

**Mat-Su CVB
Board Meeting MINUTES
January 26, 2024
Alaska Glacier Lodge**

Board Members Present

Mark Austin
Kierre Childers
Mark Fleenor
Roberta Warner
Sam Dinges
Heather Dudick
Jennifer Brandon-Hicks
Mandy Garcia

Board Members Absent

Jeff Curtis
Travis Taylor

Staff Present

Casey Ressler
Tasha Belka
Katie Reeves
Justin Saunders

Mark Austin called the meeting to order at 11:00 am. The roll was called.

AGENDA

Agenda was approved without opposition.

MINUTES

Roberta Warner moved to approve the December 1, 2023 board meeting minutes. Sam Dinges seconded the motion, which passed without opposition.

STANDING REPORTS

CHAIR'S REPORT

Mark deferred to conversations and statements made during the January 25th Planning Retreat held the previous day and opened the floor for any questions. No questions at this time.

ATIA BOARD / MARKETING REPORT

Casey Ressler, Heather Dudick and Mandy Garcia attended the ATIA marketing committee retreat January 22nd – 23rd. Casey reports the focus of the retreat was lead generation. ATIA lead generations have seen a significant decline; 600,000 leads seen two years ago while less than 60,000 were generated last year. The problem lies in the number of DMO's participating in the lead program. ATIA estimates the need for 20 DMO's to support this program and currently there are only 3; Visit Anchorage, Explore Fairbanks and the Mat-Su CVB. The cost per lead went from \$0.35 per lead down to \$0.25 per lead last summer. ATIA will be offering new programs this year, some up to \$1.00 per lead. Also discussed was seasonal aspect of tourism in Alaska and how to better promote winter tourism.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Travis was absent from the meeting. Casey reviewed the financials with Travis prior to the meeting and reports that spending and income are on track. He confirmed with the borough we will receive the second \$400,000 FY24 grant within the next week and Tasha reported there are no major capital expenditures expected for the second half of FY24.

PRESIDENTS'S REPORT

Casey noted that his full report is in the board packet. Justin Saunders, Marketing Manager, attended the American Bus Association Marketplace in Nashville January 13-16, which was a success. There were 2,800 people overall of which 1039 motorcoach and tour operators. Justin secured 30 appointments during the show. Justin will head to Los Angeles February 2-4 for the Travel and Adventure show. We will also have a booth at Scott McMurren's Travel Secrets event Feb 8. The Travel Auction is set for May 3rd at the Government Peak Chalet. Katie Reeves, Membership Manager, has already received multiple donations for the auction. We received the 2024 Visitor Guides and this year we signed 43 new members which is the most we've ever had in a calendar year. Calendar year-end administrative duties (W-2, FUTA, 1099) have been completed.

NEW BUSINESS

PLANNING RETREAT ACTION ITEMS

Zartico:


Casey will reach out to Zartico representatives with questions the board has about the platform itself as well as ATIA, Visit Anchorage, Explore Fairbanks with questions about how they use similar platforms. He will report back to the board at the February meeting.

New Policies Letters of Support / Cannabis Membership:

Casey will draft Mat-Su CVB policies for Letters of Support and a Cannabis membership category from board discussion at the Planning Retreat. Resolutions to adopt these policies will be prepared for a vote at the Feb 13th Board of Directors meeting.

Branding RFP:

The goal of the Mat-Su CVB re-branding project is to pull all regions together. The Mat-Su CVB will be rebranded as well as the regional destination itself; a brand that will live on. Project committees will be selected by the board and include community and business members, Assembly members as well as Palmer and Wasilla city representatives. We have access to relevant sentiment research and will approach the selected contractor to evaluate this data for potential use on the project, reason being it could free up capital to put towards the creative portion of the project and allow us to go with a larger firm. Casey will provide branding RFP with proposed edits for review at the February board meeting. Proposed edits are as follows:

 Under Background 2nd paragraph/ 2nd sentence remove 'OUR' from "...salmon fishing, 'OUR' Ahtna Athabascan and..."

2. Under Project Goals part ii – remove ‘THE’ from “Develop a road map for the destination ‘THE’ brand to live on after the scope of work is completed.”
3. Under Scope of Work add bullet point: roll out procedures best practices / style guide etc as well as the order i.e. website first etc?
4. Under Estimated Project Timeline: update to 2025
5. Under Evaluation Metrics consider using components from the Chat GBT Rebrand Criteria provided by Kierre (add AI disclosure if utilized)
6. Under Submission Requirements, second bullet point remove the word ‘ANY’

Gateway Visitor Center:

Committees for the Gateway Visitor Center were formed. Meetings will begin immediately and committee chairs will set the agendas. Mark Austin asked the board to email him with any thoughts relevant to the Design Committee as detailed below. The committees are as follows:

DESIGN: Executive Committee and Heather Dudick. All board members who would like to participate are invited to attend meetings to give input. Items to cover: Storage / use of building, what do we want to be sure isn’t left out – this is up to staff mainly. Don’t assume anything is assumed.

PROGRAMING: Roberta Chair and Mandy
Items to cover: Exhibits, technology; are they going to have the right contractor? Do we need phone lines? Will everything be Bluetooth? Which community members and organizations should we include in the planning process? Cole, Suzanne, Pyrah’s Farm, Alaska State Fair, tribal representation Chickaloon, Mat-Su Health Foundation, Friends of AK Parks. Mark and Sam are happy to help.

OPERATIONS – Sam Chair
Items to cover: How will we staff the center? Where do we hope to be after 10 years? Identify funding possibilities. Mat-Su CVB will be responsible for all maintenance and operations per our grant agreement. What will operation costs be i.e. cost of lightbulbs, utilities etc? Kierre suggests contacting Menard Center or Tom Adams of Public Works for comparable data to use for planning. Commercial sales will be small/incidental if at all due to concerns about pushback from Mat-Su CVB members.

MARKETING – Kierre Chair
Items to cover: PR for launching, tying in to the Mat-Su CVB rebranding as well. Ground breaking ceremony.

FY25 DRAFT BUDGET – FEBRUARY

Casey will meet with Mat-Su Borough Manager, Mike Brown, in the coming weeks to solidify funding for FY25. In years past the grant was based on a formula whereby Mat-Su CVB received

65% of the projected bed tax revenue for the upcoming fiscal year plus an additional 65% of revenue in excess of the projected bed tax received by the borough. In addition, the grant contract was renewable up to three years by the borough manager. Currently the grant is a straight appropriation and is not tied to the bed tax in any way. The board proposes asking for a straight appropriation of 65% of the previous year's bed tax revenue. Using historical revenue data rather than projected data streamlines the budgeting process for the CVB. Board discussed lobbying to increase the bed tax (currently the lowest in the state at 5%) and agreed to table this topic for the time being as the primary focus right now is the Mat-Su CVB rebranding and the Gateway Visitor Center. The board supports an ask for a straight appropriation of 65% of last year's bed tax revenue. Casey will work with staff to prepare the FY25 Draft Budget for review at the February 13th board meeting.

NEXT BOARD MEETING

Mat-Su CVB board and staff extended their sincerest thanks to Jennifer Brandon-Hanks of Alaska Glacier Lodge/Alaska Helicopter Tours for hosting the retreat this year. The venue was outstanding, and service went above and beyond. Jennifer reports there is no off-season for Alaska Helicopter Tours and the Lodge will host an exclusive heli-skiing company from February 15th through April 15th.

The next board meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, February 13th at 9:30 am.

ADJOURNMENT

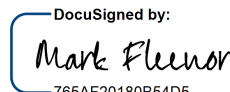
After some brief board member announcements, the meeting was adjourned by consensus at 12:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted,


Tasha Belka, Recording Secretary

4/23/24
Date

Attest,

DocuSigned by:

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Mark Fleenor, Secretary
4/27/2024
Date