**Mat-Su CVB**

**Board Meeting MINUTES**

**January 17, 2023**

**Mat-Su CVB office and Zoom**

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| **Board Members Present**  Mark Austin  Mark Fleenor (Z) 10:10  Roberta Warner  Heather Dudick  Sam Dinges  Wes Hoskins (Z)  Kierre Childers  Cole Chambers (Z) | **Board Members Absent**  Israel Mahay  Fernando Salvador | **Staff Present**  Bonnie Quill  Casey Ressler  Justin Saunders (Z)  **Guests Present**  Travis Taylor – 10:30 arrival |

Mark A. called the meeting to order at 10:02 am. The roll was called.

**AGENDA**

The agenda was amended to reflect the accurate FY24 dates under new business, replacing FY23. Also, CEO Succession Plan was amended to include Board Succession. Roberta moved to approve the agenda as amended. The agenda was seconded by Sam Dinges and it was approved by consensus.

**MINUTES**

Roberta moved to approve the November 18, 2022 board meeting minutes. Kierre seconded the motion, which passed without opposition.

**STANDING REPORTS**

**CHAIR’S REPORT**

Mark thanked Bonnie for the flexibility with the annual retreat. He reported he and Mark Fleenor will be attending a leadership symposium with Bonnie. The one-day board retreat is set for February 6 at the Musk Ox Farm loft. Today is a great opportunity to begin discussion on topics we will address at the retreat, which will be fun and engaging for everyone.

**ATIA BOARD/MARKETING REPORT**

Bonnie attended the ATIA Marketing Committee retreat on Dec. 1 and the Advertising Committee on January 12. The current FY23 state marketing plan is $10.5 million. The governor did not include tourism marketing funding in his FY24 budget last month. Sarah from ATIA shared they have had discussion with his chief of staff and there will be an opportunity to amend his budget in mid-February. There is $4 million of American Rescue Plan funds that have been forward funded, dedicated to the FY24 budget. ATIA is also doing a winter photo shoot that will include Talkeetna in late February and we will work with them to offer assistance. The next board meeting is Feb. 16 in Juneau. Sarah Leonard has announced her resignation after 10 years to take a position as Executive Director at Visit Longmont. Bonnie also attended the Tourism Policy and Planning committee on Jan. 10. There were updates on the Marine Highway, SCORP and National Park Service on the Denali Park Road. Total visitors to Denali last summer was 415,000 compared to 610,000 in 2019. The report from ARAMARK was that they received good feedback from guest experiences and guest were able to do an additional activity. The superintendent announced they awarded the bridge construction contract last week to Granite Construction and the timeline is still May 2025 for completion. Lastly, Heather Dudick is our representation now on the board. She was elected last fall.

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

Wes deferred to Bonnie. Bonnie reported we are expecting our second payment of $375,000 any day. Our grant appropriation for FY23 is $750,000. The financial reports do not reflect we have received that check yet, so board members should note that in comparison the entire revenue was all received in 2021, so that’s why it appears different. Bonnie has taken the resolution of executive committee check signers to FNBA and is currently getting signatures on an updated form.

**PRESIDENT’S REPORT**

Bonnie e-mailed a detailed report of our activities since the Nov. 18 board meeting. She gave a few highlights: The winter newsletter was published and mailed before the holidays. During the Annual VOM, membership brought two items forward – scheduling social media trends and tips, and advocating for recognition of conservation of sportfishing. Both topics have been addressed. We have scheduled three member luncheons: January 20 Social Media Trends with Thompson and Company; February 24 “How Mat-Su CVB Marketing Works for You;” and March 24, a cultural training workshop to continue our cultural tourism initiative with Chickaloon Village. Our web site performance is exceeding goals with year-end sessions up 17.4 percent over 2021. Neil announced his retirement effective Dec. 31 and we have divided up his responsibilities. Foster CPAs, who do our reconciliations and quarter tax filings will come into the office twice a month to do our bookkeeping for the next 4-6 months. We are developing a new job description and search for a replacement. We have also reached out to Valley Business Machines to submit a proposal for IT and networking. We are bringing back the Travel Auction on May 5 after three years. Justin is working on securing Government Peak Chalet. Finally, a new Destination Leadership Symposium was announced nationally to DMOs and Bonnie looked into the agenda and topics. It is a great opportunity during a transition year and the future planning of the Gateway Visitor Center to meet with peers and national industry consultants on best practices. The President of Searchwide Global, a national executive search firm for tourism and hospitality is one of the keynote speakers. Topics include succession planning, board governance and advocacy, finance and accountability, organization culture and funding. Bonnie registered Mark A. and Mark F. and herself for the Feb. 1-2 symposium in Irving, Texas.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**FEBRUARY 6 BOARD RETREAT AGENDA**

**Sustainable Tourism Master Plan Priorities**

Bonnie said this isn’t something that is going to sit on a shelf, it’s actionable. She wants the board to discuss and prioritize 2-4 goals that we will focus on and identify how we will move them forward. There are three parts to the plan – the full report, the summary and an appendix. There were resident surveys, stakeholder interviews and four community workshops. Bonnie thanked Wes and Mark A. for participating on the leadership team. Bonnie identified on Page 23 there were common themes that set the stage - Mat-Su offers many strengths and attributes; resident engagement and communication can be improves; there are infrastructure gaps and maintenance issues; Talkeetna has unique challenges; and several opportunities that could provide significant benefit for the region. Mark A. said the retreat allows us a good opportunity to dig into the plan and get to work on it. He said the board is a cross-section of the industry and we can use board member’s expertise and relationships to explore more deeply how we can use that for the benefit of the CVB. Wes said there is some homework for board members to review and get the topics “sized right” for operational plans. He said the discussion will be most impactful if we look at the objective level, and the strategies then group into the objective level. Bonnie said she looks at it as how we can move the needle on the plan and what goals do we have the opportunity to move the needle on in a year, and what is the board’s role in that plan.

**FY24 Budget and MSB Grant Increase**

Bonnie recommends we request a 10 percent increase in the FY24 budget dedicating the additional funding to marketing the Arctic Winter Games and hosting media and beginning a rebranding effort for the opening of a new Gateway Visitor Center in 2024. Her meeting with the borough manager and finance director last March indicated they did not support a 3-year formula-based grant agreement because each year it is an appropriation that the manger includes in his budget and the assembly debates and approves. His suggestion was to ask for more and that is what Bonnie intends to do, identifying the programs for the additional funding. Kierre asked about the budget timeline and the process with the borough.

**Gateway Visitor Center**

Mark A. and Bonnie sat in on an EDA meeting on Jan. 4. The meeting outlined the process to award the construction contract and the responsibilities in meeting EDA grant deadlines. Our involvement as a co-applicant, partner and tenant was discussed. The EDA Regional Director noted that this was one of the largest EDA grants awarded, and that construction of a new visitor center was also rare compared to the mostly infrastructure projects they award. He said all that are involved are really excited about the project. Mark A. reported that more than likely, Wolf Architecture will be used for the final 5 percent of the design, but there may be a lot of changes in the design, which will require us to consult. Mark A. said we should schedule a meeting soon to discuss other visitor centers, see what works and what doesn’t work, and bring that info to the group. Travis noted that when we go to the borough during budget, could we advocate for some funding for things like creation and maintenance of highway rest stops, including public restrooms, that tie into the STMP and the Gateway.

**CEO and Board Succession Plan**

We know we are going to be looking for a new President & CEO. We are looking at Bonnie being available through the end of April and being able to help in transition through the end of June. ATIA and Ketchikan are also looking for new CEOs. There are a lot of conversations the board needs to have. Bonnie said she’s committed through the budget cycle around the first of May, and then she’s accumulated vacation time to use to be available, with a transition in place by July 1. Bonnie also gave an update on the selection of a new Mat-Su Borough Assembly representative for District 6. Mark said he’s known Bonnie since the late 1990s and a friendship that goes beyond the board, and he is likely to purchase Bonnie’s home and he wanted to bring it up to be transparent. Regarding board succession, Mark. A. reminded the board about term limits – three terms, three years each – but when the by-laws were amended, it was included that no more than two members may term out at the same time. This year, we have three terming out – Cole, Roberta and Israel. Mark A. said this is a discussion we need to have at the board retreat. The third member not being termed out will stay for another year. Bonnie gave an update for the remaining terms for Fernando, Mark F. and Heather. Bonnie said she will make the board service spreadsheet available before the retreat for clarity. She also said you only must be off the board for one year before seeking a seat through election. She also will provide current job descriptions, prior to the retreat. The one-page strategic plan will also be reviewed and discussed.

**SCHEDULE FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING**

February 24 has been scheduled to approve FY24 budget. Bonnie takes all the feedback from the retreat, drafts the budget and then the board approves it. It is scheduled for Feb. 24 to coincide with our luncheon.

**ADJOURNMENT**

After some brief board member announcements, the meeting was adjourned by consensus at 11:26 am.

Respectfully submitted, Attest,

Casey Ressler, Recording Secretary Israel Mahay, Secretary

Date Date