



Explore Lawrence

Board of Directors Meeting

January 31, 2024

Present: Ivan Simac (chair), Kim Anspach, Executive Director, Mike Logan, Drew Gaschler, Anthea Scoffas, Tina Tourtillott, Amber Sellers

Staff: Allison Calvin, Director of Marketing, Ruth DeWitt, Sales Manager

Ivan called the meeting (held on zoom) to order at 11:06

MINUTES/FINANCIALS:

The board approved the minutes of the December meeting without changes.

Anthea presented the financial report. Kim reminded the board the financials are on an accrual basis, and we are still waiting on some invoices to come in from 2023. Kim felt as though the final budget stayed very close to the original budget approved by the board, with one exception being an increase in rent at the visitor's center. Kim will look more into what's driving that.

The financials were approved.

STAFF REPORTS:

Marketing Budget Reallocation:

All staff reports are in the packet. Members are encouraged to look over them on their own, to allow time for Allison's presentation.

Allison presented the 2024 marketing plan for the board (attached for detail). The 2024 plan was adopted by the board prior to Allison's hire. It set a plan to increase engagement by 5% year-over-year in 5 years. This goal was greatly surpassed in the first year.

In 2023 we saw:

- Huge increases in website traffic (over 100,000 page views), social media engagement (up 3x over last year), in passport programs, and digital advertising engagement (click throughs), and increased distribution of visitor guides.
- Increases in visitor spending on food and beverage, lodging, recreation and entertainment, retail, and transportation.
- Increases in community engagement with tourism ambassadors, monthly e-newsletters, and arts roundtable.

Allison requested the board revise the goals for 2024 – as a 5% increase over the large increases from 2023 might prove difficult and unsustainable.

Allison went through the spending plan for 2024, and requested a reallocation of the marketing budget to better align with her priorities, but the total amount budgeted for marketing would remain the same.

The board voted to allow Allison to reallocate the marketing budget, based on her expertise, and urged her to create a budget aligned with her priorities. The motion was approved unanimously by the board.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Placer AI demonstration:

Kim used her time for a full board presentation by Jordan from PlacerAI, a software tool used to measure foot traffic, trends, and visitor data for assets in Douglas County and Lawrence. (The executive committee had already had a demo previously).

Jordan presented the board with a customer demo about how Placer AI works. Using cell phone data and geo-fencing on various sites, he showed visitor behavior using the Booth Memorial Stadium as an example.

He also demo'd reports the staff can create for the board, businesses, and the city to provide important data information for decision-making. He discussed it as a both a marketing and sales tool for EL.

Kim raised how this information will also be helpful for non-profits in the community in their grant-writing process.

The board asked various questions around accuracy, reporting, students, visitor data, and staff interest. Amber raised the question about Kim developing some data-sharing agreements, and urged her to develop a process about how data is shared among various constituencies who are going to be very interested in this information. David noted all the local applications and the advantages this could bring to the team.

Kim discussed further how it can be used as a sales tool noting the ability to track the visitor behavior from an event and whether or not it is a lead worth pursuing or even incentivizing.

Kim explained to the board she has worked with the sales team to identify \$30K in software they are not currently using, and other programs that will be unnecessary with the implementation of Placer AI. Kim and Allison have also worked to identify funding in the marketing budget that will share the expense cost between those departments.

Placer AI has extended last year's pricing and Kim negotiated a discount allowing Explore Lawrence to enter into a one-year contract without going over in budget expenses.

Anthea moved to enter into the Placer AI contract, David seconded. The motion passed with full board support.

Staff Retreat and Economic Impact Report:

The staff retreat and economic impact report items were tabled to the February meeting, as the demo and discussion went over time.

ADJOURNMENT:

Ivan adjourned the meeting at 12:27.