



## Explore Lawrence

Board of Directors Meeting

March 6, 2024 (Rescheduled from Feb 26)

Present: Drew Gaschler (acting as chair), Kim Anspach, Executive Director, Mike Logan, Anthea Scouffas, Tina Tourtillott, Amber Sellers, Heidi Champagne, David Hayob, Porter Arneill, Kathy Gerstner, Andrew Holt

Absent: Ivan Simac (chair)

Staff: Ruth DeWitt, Sales Manager (taking notes)

Drew called the meeting to order at 11:06

### MINUTES/FINANCIALS:

The board approved the minutes of the December meeting without changes. (David, Anthea)

Anthea presented the financial report. Kim had the following comments on the financials:

- Visitor's Guide ad sales exceeded the budgeted amount by over \$500. This level of ad sales is the best we've had in recent memory.
- Insurance costs have increased and projections show they'll exceed the budget by approximately \$10,000. The budget included an increase of 5%, but it is closer to 13%. Luckily more people were budgeted to be on the plan than are. This savings makes the increase absorbable, rather than catastrophic.
- We had to replace the toilet and plumbing in the Visitor's Center. Kim obtained 3 bids for the work ranging from \$1,100 to \$1,800. We went with the lowest bid, the work was completed on Monday, and Calley reports the problems have been solved. Anthea suggested Kim circle back with the original contractors to share with them the original work wasn't done properly and see if they might help with the cost to fix the issue.

The financials were approved.

### STAFF REPORTS:

#### Sales Team Reports:

All staff reports are in the packet. Kim mentioned the 2024 sales goals will be forthcoming. After the board and staff retreat, Ruth, Laura, and Kim are working through defining the two sales team roles so both are using their strengths and serving the organization in the best role possible. They are working on new position descriptions, new sales goals, a new sales process, and ways to make the sales processes more efficient. The sales plan will be shared at the April board meeting.

Laura continues to book room nights with groups that are coming in. The team is also working groups like the Chinese Basketball Association and others who they met at tradeshow to hold future events in Lawrence.

### **Marketing Team Report:**

January was a really busy month for marketing largely due to Restaurant Week and the Winter Wonder Pass closing out. Restaurant Week did really well this year. Kim directed the board to the report showing the economic impact and the huge increase in website traffic and other digital media responses. In January, the website had a 61.5% increase (nearly 50,000) users.

Kim shared the PlacerAI report Allison created from Restaurant Week data. There are several things in the report that require understanding of Placer and its count. Kim went over that with the board, and Kim and Allison will be meeting with the Restaurant Week participants to go over the results and provide them context. We're excited to be learning this tool.

Allison will be working to do a report in collaboration with the farmer's market to help them with data and help them with information they need to complete grant applications.

Kim noted to the board the earned media Allison has been getting EL through her connections in Kansas City and with travel writers. We were present on Telemundo for the first time ever! Kim also gave a shout out to Laurel with the board, who put in over 121 hours on making Restaurant Week happen. She also ran with the Winter Wonder Pass program and has maintained a rigorous schedule with the e-newsletters. She has blown past her Q1 goals for social media engagements. Kim will work on making sure these projects are done in the most efficient way possible next year, so the marketing team doesn't feel as though they are behind before the year even starts.

The Visitor's Center had a low walk-in count in January because of the weather and it being closed several days (which follow the school closure days). Calley was able to use that slowdown in traffic to complete an inventory, work with the contractors on what was needed for the toilet repair, and order new merchandise for 2024. Calley has also taken over organizing the Lawrence Arts Roundtable, and has joined the Lawrence Art Guild so she meets and gets access to artists who might exhibit in the Visitors Center on Final Fridays.

Ruth shared with the board about our quarterly field trips. Q1 was a trip to the new Central Transit Station. We had a terrific time and learned so much about accessing the city through the transit system. Driver appreciation day is March 18, and Explore Lawrence is going to partner with Lawrence Transit to recognize the drivers with EL Bucket Hats and cookies. The open house is March 18, 11-2 at the Senior Resource Center.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

### Annual Report:

Kim shared the 2023 annual report with the board, highlighting the huge increase in website traffic and social media engagements. The report will be sent to elected officials on the City and County Commissions, and staff in relevant offices.

The board accepted to accept the annual report (as amended – there are a few grammar and spelling changes to make). (Heidi, Anthea)

### STR/Air DNA Report:

Kim went over the STR report, and called to the board's attention the dramatic drop in TGT collections last month. We have a call in to the Department of Revenue to clarify, but in Kim's experience, it is likely a property did not report their collections.

Included in the Lodging Report is a new report from Air DNA regarding the short-term rental market. We are creating a report to mirror the STR lodging report so we can compare more easily. The board had a preliminary discussion about the proposed tax increase on short-term rentals, and Amber suggested Kim attend (or tune in) to the March 19<sup>th</sup> City Commission meeting where Brian Jimenez, the city's Assistant Director of Planning and Development is going to cover some of the issues around short-term rentals with the commission (ie inspections, occupancy, taxation, housing stock, etc). Kim will plan to listen in, but also invite Brian to the March board meeting to start the discussion with the board.

Mike said a retraction letter is supposed to be coming out, which gives the board extra time to discuss some of the proposed ideas on dealing with short-term rentals. He reminded that we want people to experience Lawrence in a way they feel comfortable and enjoy so their visitor experience is positive.

### Staff Retreat and Economic Impact Report:

Kim reported on the staff retreat in December. We had a great meeting, discussed our ideas for the future, did a Strengths Deployment Inventory so we learned how to work together and how we react in conflict. Kim said how good she feels about the team assembled – we have a strong, dedicated, and talented group that is ready to grow. We determined five focus areas for the next year:

- Clarity (mission, job titles, roles)
- Protecting bandwidth
- Resources and tools efficiently
- Proactive mindset – are we looking ahead and planning
- Reviewing and refining processes

We also spent time recognizing our accomplishments from the past year. It's easy to move forward to the next thing quickly. We are working as a team to acknowledge progress and recognize our work.

She is still working on what the role Amy vacated can be, and how it can be most effective in our work. She might be presenting a new organizational chart to the board in April.

Andrew Holt asked about a World Cup update. Ruth, Laura, and Kim met with Cathy and Bonnie from the Chamber. They determined the next steps was to bring in the leadership team of the city, so they will have a small meeting with them before broadening out to all aspects of the community that will be involved in preparing Lawrence and putting together the events of 2026.

Amber stated that we can't get so focused on the World Cup that we forget the residents of Lawrence, its annual events, and groups not associated with FIFA coming to town.

Andrew asked to be looped in to any future discussions.

Kim reminded the board there is a new ambassador training scheduled for March 26 from 9-noon at the Spencer Museum of Art. Anyone is welcome if they would like and encouraged the board to send people to it if they're interested. There will be a behind-the-scenes tour if anyone is interested.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

Next meeting is March 27<sup>th</sup>. The board conduct the quarterly strategic plan review, with a focus on organizational health.

Drew requested a motion to adjourn (David, Mike). The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 am.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ruth DeWitt