pine Bluffs if they will be opening up or not.

e) Marketing Co-Op Program Update – Mr. Larson reported that a couple of business have been interested in the co-op including the Mountain View Historic Hotel and The Curiosity Shoppe. Mr. Larson explained that by nature this program doesn't work for every business, but he expected more community feedback and interest. This is a great opportunity for the tourism board to get our logo out, but also for the community businesses who are struggling, with the hope that this will bring travelers back into the area. Mr. Larson reported that the Mainstreet Alliance has boosted the posts about the program and he is working with Appaloosa Broadcasting to spread the word via radio. Mr. Larson asked the board members to spread the word as well. Mrs. Malmstrom asked for an email with the information.

f) USA Softball – Mr. Larson reported that they will be moving forward with this event and are even considering hosting it in Laramie in 2021. Mr. Larson contacted the city to go over any restrictions so the event takes place safely. The grant ACTB provided the organization was \$3,500 to help them break even and cover their costs. Mr. Larson noted that in a normal year the event would bring 1,200 room nights, obviously it is unknown this year. The organization has been playing games all over the state and they still expect a strong attendance. If the event is successful they would consider bringing the event back.

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Mr. Larson believes the LJD committee would be supportive of the event taking place on the same weekend as LJD. Mr. McShane chimed in that if everyone can do a great job this year it would be very worthwhile to bring this event back because the event typically brings in \$800,000 in spending. This will help soften the blow on the community from COVID-19. Mr. McShane offered to help out in any way possible. Mr. Jackson asked how many teams were registered. Mr. Larson didn't have that information because they broke it down by the number of nights. Mrs. Malmstrom thought the number was around 30 teams.

g) Wayfinding Signs – Mr. Larson reported that he had a meeting with the city and the Mainstreet Alliance to talk about the plans for signs. They had submitted a grant to the Wyoming Business Council at a rather unfortunate time and was not awarded the grant. Mr. Larson said instead they prioritized the signs, put together a phased approach, and reviewed what contributions people agreed to so the project can get started without a grant. ACTB had committed to \$9,100 or \$9,200 for the project. Mrs. Trey Sherwood from the Mainstreet Alliance received comments from the public that this would be a huge improvement.

h) 401k Plan Discussion – Mr. Larson recapped that at the last meeting, the vote was 50/50 as far as doing the program and how it should be implemented. Mr. Larson met with Vanguard to go over terms. To implement the plan it will cost \$1,000 so if the board decided not go through with the program that would be a fee. The entire program would cost approximately \$5,000 and if each of the three employees requested the full 4% match the total comes to \$5,800 or \$5,900 for the year. The board had previously discussed starting at 4%, starting at 2%, or not doing it at all knowing that FY 2020-21 would be slow. Mr. Larson asked the board what their decision is now. Mr. Jackson explained why in the past the board gave monthly retirement checks was because the organization is so small – the startup costs are killer for small businesses like this one. Mr. Jackson suggested that we continuing writing a retirement check each month rather than work with Vanguard. Mr. McShane asked if Mr. Jackson suggested that the organization match 4% of each employee's salary and write a check for the employees to put into their own IRA account. If the employees put the money in an IRA the money is tax-free, if not the money will be taxed. Mr. Jackson confirmed that the board will encourage the employees to put that money into an IRA, but they don't have to. The employees also aren't required to put a matching amount into the account. Mr. McShane asked if Mr. Larson had budgeted for this program or not. Mr. Larson did budget the plan costs under Contract Services/Professional Fees and the match under Payroll in the condensed budget. If the board wishes to go this route, Mr. Larson could put the plan costs into the Unappropriated Marketing section of the budget to use it elsewhere. Mr. McShane asked Mr. Larson if he was correct in stating that each year with Vanguard there is a \$3,800 fee for using Vanguard. Mr. Larson said that is correct. Mr. McShane asked the board to put a motion on the table. Mr. Jackson stated that he would like to see the numbers first so the board could vote on it in July. Mr. Larson had calculated 4% for the three employees for the year is a total of \$5,850. Mr. Jackson and Mrs. Malmstrom asked if all employees requested 4%. Mr. Larson stated that two had requested 4% and one had requested 2%. Mr. Jackson and Mr. McShane stated that the board should commit to one number so the process is cleaner. Ms. Bertoneclj asked what would the tourism board's liability be if the employees did not put the money into an IRA. Mr. Jackson stated that it would be all on the employee because then it would be taxable income. Mrs. Malmstrom asked Mr. Larson's opinion. Mr. Larson stated that he is comfortable with investing and has had a retirement account for some time, but the nice thing about having a program is that it's easy for an employee because they don't have to worry about what to do with the money – it goes straight into the retirement account. They also don't have to worry about the plan they choose. It is a perk to get rid of the vesting schedule for future employees as well because they are fully invested up front. Mr. Larson agreed that this is a good solution and a big step forward for the benefits package for the team and the organization. Mr. Jackson stated that depositing the money into an account for an employee is fairly simple, then the employees don't have to worry about the money and where to put it. Mr. McShane stated that if the COVID-19 setbacks hadn't happened then he would be all for the Vanguard program, but this is a good solution at least for another year. Mr. Jackson made a motion to set up a program where ACTB is doing a 4% payroll match into a retirement account for all our staff members. Mr. McShane seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

7. Grant and Sponsorship Requests

a) This Is Laramie – Mr. Larson stated that the board should discuss whether or not they would like to sponsor This Is Laramie which has been promoting only good news within the community. Mr. Faxon wanted this brought up in front of the board while we are still in the 2019-20 fiscal year knowing that the tourism board will be going into a dramatically different budget for 2020-21. Mr. Larson stated that lodging tax revenue surpassed what was budgeted for the fiscal year and that we could use that money to prepay for expenses that would normally be paid in the next fiscal year. Mr. Larson stated to the board that this would be a great opportunity to market ACTB within the community and reinforce our image. Mrs. Malmstrom asked how could the tourism office utilize this sponsorship opportunity when the main goal of the organization is to put heads in beds. Mr. Larson stated that this would raise brand awareness and our visibility within the community during this time of COVID-19 showing the public that we support the Laramie community. Mr. Larson doesn't want the public lashing out at the tourism board because we are only concerned with the visitors. Mr. McShane stated that we've already tried to help out the community partners by implementing the Co-op Advertising Program. Mr. Larson stated that we can always do more for the community. Mr. Faxon chimed in that this would be a local visibility piece to build a greater relationship with the community we are promoting so they know what we do, why we're here, and why what we do is important. Mr. Faxon stated that This Is Laramie would focus on developing content that can support the tourism board's mission of encouraging people to come here and that they can be another marketing resource for ACTB in promoting the community.

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Mrs. Malmstrom asked what an ad for ACTB would look like. Mr. Faxon explained that an ad would be visible on This Is Laramie's webpages, at local events, and could be another avenue for us to send out marketing material creating brand awareness within the Laramie community. He also stated that this would be a great opportunity for when the rebrand is finalized so the public will stay informed. Mr. McShane asked how the word reaches folks outside of the community. Mr. Faxon stated that the primary goal is reaching the Laramie community, but their website traffic shows a huge percentage of the visitors are not from Laramie. He reported that the second highest hotspot is traffic coming from Ireland. Mr. McShane asked for the site analytics. Mrs. Walsh asked about the social media traffic and overall reach. Mr. Faxon stated that at least one of the videos This Is Laramie filmed about locals and local businesses reached approximately 9,000 viewers and he does believe that these videos will have a long shelf life. Over the last seven days, their posts have reached 12,676 people. Mr. McShane asked if the reach included unique visitors to the site or if the same people were viewing the posts. Mr. Faxon said he would get back to the board on that. Ms. Bertoneclj stated that she had never heard of the site before it featured a certain downtown business and since then she has been staying updated on the material This Is Laramie puts together. Mrs. Walsh stated that the content is great, but her concern is who it is reaching, who's the target demographic, and what impact it has as it pertains to tourism. Mrs. Malmstrom also wanted to know how this pertains to tourism because she uses the program with This Is Laramie to attract locals to the Hilton restaurant, which has worked well. She asked the board what would we be marketing and promoting specifically since as a tourism board you wouldn't want to leave anyone out. Mr. Faxon stated that it would not be a traditional marketing tool and whatever we chose to highlight the site would be a resource to travelers who find themselves in Laramie looking for more things to do, where to eat, or who they want to support when they are here. Mrs. Walsh asked Mr. Larson what This Is Laramie can provide that the staff can't already provide. Mr. Larson stated that this would be a support or extension for Visit Laramie rather than a major resource. Also, he believes it is extremely important to raise Visit Laramie's brand awareness within the community because the organization wouldn't exist if the public didn't vote to keep us around. This is an opportunity to show those who think Visit Laramie only cares about tourists that we support and are valuable to the community. Mr. McShane stated that the 2% lodging tax will never change even if Visit Laramie doesn't exist. He also pointed out that some community members might think that we are throwing money around when the community is suffering rather than focusing on bringing travelers here and that when travelers do get here we can direct them to This Is Laramie without spending any money. Mr. Jackson agreed with Mr. McShane's points and also stated that the original mission statement is to ultimately put heads in beds and the organization already supports the community locally (LJD, soccer tournaments, High School Football Championships, etc.). Mr. Jackson stated that at this time it wouldn't be a good idea to spend any money as we don't know how the future is going to unfold. Mrs. Walsh agreed and pointed out that in a few months the Pilot Hill Project is going to provide us with plenty of PR and exposure. The board agreed that this would be a great opportunity, but not at this time. Ms. Bertoneclj stated that the board should keep This Is Laramie in mind and revisit this when they feel more comfortable. Mr. McShane thought that would be a good idea and asked Mr. Larson if the money budgeted for events like LJD which was canceled will go back into our reserves. Mr. Larson reported that we did not budget for LJD in the next fiscal year. Mr. McShane expressed his concerns about spending money right now and stated that the co-op advertising program was implemented to help the community during COVID-19 and maybe This Is Laramie could promote that program. Mr. Larson explained to the board that it would be financially cleaner if we decide to pay for the This Is Laramie program to pay for it before the end of this fiscal year when we are knowingly going into a fiscal year budget that is 30-40% less. Mr. McShane chimed in stating that if we have a surplus of funds this year we shouldn't spend it when our tax collections next year will be dramatically lower. Mr. McShane would rather see the money go into the organizations reserves. Mr. Larson stated that it would be financially cleaner to prepay items this year rather than next year. Some items could strategically be invested in like a website redesign or local marketing opportunities. Mr. Jackson stated that the board can better determine what they can approve as the year progresses and that they should wait until September to discuss this topic again. Mr. McShane made a motion to vote on the sponsorship request for This Is Laramie and grant them \$5,100. Ms. Holyfield seconded the motion. Mrs. Malmstrom asked if we were postponing this or not. Mr. Larson stated that for clarity sake the board should vote on this. The vote was unanimous and the motion failed.

b) Food Truck Festival Concept – The board asked if there was a formal grant application for the event. Mr. Larson stated that the conversations that he has had with Mr. Faxon that there isn't a formal defined number for the grant request. Mr. Larson received an agenda of the event this morning which includes more than a food truck festival. Mr. Faxon is proposing a Football Fan Appreciation Day with activities, music, and food trucks to take place on August 15th. Mr. Larson explained to the board that he wanted to see if the board was comfortable with contributing to this event and if so, how much grant money could be set aside for this event. The reason this is being presented at the June meeting is because of a tight turnaround time for planning the event. Mr. McShane stated that if there is no official grant request application then the board doesn't need to discuss it at this time. Mr. Jackson agreed that this is exactly the reason why we shouldn't be spending money from this fiscal year. Mrs. Malmstrom stated that she didn't see any information about the event. Mr. Faxon explained that he was waiting to hear back from the University because the idea is to host the event at the War Memorial Stadium parking lot. Mr. Faxon further explained that the event will be composed of local food trucks and local breweries based in Albany County located at the stadium parking lot with live music. Since there aren't many events taking place this year this would provide a small festival for the locals and travelers looking for something to do. Mr. Faxon reported that the University gave him the green light this morning. The food trucks will be at the lot at 3 pm. The stadium will be opened up to the fans who can listen to the coach and watch the players practice. UniWyo Federal Credit Union is also looking at hosting a Cowboy Summer Movie

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Series at the end of the day. The goal is to market this event to the state of Wyoming in the hopes that people from outside of the Albany County join in the fun. Mr. McShane asked if the city had been contacted and if the participants will have to be over 21 years old. Mr. Faxon stated that they will have to pull an open container permit and that all ages are welcome but they do have to be over 21 to purchase alcohol. Mr. McShane asked what musicians are lined up. Mr. Faxon reported that Chancey Williams and the Younger Brothers Band has an opening that day so they are tentatively on the schedule. Mr. McShane asked if only Laramie food trucks were going to be invited. Mr. Faxon stated that they would start with anybody based in Laramie and then branch out to other Wyoming food trucks. Mr. McShane asked if brick and mortar stores would be invited to participate. Mr. Faxon stated that they would be open to inviting anyone who has the ability to set up an outside tent. Mr. McShane stated that if he owned a restaurant in town he wouldn't be very happy if they weren't invited to this event. He also stated that with brick and mortar stores joining in, it should be called something different. Mr. Faxon explained that it was initially an event for only food trucks and hopefully it would turn into a yearly event. Ms. Holyfield pointed out that the current group restrictions are up to 250 at an outside event and it seems like this festival would be larger. She asked if Mr. Faxon anticipated that the restrictions would be lifted by the time the event comes around or not. Mr. McShane spoke up stating that the restrictions do not take into account any of the workers including the food truck workers, ticketing staff, performers, etc. Mr. McShane also learned from a connection that beginning July 1st the governor is going to move the restriction to 500 people/event. Mr. Faxon stated that he was hoping the restrictions would ease up, otherwise the purpose for hosting the event at the stadium was for the participants to tailgate and spread out that way. Ms. Holyfield asked if he had any evidence to show that people are willing to drive 3-6 hours to come to a festival like this. Mr. Faxon stated that he does not know what the demand is for a food truck festival, but as events have been canceled and many more are getting canceled people are aching for something to do. The board decided to put it to a vote and Mr. Faxon left the meeting. The board asked how much money is being requested. Mr. Larson stated that there is no set amount yet, but from his conversations with Mr. Faxon the event already has some sponsors around town. Mr. Larson agreed with Mr. Faxon that people are hunger for an event like this and if it is marketed correctly people will come and stay in town. Mr. Larson asked the board if they would support this event moving forward although an amount and application haven't been submitted. Mr. Jackson stated that the board can't do that – a grant request must be submitted at the same time as the packet is sent (deadline of the Friday prior to the meeting at noon) so that the board can review the material beforehand. The This Is Laramie and the Food Truck Festival were thrown into the meeting last minute. Mr. Jackson stated that he would love to support this event, but the process of introducing it to the board for potential grant money was not done in the right way. Mr. Jackson stated that this should be thrown out for now. Mr. Larson asked if this could be voted on in an email after the meeting when more details are set in place. Mr. Jackson stated that the board shouldn't get into the habit of voting via email and from a financial stand point the board isn't able to vote on this at this time. Mr. McShane agreed with Mr. Jackson and pointed out that it seemed the event was hastily thrown together and it shouldn't have been put into this board meeting agenda. Mr. McShane agreed and also stated that he agrees with Ms. Holyfield that most people won't drive 3+ hours to a food truck festival with Chancey Williams who tours Wyoming regularly. He doesn't believe this will bring heads in beds. Ms. Bertoncelj chimed in that she would like to see an official proposal before anything is decided. No motion was made.

8. Review of the Board/Staff Activities

a) May Office Stats – Mr. Larson stated that the board should review the stats on their own and can contact Ms. Johnston if they have any questions. Mr. Larson did point out that the traffic is down YOY, especially the phone volume which is partially due to COVID-19 and partially due to the Robert Fuller events held in 2019. Mr. Larson stated that this confirmed his decision to downstaff.

b) We Are Open – Mr. Larson reported that this is week five since the office has been reopened. We are encouraging a contactless system with signs everywhere saying “don't touch” and “if you touch it goes with you”, masks are being worn, and hand sanitizer is provided at the door. There have been some walk-ins, but we are trying to keep everyone safe while providing what a visitor center should.

c) All Staff

i) Website RFPs

d) Johnston

i) Rebranding Design & Brand Style Guide – Mr. Larson reported that Ms. Johnston is working on a brand style guide which is something we never really had as we work through the rebrand process. It'll showcase the fonts, colors, logo, and how to use them all properly. Mr. Larson stated that the logo the staff has been working on encompasses the Laramie community and crosses over with the Thrive program to unify with Mainstreet Alliance, the Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Laramie.

ii) Graphics Help – Mr. Larson reported that Ms. Johnston has stepped up to help with ads and design work, as well.

e) Haugen

i) Marketing Campaigns – Mr. Larson reported that Mrs. Haugen has been working hard and doing a phenomenal job on marketing emails and campaigns on social media.

f) Larson

i) COVID calls, Meetings, etc. – Mr. Larson reported that he continues to stay busy with phone calls and meetings about COVID-19. Now it isn't as time consuming which is a sign that we're starting to see that curve flatten/level

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off. He is staying updated as far as statewide, countywide, and communitywide partnerships and co-ops go to make the most of this year.

ii) Boomerang Column

iii) BRE Committee – Mr. Larson reported that he has stepped into Mr. Gray’s place on the Business Retention and Expansion committee.

iv) Rebrand 2021 – Mr. Larson reported that this is a great time to focus on the rebrand with the downtime the staff has. This process will provide Visit Laramie with a more user-friendly website and better position ourselves for the tourism rebound in 2021 when hopefully a vaccine is available and consumer sentiment really starts to take off again. This has been a staff effort and Mr. Larson is proud of the work the staff has put into this process.

9. Public Comments

a) Mr. McShane mentioned that he has been in contact with Mr. Brad Enzi at the Chamber of Commerce hoping that the new building contract would be complete so the board could sign the document and get the process underway. The process was held up a day or two so the remaining board members will be able to approve the document for the new building and new rent rate. Mr. McShane stated that the document should be ready within the next week. He thanked Mrs. Malmstrom for her help in working with the Territorial Prison to try to move over there and Mr. Larson’s help throughout the entire process. He lastly thanked everyone for their help over the years.

b) Mrs. Walsh brought that with the protests over the last few weeks, ACTB and Visit Laramie should diversify the marketing messages being sent out. She suggested that a subcommittee be formed to talk about diversity to show that we are open and accepting to all people and volunteered to be a part of the committee. Mrs. Walsh stated that she has received some backlash that her posts and content at her business and with Hike Like A Woman are “too white” or “too young”. Mr. Jackson asked if we were ever not accepting of diversity. Mrs. Malmstrom stated that this is Wyoming, a primarily “white” state. Mrs. Walsh stated that the topic is hot right now so we should have it in the back of our minds. Mr. Larson stated that he and Mrs. Haugen can sit down and discuss that topic more since Mrs. Haugen is a terrific writer. Mr. Larson also stated that we have room in our budget for photography sessions and get more assets that paint that picture differently. Ms. Bertoneclj stated that we did gain more assets featuring women last year, which was a similar scenario. Ms. Holyfield stated that it is very hard to appeal to the right market when the outdoor industry is primarily “white”. Mrs. Walsh explained that we could also feature older generations because we target retirees who spend more money than younger folks. Mrs. Malmstrom stated that most of our marketing is primarily outdoorsy, young hikers/bikers/campers/etc. which is what we want to target since older generations like to sightsee and drive through. She stated that it could be a good idea to put together a committee to brainstorm ideas that haven’t been considered yet. Ms. Bertoneclj pointed out that there is a group in town called “Seniors On The Go” who hike every Friday and snowshoe in the winter. Mrs. Walsh stated that most people interested in our region are retirees and we aren’t reflecting that in our marketing. Mrs. Walsh and Ms. Holyfield are happy to be a part of a committee.

10. Adjournment

MOTION BY Mr. McShane seconded by Mr. Jackson to adjourn the meeting. The motion was passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 6:05 pm.

The next ACTB board meeting will be at the ACTB Office at 4 p.m. on Monday, July 20, 2019

Minutes respectfully submitted by Director Larson and Lyndee Johnston, Office Assistant