



Explore Lawrence

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

September 25, 2024

Present: Ivan Simac, Chair, Luis Ruiz, Mike Logan, Porter Arneill, Kathy Gerstner, Tina Tourtillott, Amber Sellers, Andrew Holt, Anthea Scouffas (virtual), Drew Gaschler (virtual).

Absent: Heidi Champagne

Staff: Kim Anspach, Executive Director, Ruth DeWitt, Manager of External Affairs and Sales Operations, Allison Calvin, Director of Marketing and Communications

Ivan called the meeting to order at 11:08.

MINUTES/FINANCIALS:

Minutes

The board approved the minutes from July and August (Luis, Mike).

Financials

Kim and Anthea presented the financials, neither had issues to report. The spending and expenses are on track for the year.

The board accepted the financial report.

Treasurer Position Appointment

Anthea is planning to step away from the treasurer's role for health reasons, and nominated Tina Tourtillot as treasurer. This nomination also removes Anthea from the Executive Committee and puts Tina on the executive team.

The board unanimously approved Tina's appointment as Treasurer and by extension, the Executive Committee. (Anthea, Mike)

STAFF REPORTS:

Kim encouraged the board to look over the staff reports. Allison is presenting on her marketing plan and budget, and then the board needs to take up the organization budget after the marketing discussion so that will take most of the meeting time.

Marketing Budget 2025

Allison shared the marketing plan with an executive summary with the board. The marketing line will increase \$12K for next year.

The board had some questions about World Cup and the marketing plan. There was nothing in the 2025 budget from the city's appropriation for marketing so Allison plans to continue with the current plan. We know hotels will be very busy, and think that travelers will visit Lawrence on a day-trip or even an overnight. If things shift, we might plan to go into Des Moines and Omaha to attract those visitors.

The board was curious about other local communities and what kind of efforts they are undertaking. Really, each community is different, Lenexa has formed an LLC called Pitch Lenexa, and others are engaging in various forms of collaboration. Next week, KC26 is hosting an update for CVBs and Ruth and Allison will be attending that. There is also a meeting of the state CVB directors at the TIAK conference coming up in October, so we might learn more information on that from them.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

New Board Members

Mike, David, and Ivan will be rotating off the board at the end of the year. Ivan has the hotelier seat, and has someone in mind as a replacement, David occupies a tourism industry seat, and Mike is currently representing the event management industry. Kim would like to have the new members recruited to attend the board retreat in December with the current board for continuity.

Porter will check with Sherri (City Clerk) about the timeline for us to submit nominees for vacancies. If any board members have ideas of possible members, please send them to Kim.

Because the bylaws changes haven't been approved yet, Kim suggested proceeding with the current structure – ie replace Ivan with a hotelier, David with a tourism representative, and Mike with an event management seat. David mentioned that they are finishing up interviews for the conference center manager, so stay tuned for that information.

Bylaws

Kim and Luis met about moving forward with the proposed changes to the bylaws. eXplore Lawrence needs to create a summary memo for the commission explaining the changes we are asking for and then we'll be scheduled on the commission's agenda and get them approved by the commission. We hope this will be able to be on the consent agenda – Porter and Luis said it needs to go in front of Craig.

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/BUDGET:

Kim presented a draft of the proposed 2025 budget based on the city's approval of a flat-funding. This is a draft allocation for initial feedback from the board. Of the budget presented, the decreases in allocated funds are in green.

Kim also believes we are retaining enough resources in sales and marketing to create economic impact in the area.

Highlights:

- Given the budget constraints, we will likely stay in our current office.
- The visitor center expenses will remain flat, merch expenses are expected to go down

- Kim is asking Freedom's Frontier to increase their share of services and pay their own phones
- We will increase efforts to get sponsorships for events like Summit

Allison is currently building her marketing budget and will join the board in September to present that budget.

Other items of note in the draft:

Incentives line to bring new business is being decreased, but not by much, and will continue to be backed up by the bid fund, which can also provide incentives.

Costs for Placer AI will be split between Marketing and Sales

Visitor's guides – proposed cuts to this line, which will affect the numbers of visitors guides we can distribute to travelers who are in the area for World Cup.

There is no current allocation for World Cup marketing in the budget. Is there a way to offset TGT grants to provide money for World cup efforts.

It seems clear there will be no state money to market to World Cup travelers for short trips to surrounding communities. Amber raised the question about how we are expected to fund these and other efforts – Kim commented that the TIAK executive director and marketing efforts will be at the Summit if people are interested in talking to her.

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/WORKSPACE COMMITTEE:

Kim gave a brief update on the office move. Right now, there is no option on Mass Street that we can afford. If there is not space to move into and we don't move, we'll need to configure the current space using the current conference room as flex space. We also need to get our desks out of storage. We can use the upstairs for board meetings if we reconfigure the conference space.

ADJOURNMENT:

Drew requested a motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 12:22 (Mike)

Next meeting is October 30, 11:00 AM at the eXplore Lawrence conference room.

Respectfully submitted, Ruth DeWitt