

Explore Lawrence
July 2023 Board Meeting
June 26, 2023
Carnegie Building

Members Present: Drew Gashler, Mike Logan, Andrew Holt, Anthea Scouffas, Heidi Champagne, Tina Tourtillott, Porter Arneill, Amber Sellers (virtual).
Staff Present: Kim Anspach, Amy Schmidt Cowardin

All in attendance had in their possession copies of documents pertinent to the discussion.

Meeting Called to order at 4:05 pm by Mike Logan

1) Approval of June 2023 Minutes

- a) Heidi made a motion to approve
- b) Anthea seconded
- c) None opposed
- d) June meeting minutes passes

2) Financial Report by Kim Anspach

- a) Kim and Anthea met during the month to review the budget and it's pacing well.
- b) \$12,000 DMI funds were transferred but didn't clear their account. Working with DMI & FFNHA to reinitiate the transfer.
- c) Merchandise sales at the Visitor Center are doing very well and are already within the \$80 YTD projection.
- d) DTN (website advertising via SimpleView) performing better than expected. Currently \$640 over mid-year prediction.
- e) Kim states looking to audit the EL committed incentives for 2023 as they included an event that did not ask EL for incentive money.
- f) Second-quarter taxes have been paid

3) Marketing Report

- a) June busy month with the launch of the Summer of Fun Pass and Live Music Campaign that is on music streaming services.
- b) Website traffic: Up over 55% over the same period last year and 35% over May. New users are up 54%. Engagement is up 147.3%.
- c) Social Media: Strong with a gain of 314 fans, 667,531 impressions, and over 20,000 engagements
- d) Summer of Fun Pass performed well
 - i) As of the end of June numbers are way up –774 users and 776 check-ins
 - ii) Kim stated she feels much of the success is due to staff engagement (tabling at events) and promotion on the website.
 - iii) Pass speaks to local and to EL's Strategic Plan
- e) Kaw Valley Craft Pass and regional Metal Ale Trail still performing well.

- f) The digital team working on consistent messaging around Explore Lawrence initiatives, not just focusing on event marketing. Focusing on things that EL has committed to within the Marketing budget.
- g) Digital campaigns are going well. EL uses CoHort and it's doing well to optimize ads and put EL in front of engaged consumers.
- h) Outdoor campaign money report: Current focus on Cycling to support the upcoming Belgian Waffle Race. Doing better than the industry average on clicks-through on Google, etc. Have targeted riders and spectators of the Unbound Race out of Emporia.

4) Visitor Center Report

- a) 847 visitors in June
- b) Calley Vance, VC manager exceeding expectations – creating programs to bring people in, selling more merch than expected.
- c) Final Friday in June 2023 had the best attendance to date with help from the launch of the new City of Lawrence Annual Outdoor Downtown Sculpture Exhibition.

5) Sales Report

- a) Laura Carbrey making significant progress in sales. Currently at 91% of newly generated leads goal (YTD).
- b) Currently at \$3 million of \$3 million goal (YTD). 59 of 65 leads have been sent out.
- c) Laura is in a great position as already at her goal for the year and now has travel and trade shows coming up during the 3rd & 4th quarters and has time to engage in those events.
- d) Onboarding new Sales Manager, Ruth Dewitt, August 14th. Ruth will be doing all incoming business and be the primary liaison to Jayhawk Hospitality.
- e) With Ruth on the team, Laura will be able to focus on going out and seeking new business
- f) Part of Laura's goals for 2024 is to create a sales and service plan and align it with EL's strategic plan
- g) July 2023 DOS Meeting will be happening again on 7/27/26 in conjunction with Jayhawk Hospitality
- h) Amy Schmidt Cowardin has been working with Economic Impact Calculator and creating consistent pre and post-event workflow to help understand the actualized value of the events in our city

6) Executive Report

- a) Budget season update. The budget request was included in full to City Manager. Currently working on the line item budget for 2024 based on the ask of \$1,390,986 so everything is in place with the budget approved in full.
- b) Mike asked when City Commission will adopt the budget. Porter advised the final vote is the second week in September 2023, later than usual, as it's typically in August.
- c) TGT Collections: Distributions for the second quarter came through on 7/25/23 in the amount of \$603,637.00. Will wait three weeks per the operating agreement with the City to request the rest of the allocation.
- d) TGT Collections: Up 14.5% over last year and up 17% YTD.
- e) STR Report:

- i) Sidenote, jumping ahead to the beginning of July 2023 for a second. Lawrence had the highest occupancy weekend to date when Hardwood Classic and Taylor Swift happened on the same weekend – July 7th & 8th. 91% Occupancy!
- ii) June was very strong. Occupancy up 9.3% YTD, ADR up 5.1%, RevPar up 15.9%, and Revenue up 16%.
- f) Guidance Requests
 - i) Would like to bring back AirDNA reporting, which is the STR Report for Short-Term Rentals. Had this product back in 2017. At that time Douglas County had 285 short-term Costs \$6,000/year which aligns with the cost of a regular STR report.
 - a) Have funds since canceled Datafy
 - b) Would get essential data that we currently don't have that will fill information holes
 - c) Get 16 similar markets to be able to look at
 - d) Mike advised do not need a formal vote from the board on this
 - ii) Discussion of the statement that the EL Executive Director will make in regard to the MultiUse Gateway Project.
 - iii) Kim announced will be making a statement about Old Fashioned Christmas Parade to Lawrence Business Magazine.
 - iv) Tourism Ambassador Program is back! Will be on August 9, 2023. 17 people already signed up.

7) Executive Director Board Appointments

- a) Kim as Executive Director of EL has begun to get more requests to join boards and asking. Discussion of appropriate deployment of the Executive Director when asked to participate on boards or steering committees.
- b) It was agreed that anything to do with the City is appropriate
- c) Discussion to be mindful of commitment to EL and also own personal time and fairness/equity since EL is part of the City. What the EL does for one group, they would have to do for everyone. If cannot do that, then should say no.
- d) Decided that if the Executive Director wants to serve outside of EL, they may do so if it's personal and tangential to Explore Lawrence.

8) Strategic Plan

- a) A printed document was provided for all in attendance.
- b) Will be reporting on progress at every Board Meeting going forward
- c) This Explore Lawrence's guiding document that supports the City's Strategic Plan in the best way possible at Tourism Organization

9) Movement to adjourn

- a) Anthea moved to adjourn
- b) Heidi seconded it
- c) None opposed`