



Explore Lawrence

Board of Directors Meeting

June 27, 2025

Present: Drew Gaschler (chair), Heather Shull, Kirk Goodman, Emily Peterson, Margann Bennett, Commissioner Amber Sellers

Present online: none

Absent: Andrew Holt, Anthea Scouffas, Heidi Champagne, Luis Ruiz, Tina Tourtillott

Staff: Kim Anspach, Executive Director, Ruth DeWitt (notetaker)

Drew called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM

MINUTES/FINANCIALS:

May minutes were amended to reflect attendance corrections. Heidi was listed as absent and was in attendance, Margann was listed as present and was absent. Anthea and Amber were both present online.

Minutes adopted with corrections (Kirk, Heather)

Tina and Kim went over the financials earlier in the week. There were no discrepancies and everything on the report is correct. Allison has reviewed marketing lines with no changes.

We are on track with our current budget and there are no changes to expected spending.

STAFF REPORTS:

Marketing:

The Summer of Fun pass launched at the end of May – there have been 1,386 sign ups and 996 check-ins. This year, we're putting finishers into a sweepstakes rather than a prize for everyone. Winner prize is a hotel night giveaway.

Marketing started working with the Crowdriff content creators. The content is starting to come in and get added to our media library. They are extending our number of events because they didn't show for the first three. Northside Social is next on their list.

Our web traffic has increased 22% over last year. We gained 670 new fans on social media in May, which was a terrific performance in one month.

A travel writer was in and got Squishington's included on a nationwide poll for best candy stores. Voting is open, so don't forget to vote for them.

The graphic designers from Side Studio will be in Lawrence in early July to experience Lawrence to garner inspiration for the digital inspiration guide. They will be here from July 1-3. Kim, Allison, and Laurel will tour them to highlights around town.

Sales:

Kim reported on the first sales working group meeting. We convened a group and conducted a SWOT analysis using the Menti tool. While we had a small group, it was a group from very different venues, and proved to be a very valuable exercise. We plan to convene the group that couldn't make it in a webinar format, then do it at a future board meeting and at the next DOS meeting. We plan to use the information from the discussions to inform the strategic plan as we look to do a new plan post World Cup.

The sales report has a new format. Laura will continue to do a narrative and make that information available. The board asked to add the YTD and quarter to date numbers. May was a busier month with some new leads. Laura will continue to increase prospecting for June.

Assists are time-consuming and valuable. The board asked to add a lost lead code to the system.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Misc:

We reached an agreement with the National Fishing League.

Kim shared the updated TGT collections from the state. Collections are up 8% for the year after a slow start. We are expecting this to continue to be strong, as football is back and there should be a robust season on tap for the new stadium.

TGT Increase:

Kim and Luis had a meeting with Casey Toomey, Assistant City Manager. The TGT increase discussion is not going in the city manager's budget as commissioners requested a budget that did not contain tax increases. Even though the eXplore Lawrence budget request is predicated on the TGT increase going through to fund World Cup marketing.

With that timeline the earliest collections would start in April, and disbursements will follow after that. The rate adjustment work session will take place sometime between July 15 - September 2. The funding for World Cup seems to have support, the big question is what it could fund, and how will it be used after the World Cup.

Kim and Luis convened a stakeholders meeting, and received feedback very similar to that – they are not necessarily opposed but are concerned about how it is spent after World Cup.

The city would like information from eXplore Lawrence projecting what Lawrence might miss out on if the TGT is not increased. Kim proposed a formula to get the city-wide average daily rate during graduation, and factor occupancy at 80%, which is more conservative than graduation weekends.

Margann suggested that occupancy will certainly be higher than 80% and we should adjust that number up. Amber cautioned to stay as conservative as possible as we don't know about geopolitical issues that might depress travel, or the general instability of the international landscape right now.

The board agreed to draft the memo using an 80% occupancy scenario factored on the average graduation ADR.

There is still some hotel opposition to the idea, mostly based on the worry that the extra revenue generated will not be put back into the tourism economy.

The board had a brief discussion about whether finding other revenue funding would be possible, and Kim mentioned it was a strategic plan goal and one that they can revisit.

Kim will share the final memo with the board.

2026 Budget Request:

Kim is revising the budget request to add increased funding from TGT as part of our budget request to outline how Explore Lawrence will fund World Cup activities with extra revenue.

Mobile Experience Van:

Kim shared an update from McCullough Creative on the MVIC. They took our feedback and made some changes she wanted to share with the board. Board members liked the small panel in the back for digital activations and the VR piece that will be outside the van – which can help with line management and accessibility. The big screen appears to be on the “wrong side” for showing and parking – and Drew cautioned a screen that size on the outside could be cost prohibitive. It is labeled as a phase 2 project so we will work on that later.

The board asked Kim for pricing on the ideas, and she said she will get that to them.

ADJOURNMENT:

Drew requested a motion to adjourn (Heather, Emily). The meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Next meeting is July 25 at 1:00 pm in the Carnegie Building.

Respectfully submitted,
Ruth DeWitt