

Explore Lawrence

March 3/30/23

4:00pm

Carnegie Building, Lawrence,KS

Members Present: Heidi Champagne, Ivan Simac, Mike Logan, Drew Gashler, David Hoyab (virtual), Peter Bobkowski, Kathy Gerstner, Porter Arneill, guest Tina Tourillott

Staff Present: Kim Anspach, Laura Carbrey, Amy Schmidt Cowardin

Before the call to order, Peter Bobkowski, professor at KU and the current Local University/Educational Institution board representative for Explore Lawrence, announced he has taken a new job at Kent State in OH. This was followed by the introduction of Tina Tourillott, an instructor at Haskell, visiting as a possible replacement for the upcoming open board position.

Meeting held in the lower level of Carnegie Building.

1. Meeting called to order and Approval of Minutes – February 2023 Board Minutes
 - a. Heidi moved to approve minutes and seconded by Ivan.
 - b. Motion to approve was for in February in person meeting and also subsequent Zoom meeting
2. Introductions
3. Financial Report (Kim Anspach)
 - a. Kim and Anthea met and went over financials during the previous week.
 - b. Movement of funds authorized by the board in February was completed. Checking is now operating funds, Money market is Bid Fund, and Reserve Fund separate from everything else.
 - c. Pacing well in regards to spending
 - d. Received first quarter allocation of \$348,000 from City of Lawrence and was deposited this March. \$48,000 of that was bid fund. Moving forward, quarterly allocations will be \$300,000.
 - e. Announced that EIDL load has been paid in full
4. Staff Reports
 - a. Marketing & Visitor Center Report (Kim Anspach)
 - February focused on launching new content and marketing strategy
 - No major digital campaign in Feb, so good month to look at organic traffic to website. Focused on Passports, and launching new blog content.
 - 3 new local experts blogging for EL: Bob Dinsdale, Fally Afani, and Kelly Barth
 - Looking for Foodie Expert.
 - Regarding organic traffic to the website, 7.5% increase compared to last year. Page views up 15.3%. Kim went over most viewed content
 - Bucket List ends this month (March) and currently working on Summer Fun Pass
 - Increased in Visitor Center foot traffic in February compared to same time last year. Sales similar for Jan & Feb 2023, but more than double compared to 2022.

- 135 new events added to Calendar of Events in February 2023. The Visitor Center gave lots of referrals. Looking to keep better track of referrals and send a report at the end of year to our member/partners.
- Calley creating great environment in Visitor Center

b. Sales Report (Laura Carbrey):

- Currently at 37% of goal for the year and 50% of estimated room revenue.
- Lots of leads from CVENT (not “qualified” leads) where we are tagged as viewers, but not asked for proposals. Tentative meeting with CVENT on 4/11.
- Can see what places in KC are bidding since included on the leads, so Laura is sending email back to planners saying “why not Lawrence?” to promote what we have and say please consider us.
- February 2022 was a very busy month for sales with lots of tours/visits.
- Laura was part of the process to hire Laura Hamilton for Jayhawk Hospitality.
- Reviewed events that happened in Lawrence in February
- Went over upcoming events: MLS Series 2, KU PowWow, 100th KU Relays, WNIT, KU Baseball, KU Softball, Moms Weekends, Sports Pavillion is booked, Bowlers
- Went over new Incentives. Will be doing separate incentives for Sun thru Thursday, and another one for Friday and Saturday. This will be for New Business and for Reclaiming Lost Business. Reviewed known challenges ahead.
- Kathy asked where money comes from for incentives and that was explained it comes from incentive fund.
- Laura explained Incentive Programs in detail. SUN thru THURSDAY: Room blocks qualifications, contracts must be signed, % EL will offer back on rooms (after pickup report finalized), Services/support/information from Explore Lawrence. FRIDAY & SATURDAY: Basically the same but must book at least 30 rooms to get 3% back. Focus on selling Lawrence, not selling the discounts

c. Executive Director (Kim Anspach)

- Visitor Center Work Bid due to changes needed. Bid will cover 3 different scopes: 1) ADA improvements (front door & bathroom door) 2) Moving welcome desk to back to create open in front 3) Custom cabinets put under windows for storage at window level.
- ADA accessibility is most important and also most expensive
- Working on Attraction Development grant due 3/31/23. Is a 40% reimbursement grant. Even if EL gets the grant, EL will still have to reallocate funds to make it work. ADA needs are a must. Can push the other items back to next year.
- Mike clarified that EL not asking board to take action at this time EL is just keeping board informed until find out if awarded grant.
- Kim stressed EL wants to find a way to do ADA accessibility this year no matter what, but not no need to ask to reallocate funds until find out if or what getting from grant.
- Kim wrote letters of support for SPRINT Grant (copies included in board packet) for the following: Theatre Lawrence, Watkins History Museum, Lecompton History Museum, and Lumberyard Arts Center.
- TGT Pacing going well this year. First 2 months have been higher than the 2022 collections. 34% above last year.

- STR report is looking good for 2023. Occupancy, ADR, and revenue all up.
- Kim advised working through drafts of the strategic plan with Executive Leadership and Directors. Will send out a second draft for board review soon.

5. Discussion of Explore Lawrence By-laws, Operating Agreement & Funding Agreement

- Discussion of plan to submit changes to all 3 documents to the City of Lawrence at once, as usually goes at the end of April or early May
- Per suggestion of Coneflower Consulting, the board agreed the best thing to try and get the city into a 3 year agreement versus annually. Result should be EL working on mission and output, and not spending valuable time and money going through the process with the city every year.
- Coneflower suggested increasing the number of seats on board. Kim is looking for feedback on how to allocate seats. Coneflower suggested possible seats from certain industries. Various suggestions were made in regards to where the seats might come. Need to add 2 or more, up to 9 or 11 voting members.
- Coneflower also suggested EL request a percentage based funding agreement from the city, in contrast to the current line item budget request. Suggested to request 7-10% for bid funds, and 70% of transient guest tax (looking to 2022).
- Coneflower suggested that Explore Lawrence develop an Advisory Board that would meet biannually and give advice on community engagement, to get activation from others outside of board members, cast net outside of regular board meetings.
- Kathy advised the Chamber of Commerce is also trying to move to a 3 year agreement with the City.

6. Mike asked if motion to adjourn meeting

- Heidi made a motion to adjourn and Peter seconded it.