



Explore Lawrence

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

May 29 2024

Present: Drew Gaschler (acting chair), Mike Logan, Anthea Scouffas, Tina Tourtillott, Amber Sellers, Porter Arneill, Heidi Champagne (virtual), David Hayob, Luis Ruiz

Absent: Ivan Simac, Kathy Gerstner, Andrew Holt

Staff: Kim Anspach, Executive Director, Allison Calvin, Marketing Director, Ruth DeWitt, Manager of External Affairs and Sales Operations (taking notes).

Drew called the meeting to order at 11:05.

MINUTES/FINANCIALS:

Anthea and Tina offered corrections to last month's minutes. They both attended virtually, which wasn't noted.

The board approved the minutes of the April meeting with those changes. (Mike, Anthea)

Kim and Anthea presented the financial report. There wasn't much to note other than some marketing expenses have not been reflected in the budget yet. The budget is pacing on track for the year.

Annual Audit

Kim has been working with the auditors to complete the annual audit. They are waiting on our tax returns, which Kim anticipates getting to them today, and the audit should be completed soon.

STAFF REPORTS:

Marketing

Allison reviewed the marketing report for the board.

Website There has been a 30% growth in website traffic, and a 100% growth in the "event count" metric (event count = engagement on the site).

Events calendar continues to be our **most view page**, followed by dining.

Current Campaigns are focusing on the regional METL (Manhattan, Emporia, Topeka, and Lawrence) Pour passport, and live music and events. E-news sign ups, and social media following numbers are also increasing by more than expected.

Summer of Fun Pass

The Summer of Fun pass launched Friday. Over 60 locations are participating (so far), and we have 978 users signed up, which surpasses last year's number of 800 at this point in the launch. Three people have already earned enough points to receive one of the prize tote bags.

Staff have a plan to distribute our fans with the SOF pass QR code on them at Buskerfest, Pride, Juneteenth, and other big events. Fans are also allocated for the partner locations.

Amber asked about the Midsummer Night on Mass event. Kim mentioned we'll have a sale in our Visitor's Center, and staff will be on hand to hand out fans.

Visitors Center

Walk-in numbers continued to grow in April, and our [sales](#) doubled over this time last year.

As the board probably knows, Calley Vance resigned as Visitor Center manager; her last day was May 31. Richard Smalley, who has been a part-time staff member expressed interest in Calley's position and will be taking over as supervisor in June. We are thrilled to welcome Richard to the position.

We will be looking for one additional person to work part-time to cover weekends, and other shifts.

World Cup Marketing Budget Request

Allison presented the board with a draft World Cup marketing budget. Our budget request includes \$75,000 for marketing for the World Cup coming to Kansas City in 2026.

Allison mentioned efforts that need to start in 2025 to have an extended 24-month campaign to promote Lawrence as a destination for day visitors or for extended-stay guests in the city. The campaign would showcase Lawrence's unmistakable identity, and experiential marketing to appeal to guests.

The sample budget included expenses such as:

- Digital and web advertising
- A microsite for a quick overview of activities throughout the summer
- Lawrence ads at the airport, or billboards on 70
- Translation services
- Print publications, including additional visitors guides
- Developing a soccer-specific passport programs, and more.

We would like to wrap up some contracts as soon as possible, so rates stay affordable. We're also hoping to collaborate with the state tourism office with possible branding and other advertising opportunities.

Sales Team

Kim encourage the board to review the sales report, which all goals are running on target. The sales team has reached 42% of the lead goals, and 50% of economic impact.

Laura has been on a prospecting trip to Kansas City to work some possible leads. She's also been working to bring the Puppeteers of America to Lawrence to host their annual conference.

Ruth has been working with the Dietary Managers of Kansas to host their annual conference.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

STR and TGT Reports

The TGT receipts are catching up from a slow first quarter. May graduation weekend was strong, and we are in the process of creating Placer AI reports for Buskerfest and graduation.

FUNDING AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY OF LAWRENCE:

Kim submitted the funding request memo to the city per the board's authorization last month. Our request would bring a small increase for marketing efforts, and Kim pointed these line increases out to the board.

Anthea asked about the increased funding for print efforts and whether that is a good use of funds in the digital space. Kim said we'll be using funds to print more visitor guides and place them in a wider distribution to regional cities, particularly host sites.

COMMITTEE ON WORKSPACE:

Mike and Drew reported on their work to find a combined location for the administrative offices and visitors center. They have engaged a commercial broker to look at spaces. They have toured three potential spaces, and by the time they circled back, two were already taken.

Mike and Drew engaged the board about Mass Street, and decided that the vibe on Mass is central to the mission of eXplore Lawrence, and suggested moving off even a block, we would need to invest in signs, kiosks, and other advertising to direct people our way.

Mike suggested the board decide a budget range so he, Drew, and Kim can move ahead and avoid losing spots again. Kim said she would put together some projections for the board.

Amber asked about the willingness to do renovations before moving, and Mike reminded the board that we needed to do \$119K in improvements to the current Visitor Center location. That lease is up at the end of the year, so time is important here.

SAVE THE DATE: TOURISM SUMMIT

Kim reminded the board that our first tourism summit is on September 5 from 9:00-2:00 at Arterra events gallery. Ruth shared the speaker agenda, and Kim talked about the first annual awards planned for the industry over lunch.

Ruth said we'll be starting to look for sponsorships for the summit so people can go who might not be able to afford it, and to help defray the costs of the lunch and space rental. Both David and Tina said they were interested in sponsorships.

ADJOURNMENT:

Next meeting is June 26, 11:00 AM at the eXplore Lawrence conference room.

Drew requested a motion to adjourn (Anthea, Mike). The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Ruth DeWitt