



## Explore Lawrence

Board of Directors Meeting

August 29, 2025

Present: Heidi Champagne (acting as chair), Heather Shull, Emily Peterson, Tina Tourtillott, Luis Ruiz, Margann Bennett, Mike Logan (new DLI ex-officio)

Present online: Commissioner Amber Sellers,

Absent:, Drew Gaschler (chair), Kirk Goodman, Anthea Scouffas

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

Heidi called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM

### MINUTES/FINANCIALS:

Approved July minutes (Tina, Heather)

Tina and Kim presented the financials, everything in the report is correct. Tina and Kim did not have a chance to meet in advance. The TGT disbursement hit the first week of August, and will be reported in the next month's financial report. Other points of interest:

- Large amounts in the public relations like item for now, but that will be spent on the TBEX conference coming in early October.
- We have three months of operating expenses as required for the reserve fund.
- Luis asked how expenses were tracking for the Mobile Visitor Center. Kim said things are on track and nothing has seemed out of line so far. We are slated to have the build done in October, so as that process gets underway, we will know more.
- Board members asked Kim about starting the 2026 budget process. As we learn more from the city about our budget and the TGT increase, that process will start shortly.

The board accepted the financials.

### STAFF REPORTS:

#### MARKETING:

##### **Website:**

Our website growth is 13% over July 2024, the event count is 11 events per user, which reflects how long and how many clicks people are doing on the website. The Summer of Fun passport, the Visitor Guide promotions, and the events calendar remain the highest traffic pages on the site.

##### **Social Media:**

Our social media platforms continue to grow. We increased by 2,600 followers in July! We are reaching new levels of engagement, and had 840 video views in July. Laurel has been reaching these goals and managing content calendars, gathering content, and editing and designing video and has done a terrific job in Allison's absence.

The enews letter is also doing well. We have 9,000 subscribers on our distribution list, and the last newsletter had over 4,000 opens. We continue to grow the list with the IMG sports package.

**Crowdriff Content Creators:**

Created content for Wine Night at Irvines, Fall Reels, and Pizza Nights at Paradise.

**Passports:**

Summer of fun pass is wrapping up for the season. We will report those numbers next month, but had terrific participation.

**Visitors Guide:**

Kim suggested to the board we postpone creating the Fall digital Inspiration Guide Allison proposed and keeping our printed guide through the end of the year. This will ease pressure on the staff and allow the new director to drive that vision a bit more. We anticipate making the change for the Spring/Summer of 2026.

**MOBILE VISITOR CENTER:**

The visitor center continues to move forward. We had some adjustments to the technology and screens for the inside, and we are slated for Le to do the interior build in October. We have been discussing wrap concept plans with the designers and have previewed three concepts we're evaluating.

**SALES:**

Sales is down in July (typical) and it has been a transition month as Laura moves from director to sales and services manager. She is heading to Small Market Meetings in Buffalo in September, and has a FAM/Site Visit tour coming up that came from the Small Market Summit in Branson earlier this summer.

The assists are still coming in, and the economic impact from assists are reaching goals. Occupancy and STR numbers were flat for July too, the ADR is pretty similar to July of last year.

The AirDNA report is getting close to showing occupancy for the summer of 2026.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

**Hiring Report:**

Kim has received over 100 applications from Linked In for the Director of Marketing position. Kim, Emily and Drew will conduct an application review next week. Kim will then conduct screenings

before narrowing the field for in-person interviews. Finalists will be asked to come present a plan of some kind before we make a decision.

The Director of Sales position is going a little slower, with 6 or so applications received so far. Kim is posting it on Indeed and will boost the post to get more applicants.

### **TGT Increase:**

Kim updated the board that the vote to increase the TGT rate from 6%-8% passed the city commission on 8/19 by a 4-1 vote. That moves the matter to second reading on the consent agenda. Once it passes second reading, it will be published twice in the paper, then a 60 day protest period begins. This timeline allows collection rates to begin Jan 1, 2026, for disbursement in April, 2026.

Commissioner Sellers shared with the board her plans to remove it from the consent agenda and propose increasing the tax on short-term rental properties from 8%-10%. She still has not received information from city staff or KDOR whether or not this is allowed. She is looking for a way to recover costs from the extra strains the World Cup will put on our city.

There was discussion about the tight timeline of passing and collecting TGT in time for World Cup activities. At the commission meeting on 8/19 the city asked Kim about paying for things before disbursements came in, and she said the board would be discussing authorizing some reserve fund spending in a future meeting.

### **Organizational Health Committee - Bylaws:**

Kim distributed a summary of recommendations from the committee about changes to the bylaws and how to move forward with the city. Luis shared the process of board action, then changes would go to legal at the city, and then the commission would vote on a waiver to allow eXplore Lawrence to vary from the city ordinance governing advisory boards. The action would need to focus on how the variance allows eXplore Lawrence to meet the city KPIs more effectively. Some points from the committee:

The ability to expand the board to up to 9 members

Appointment process: have the board nominate people to serve with mayoral approval, not the current language that the mayor appoints and the board approves

Make bylaws consistent with what we use and what's posted on the city website

Refining officer and chair positions, keep hotel on executive team, but not rotating as chair every second year

Move the annual reporting date to the end of Q1 as our budget is done on an accrual basis

Flexibility of meeting frequency – 10 required meetings currently

Desire to have reciprocal ex-officio seats with the organizations that are EO on our board

Luis suggested the board focus on the items that need to be changed via ordinance: board size, appointment process, meeting frequency. Stress why these need to be changed and why they are different than the city's ordinance.

The board did not need to take action to submit to the city, but if those changes are made, then they'll vote as a board.

### **SWOT Analysis**

The board conducted a SWOT analysis we also did with the sales working group and the Director of Sales meeting group. The board shared thoughts about the sales environment in Lawrence and how we can work in community to meet challenges.

Ruth will send to the board.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

Heidi requested a motion for adjournment at 2:15 (Tina/Heather).

Next meeting is September 26 at 1:00 pm in the Carnegie Building.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ruth DeWitt