



Explore Lawrence

Board of Directors Meeting

January 16, 2026 **BOARD RETREAT**

Present: Heidi Champagne, Chair, Emily Peterson, Margann Bennett, Mike Logan, Heather Shull, Tina Tourillott, Mayor Brad Finkeldei, Marlo Angell, Katie VanderVelde

Absent: Drew Gaschler, Lindsay Hart

Staff: Kim Anspach, Executive Director, Ruth DeWitt, Director of Community Relations, Chris Herman, Director of Sales, Jennie Nguyen, Director of Marketing

Heidi called the retreat to order at 12:16 PM

We started with introductions to welcome new board members.

EXPECTATION SETTING FOR THE RETREAT

This retreat is about setting clear, realistic goals and organizational priorities for the year. We are also spending time in defining the board's role in achieving those goals and what success looks like to them. Staff will incorporate this work in their retreat in mid-February.

BOARD ITEMS/MINUTES/FINANCIALS:

Kim reminded all members to sign their conflict of interest forms.

The Farmer's Market asked for a letter of support for their permanent site project. Kim has drafted the letter and can sign as the director, or on behalf of the board. The board agreed to sign the letter, although Heather remembered that Tina had a conflict with a previous letter. Kim will check.

The board approved the letter (MSP Emily, Heather).

Approved December minutes (Emily, Heidi). Marlo abstained, as she wasn't on the board.

Kim presented the financials. Tina was moving out of the treasurer's role, and Heather hasn't been in office yet. Kim said there are no concerns or discrepancies. All income including TGT remits are in. The merchandise line from the visitor center is not in, because we are no longer there.

We're not receiving income from Freedom's Frontier, and the Kansas Tourism grant reimbursement will start when we submit expenses on the mobile project.

The board accepted the financials.

STAFF AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORTS:

Kim encouraged the board to read the staff reports in the packets on their own time.

RETREAT

Kim asked each director to present their department's focus and goals for the upcoming year, and how their department aligns with the other departments.

SALES:

Chris presented the sales report – summarizing 2025, and his goals for the department for 2026. He asked the board for input on conference ideas (associations they belong to) and any groups they might know who meet in the region but haven't been to Lawrence. The board gave great input and had good questions about the sales plan.

MARKETING:

Jennie presented the marketing plan for 2026. She explained the target markets, campaigns, and the world cup activities for the year.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

Ruth presented on three initiatives under community relations:

- The Mobile Visitor Center update
- The World Cup Readiness – update and planning under Lawrence 2026 (formerly the Lawrence/Douglas County incident command structure)
- Visitor Economy and Advocacy

BOARD SMALL GROUP WORK:

The board divided into small groups and worked to provide direction and set a vision for the upcoming year in three areas:

- Growth/Leveraging New Opportunities
- The Board as Advocates
- Storytelling

Kim will compile the board feedback, integrate it into the staff retreat planning meeting and provide a summary/document for the board's February meeting.

The board affirmed their commitment to the priorities set, and will work moving forward together in 2026.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned 4:15 pm.

The next meeting of the board is scheduled for February 27 at 1:00 PM at the Carnegie Building.

Respectfully submitted,
Ruth DeWitt