

Albany County Tourism Board
210 E. Custer Street, Laramie WY 82070
Monday, September 21, 2020 - 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Present: Scott Larson, Brad Jackson, Kaley Holyfield, Kathleen Bertoncelj, Lyndee Johnston, Sara Haugen, Rebecca Walsh, Tessa Cedillo, Pat Gabriel

Absent: David Wright, Page Malmstrom, Terri Jones

Guests: Rebecca White (Hampton Inn), Sarah Brown Matthews (Pilot Hill Project), Christy Smith (Laramie Range Epic)

- 1) 4:00 Called Regular Meeting of the Albany County Tourism Board to order by Brad Jackson.
 - a) Confirmation of Quorum
 - b) Introduction of Guests - Rebecca White from the Hampton Inn, Sarah Brown Matthews from the Pilot Hill Project, and Christy Smith from the Laramie Range Epic were in attendance.
- 2) Additions and/or Corrections to agenda - None.
- 3) Consent Agenda
 - a) August Minutes - no notes.
 - b) Profits and Loss Budget vs. Actual - no notes.
 - c) Advertising and Grants - no notes.

Motion by Kathleen Bertoncelj, seconded by Rebecca Walsh that the Consent Agenda be approved and that each specific action on the Consent Agenda be approved as indicated.

- 4) Old Business
 - a) Laramie Enduro Bike Race
 - i) Christy Smith introduced herself as the Sponsorship Coordinator for the Laramie Enduro Bike Race and explained that she is in charge of maintaining sponsors and donors. Laramie Enduro had received a grant from ACTB to help advertise the event. In Mid-June, the board of directors decided to hold the race virtually. There were 185 people registered for the race originally, and 95 people ended up racing virtually. Next year they will be asking ACTB for funds again. Brad Jackson asked how finances turned out for the event and Christy Smith answered that she predicted the revenue to be good. She specified that Laramie Enduro donates money to mountain bike camps and mountain bike teams. The original grant was for \$1,200 and ACTB had planned to purchase advertising at the event.
 - b) Pilot Hill Project
 - i) Sarah Brown Matthews thanked the ACTB for involvement with this project and provided details about the project. An engineering group was

hired to help with the land use plan which is on the website if anyone would like to read it. The plan helped finalize what it will cost to build the trail systems. The plan details a phased opening consisting of 3 phases. In the end, there will be over 40 miles of new trails in addition to the existing 11 miles at the Schoolyard. There will be a pedestrian area will be set aside with an ADA trail, mountain bike specific trails, and the majority of the trails will be multi use. One trail will run through the wildlife habitat area which focuses on providing sanctuary for wildlife and provides opportunity for aquifer protection. Phase 1 is in place and the land is open to the public now. The public is instructed to follow trail #4, a two track trail. Phase 2 and 3 will focus on building out more trails. Sarah noted that parking options pose a challenge. A 1 million dollar investment is required for a parking lot. The organization will need savings and secure funding for this. The organization is working with USFS to decide how parking will work from the top of the property. Sarah stated that the goal is to bring people from I-80 into town and encourage them to stay. The group is investing in wayfinding signage for I80. There will be a seasonal closure that coincides with the USFS seasonal closures, but the recreation corridor will remain open. Thanks to the ACTB funding, the group was able to create a 30 second video to kick off the opening. Sarah explained that game cameras are on the property so the impact on the wildlife in the area can be studied. Pilot Hill Project is working with the UW College of Business to create an economic analysis to determine how they will track the economic impact of this project. The group is required to put in wildlife friendly fencing. Signs are currently posted at the kiosks at the entry ways.

- ii) Scott Larson asked what the ideal scenario is for a timeline for trail building. Sarah answered that work will be done on it all this fall and next summer and Phase 1 may be completed by 2022. Sarah stated that the WCC predicted they could build 2.2 miles per trail per week. Sarah also stated trail building must be done carefully to protect the aquifer.

5) Grant and Sponsorship Requests

- a) a. None.

6) Financial Reports

- a) Lodging Tax Collections FY 2020 – 2021

- i) Marketing dashboard - Scott Larson explained that August performed better than what has been seen over the last few months. Scott Larson thanked the team for their efforts to achieve these results. Larson noted that the last week of the month was impacted by student move in and that up until the 25th of August, business was driven by leisure travel. September is starting to look similar. Larson noted that we are doing OK in September given that we don't have football games, college visitation weekends, etc. Larson explained that guests are making up for lost vacation from the spring in the fall. Larson stated that they brought in

\$96,000 and change. Larson forecasted to be 36% down for the whole fiscal year and now they sit at about 39% down year over year. Larson re-stated that August turned out much better than expected. Larson reported that ACTB is faring better than many other lodging tax boards.

b) CARES Act Funds Update

- i) \$225,000 was received in CARES Act Relief marketing funds. Larson reported that last week on a webinar the state office reported that WY was one out of three states to be able to secure marketing funding and distribute it at a local level. Of the \$5 million that was distributed, \$1.2 million went unclaimed. ACTB is now eligible for another \$57,000. This brings us to a total of \$285,000 in CARES Act funding received. Some of this funding is being used to offset expenses, promote safe travel, promote fall and winter travel, and pay balances forward when possible.

7) New Business

a) Marketing Report

- i) The number of new users in August saw a 2 times increase. The trend from July continued into August. Larson explained that this indicates that there is an increase in interest in our destination among first time users. Larson stated that his instinct is that we will be in for a better winter than predicted. The direct booking engine saw almost a 2 times increase year over year for August. This signals that the level of interest in our destination has increased this summer due to a low number of COVID-19 cases in Wyoming. Rebecca Walsh asked if the three spikes on August 7, 13, and 20 were related to newsletters. Larson answered yes.

b) Update on Fall Campaigns and Strategy

- i) Larson explained that they are doing a bigger fall push than what has been done historically. This is funded by the CARES act. Larson noted that they desire to offset the loss of fall athletics and keep leisure travel coming in. At a high level - ACTB has a lot of traditional marketing tactics being used (SEO, social media, etc.) but there will be new tactics added such as road trip co-ops, additional Google campaigns that are more refined/focused, additional print ads, and additional email marketing through National Park Trips Media. Larson detailed the tactics that will be used such as extended campaigns (radio statewide), the Bounce Back program (was also done in June and July), Q1 media - device ID, connected TV, and digital radio. Larson explained that during the pandemic era, people are more likely to travel to somewhere they have already been and are more likely to travel by car max 3-4 hours one way. Larson explained that they view fall as a rare opportunity for Albany County to step out of the shadow of UW athletics that Albany County falls under. Rebecca Walsh suggested that ACTB consider promoting that section of Pilot Hill that is open, Sarah Haugen said that we have not been promoting heavily due to the phased approach to opening. Sarah Brown Matthews said they want to get their feet under them, safety

processes in place, and have a big celebration/grand opening before doing more marketing.

- c) Wayfinding Signs Update
 - i) Scott Larson explained that he is working with Trey Sherwood (Downtown Laramie), Todd Feezer (City of Laramie), and Derek Tieni (City of Laramie). Todd collected a bid from a local company to create the signs. Trey has the money to provide for the installation of 20 signs. The signs will be installed this fall and winter. There is no money coming out of the ACTB at this time, but when we need to support this project we will as this project helps with the navigation and aesthetics of town. There are 1 or 2 signs that highlight the visitor center. There was \$9,000 - \$10,000 committed to this project prior to Larson's arrival.
- 8) Review of Board/Staff Activities
 - a) August Office Stats: Telephone and walk-in traffic was only down 20-30%. ACTB started running local radio ads that direct people to visitor center.
 - b) Lyndee Johnston is juggling projects, design, and running the front desk.
 - c) All Staff
 - i) Work on the new website has been a full team effort and they are hopeful that the group can see the home page, content page, and hotel listing page in October. The full website should hopefully launch in mid-March. Brad Jackson asked if there will be a mobile app, Scott Larson clarified the mobile app is no longer in use but the new site will be mobile friendly.
 - d) Haugen
 - i) Sarah Haugen is working on main street collaborations to contribute to maps/kiosks downtown.
 - ii) Louisa Swain Day: Haugen went to this celebration. There was a significant amount of media highlighting this event.
 - e) Johnston
 - i) i. Design Help - Lyndee Johnston has continued with design help as well as running the front desk.
 - ii) ii. Front Desk
 - f) e. Larson
 - i) Scott Larson has been focusing on regional partnership co-op road trips with Laramie and Carbon County. This road trip is an 8 day 7 night fall road trip. Larson pitched it to Madden Media in July. Each destination pitched \$4,000 and the state pitched in \$12,000. Larson is also working with Steamboat to create a regional trip that runs from the Front Range to Winter Park, to Steamboat, and to Laramie and back. The trip ties in western heritage and outdoor recreation. This trip can happen in the fall, winter, or summer.
 - ii) Travel + Leisure Pitch: Larson is working with the state tourism office, Sheridan, Cody, and Yellowstone. Larson pitched to Travel and Leisure to see if this road trip can be featured.
 - iii) Community partners call continues to happen every week.

- iv) Laramie Regional Airport Redesign: Larson explained he is a fly on the wall in the meetings and giving feedback when requested. Larson stated that this will be a great facility and do a fantastic job of welcoming people to Laramie. This project will complement the rebrand.
- 9) Other: Brad Jackson asked where Terri Jones, the County Commissioner Liaison, has been for the past three meetings. Scott reported that Terri had called him to let him know she wouldn't be at the meeting. Brad Jackson said it's important to have representation from the city and county. Kathleen asked if people have been coming in from Wyoming even without football. Tessa Cedillo and Rebecca White answered yes - there has been lots of leisure traffic from CO and CA.
- 10) Scott Larson announced a save the date for November 19th from 9 AM to 4 PM to create the strategic plan. He will send a formal announcement.
- 11) Public Comments - None.
- 12) Motion...to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Kathleen Bertoncej, seconded by Rebecca Walsh to adjourn the meeting.

- 13) 11. The next ACTB Board meeting will be at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, October 19, 2020. Location TBD.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kaley Holyfield, Secretary.