



Explore Lawrence

Board of Directors Meeting

December 12, 2025

Present: Drew Gaschler, Chair, Lindsay Hart, Emily Peterson, Margann Bennett, Heidi Champagne, Kirk Goodman, Mike Logan, Heather Shull, Commissioner Amber Sellers

Present Online: Tina Tourtillott, Anthea Scouffas

Staff: Kim Anspach, Executive Director, Ruth DeWitt (notetaker), Chris Herman, Director of Sale, Jennie Nguyen, Director of Marketing

Drew called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM

MINUTES/FINANCIALS:

Approved November minutes (Emily, Heidi)

Kim and Tina presented the financials. The financials are on track – we have had savings from being out of the Mass St. visitor center, have our first payment to Extreme Bus Builders for the mobile visitor center build out.

The board accepted the financials.

Board of Directors for 2026

Emily Peterson accepted an appointment to her first full term. (Kim reminded us she was filling the vacancy created when David Hayob left the board).

Anthea is retiring from the board at the end of the year, having filled her terms. This is her last meeting. Kim thanked her for her service to eXplore Lawrence. Kim reported Marlo Angell's nomination to the board was approved by the City Commission at their last meeting. Marlo will begin at the January meeting.

Kirk announced he will be leaving OVG and Lawrence to accept a job in Houston. He will resign from the board at the end of the year. Kirk recommended that Katie VanderVelde, Director of Sales at Oak View Group, fill his term. Kim will meet with her.

Tina has had a change in her teaching schedule and doesn't feel she can continue as treasurer due to her time constraints. Heather agreed to step into the treasurer role.

Tina moved to nominate the 2026 board officers as follows: (Emily seconded, motion passed)
Chair, Heidi Champagne
Vice Chair, Drew Gaschler
Treasurer, Heather Shull

STAFF REPORTS:

MARKETING:

We were thrilled to welcome Jennie Nguyen as the new Marketing Director. Jennie joins us from the Linda Hall Research Library in Kansas City. She has only been in the office a few days, but is already getting into the work ahead.

Kim and Jennie shared the marketing report. Web traffic decreased a bit, but event count was up to 13.4 events per user, which shows people are coming on our site and staying. We had over 120K views on our site. The events calendar is still the highest page visited on our site.

Our social media accounts are doing very well, and increasing followers and views at a rapid rate. Shout out to Lauren Nagengast who does a fantastic job with the accounts, and was working by herself while the Director position was vacant. Last month, we gained 1,000 social media followers, and 800K views on event reels such as Nightmare on Mass Street.

MOBILE VISITOR CENTER:

The van is in the bay to begin the interior build. The video components are being installed. We met with a videographer Kim and Ruth feel confident understands what we're looking for. We are checking references and assuming that works out, we will contract with him.

SALES:

Chris gave an update on the sales department. He is writing a sales plan, setting goals for 2026, which he'll present at the January board retreat. Chris and Ruth are working on updating reporting metrics.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

Ruth gave a quick update on World Cup. She thanked those who came to the Draw party at the Oread, and shared how the draw, and the game schedule that was released the following day was shaping up. This next week, teams will be touring Rock Chalk Park and the Oread, so she's prepared for that.

Commissioner Sellers mentioned there are conversations about extending the Amtrack service of the Missouri River Runner to Lawrence out of Union Station in KC on match days.

Margann mentioned the Chamber is working on finding some open retail space for pop ups, installations, and other activities to reduce open spaces in downtown.

The big news was the announcement of Lawrence as a stop on the bus line as part of the regional transportation plan. Direct bus service will run from Lawrence Central Station to Kansas City (Union Station/Fanfest) daily, every 30 minutes. It is yet to announce the cost, or the duration of the service during the day (possibly 16 hours). Lawrence Transit is working on the issue of a lack of parking at Central Station.

We continue to wait on the word for a base camp team in Lawrence. We will lean something by the end of January.

Margann has a person who is interested in creating World Cup content for websites and social media. She will connect with Ruth and Jennie.

The library is planning some run-up programming to get residents and fans interested in World Cup. They adapted their logo for World Cup, and are working on instruction programming about the game, fan behavior, and cultural trainings when we learn more about the team we might host.

Ruth had a meeting with the Dobskis from McDonalds and the plans for them as international sponsors. They told us the trophy might be in Kansas City between April 18-20 and Ruth will be working on an event for that, hopefully involving the schools – as a student focused event.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

TGT Collections:

The comment period has ended, and everything is in place for the TGT collection rate to raise to 8% January 1, 2026. Ruth and Kim are meeting regularly with Casey Toomay, Assistant City Manager, and the city has sent both an email notice and a certified letter to hotels about the increase.

Air DNA Reports:

Our Air DNA future reports are starting to get near the tournament time, so in a few meetings, we'll start to see some insight into the short term rental rates.

Board Retreat Planning:

The board retreat has been set for January 16 from 12-4 PM at the Carnegie building.

Working Agenda:

Abbreviated November business meeting

Department Reports

- Sales

- Marketing

- Community Relations

 - Mobile Visitor Center Update

 - World Cup Update – eXplore Lawrence role

Strategic Planning

- Review 2023-2027 Plan

- New Strategic plan post-2027

- Annual goals for eXplore Lawrence, beyond World Cup

- Budget Review going into 2026 and 2027, with TGT funding.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned 2:02 pm. (Heidi, Emily)

Respectfully submitted,
Ruth DeWitt