



## Explore Lawrence

Board of Directors Meeting

November 7, 2025

Present: Drew Gaschler, Chair, Anthea Scouffas, Lindsay Hart, Emily Peterson, Margann Bennett, Heidi Champagne

Present Online: Commissioner Amber Sellers, Tina Tourtillott

Absent: Heather Shull, Mike Logan, Kirk Goodman

Staff: Kim Anspach, Executive Director, Ruth DeWitt (notetaker), Chris Herman, Director of Sales

Guest: Ellie Meinen, Tourism Economics

Drew called the meeting to order at 1:04 PM

### MINUTES/FINANCIALS:

Approved August minutes (Emily, Heidi)

Kim presented the financials, Tina noted expenses were down over the last year, but had no other comments. Kim presented the end of September and the Q3 report, including the comparison between Q3 2024 to Q3 2025.

We have flexibility to use the opportunity fund in 2025 to prepare for World Cup expenses.

Heidi had a question about event sponsorships, Kim explained the change in policy from last year to leverage our digital strength to market events rather than give event cash sponsorships. People have appreciated that change.

We are saving on rent from closing the Visitor Center, and staff travel is down. That line will be up next month as October is a heavy travel month.

Emily asked about the budget adjustment when the TGT rates go into effect, and Kim explained that the budget for 2026 is currently flat and will remain similar to 2025's budget after the city does a budget amendment. We have asked for \$230K to market activities and run the volunteer program, and that will be reflected as soon as the city opens that up.

There are pressures about contracts for marketing in the Kansas City area, so Kim is keeping an eye on those opportunities.

The board accepted the financials.

### Presentation from Tourism Economics

Kim reminded the board that the city would be looking for quantifiable information from eXplore Lawrence on the effectiveness of our digital marketing efforts. She has been looking at different tools on the market that do that, and has found one she wanted to share with the board.

Ellie Meinen from Tourism Economics walked the board through the demo of the attribution tool that tracks information from website activity to when they show in market. With this tool, we will be able to present who is coming to our website, what pages they visit to get them here and when they came to visit Lawrence. There is also a tracker for the tax revenue the visits generate, which we currently can't quantify.

Heidi motioned the board to authorize eXplore Lawrence to enter in to a 3-year contract with Tourism Economics. The motion passed unanimously.

## **STAFF REPORTS:**

### **SALES:**

Kim introduced Chris Herman, the new director of sales to the board. Chris joins us from the SpringHill Suites as the director of sales there. He talked about his impressions of the first couple of weeks, setting goals for a great year next year, and ways he is looking to book the year knowing the World Cup activities will be taking place.

### **MARKETING:**

The board received the marketing report for the month. Kim urged members to look through it. Metrics continue to do well. Laurel continues to excel in the social media space, and we are getting high engagement from Fall content.

### **COMMUNITY RELATIONS:**

Ruth discussed lessons Ruth and Kim learned from attending the Tbox conference and the subsequent "fam" trip visits from the influencers. The state has promised to get us 30, 60, and 90-day reports on activity and engagement from the content they worked on while they were in Lawrence.

Ruth also reported on the Destinations International Advocacy Summit and how inspiring it was. She thanked the board for the support they gave in sending her, and took a lot of lessons and information from the conference.

### **MOBILE VISITOR CENTER:**

The team has been working on the van wrap design with Side Studio. The designs are very exciting and we're honing the concepts with consistent meetings. The interior build will start in October. Ruth and Kim have been looking at videographers, and are interviewing one this week.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

### **Hiring Report:**

After Jenny's departure, Kim has reached out to the other very strong candidate from the search. She is still very much interested in the position, and Kim has made an offer to her. She has accepted the offer, and pending the necessary background check and paperwork, her tentative start date will be December 8.

### **Budget:**

At this point, the projected 2026 budget will be flat, based on the budget approved by the commission. We are on track to have a strong budget. We will be revising the budget to account for increased TGT funding, once approved by the city. Without the adjustments, there will be funding for staff adjustments, health insurance, and other anticipated increases in expenses.

We've increased money for content, and video content and B roll for future projects and the mobile. We'll also be increasing design lines and travel, registration, and staffing increases once the mobile van launches.

We will be meeting with Casey Toomay, Assistant City Manager next week to go over the TGT funding increase and the timing of the budget amendment.

### **Board vacancy:**

Anthea is retiring in 2026, which leaves an open board seat. She serves is in the cultural representative seat on the board. Kim met with Marlo Angell, who is interested in serving. The board voted to accept Marlo's nomination to the board.

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting adjourned 2:17 pm. (Heidi, Emily)

Kim will be in touch regarding the next meeting – planned to be the end of year board retreat.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ruth DeWitt