**Mat-Su CVB**

**Board Meeting MINUTES**

**April 20, 2021**

**Zoom Meeting**

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| **Board Members Present**  Mark Fleenor (Z)  Israel Mahay (Z)  Travis Taylor (Z)  Cole Chambers (Z)  Cheryl Metiva (Z)  Heather Dudick (Z)  Rick Peterson (Z)  Dan Wilcock (Z) | **Board Members Absent**  Fernando Salvador  Roberta Warner | **Staff Present**  Bonnie Quill (Z)  Neil Campbell (Z) |

Mark called the meeting to order by at 10:05 am. The roll was called. Five board members were currently present. Three more joined after the meeting started.

**AGENDA**

Travis moved to approve the agenda. Israel seconded the motion. The motion carried without opposition.

**MINUTES**

Travis moved to approve the January 13, 2021 board meeting minutes. Heather seconded the motion, which passed without opposition.

**STANDING REPORTS**

**CHAIR’S REPORT**

Mark stated that he would defer his report until later in the meeting after more board members are able to join the meeting.

**ATIA REPORT**

Bonnie reported that the ATIA board met February 3rd and March 19th. She attends the meetings as a guest since terming off the board last November to monitor the policies and actions of the ATIA board to share with the Mat-Su CVB board. Much that has taken place has been advocating for the return to cruise and communicating with the Alaska congressional delegation. There has also been lots of discussion regarding Health Mandate 6 which required strict social distancing for 5 days after arrival and a motion to communicate to the state to eliminate that restriction.

Bonnie stated that on March 18th, the ATIA was awarded a 2.28 million dollar EDA grant from the CARES Act for disaster relief supporting Alaska travel and tourism to communicate safe travel messaging and promote public health of Alaska visitors and residents. ATIA provided a $570,000 match for the grant. Bonnie noted that the Governor appropriated in March an additional 5 million dollars to the ATIA from the remaining CARES Act funds. The ATIA will use 3 million dollars of that in FY21 and reserve the remaining 2 million for marketing in FY22.

Bonnie reported that the ATIA marketing committee met on March 18th to approve the increased budget plan for FY21. The next meeting of the committee is scheduled for June 8th after, hopefully, the legislature has adjourned and passed the FY22 budget, including tourism marketing funding. The Go Big Go Alaska national ad campaign which Alaska Airlines, in partnership of the ATIA, ran from March 30th through April 4th, offered discounts for flights to Alaska through June. Bonnie stated her belief that, with the closing of the current season cruise window closing, the campaign may be renewed in August.

Bonnie noted that the ATIA resumed its monthly DMO Zoom meetings in January, which are attended by Mat-Su CVB staff.

Bonnie reported lastly that the Governor, in two press conferences, has alluded to a big national tourism marketing campaign, independent of and in addition to the ATIA efforts, to be run out of his office. She noted that details are scarce, rumors abound, and the amount to be spent is unknown at this time. Bonnie added that the Governor has assigned the Lt. Governor the task of conducting a two-week listening tour of the state to get feedback from tourism organizations and businesses to create a 150 million dollar granting program using American Rescue Plan funds. Any plan proposed would require legislative approval. Details of and federal guidance for use of ARP funds are not expected until May 10th.

Bonnie stated that she has reached out to the Lt. Governor’s office to schedule a Zoom listening meeting and asked that board members attend the session, hopefully this week or next. She finished by noting that another gubernatorial press conference is expected, which may clarify matters and offer up details of his campaign.

**TREASURER’S REPORT**

Travis reported that $1,000,000 in funds remain in Mat-Su CVB accounts, $750,000 of which is designated for FY2022. He added that the Mat-Su CVB is still waiting on an additional $56,000 from expected employee retention tax credits. Travis stated that the change in banking institutions will take place after the end of this fiscal year to simplify the upcoming audit. Bonnie noted that employee retention tax credits are determined quarterly.

**PRESIDENTS’S REPORT**

Bonnie referred the board to her detailed staff activity report emailed earlier. She noted that while Casey would normally present to the board a report on recent marketing activities, he is currently engaged elsewhere and has, instead, prepared a recorded Zoom report that details web traffic statistics, the instate campaign that is double that of last year, and addressed the social media campaign proposal sought from Sparkloft, a social media specialist based in Portland, the specifics of which will be reported in June. Bonnie explained how the proposal came about, the bona fides of Sparkloft, and their ties to Alaska.

Bonnie stated that her report included a link to a new Mat-Su CVB travel safe video, produced by Justin, featuring Dallas Seavey as spokesperson. Links to the video can be found on the alaskavisit.com homepage and COVID page and has been widely shared with members.

Bonnie stated that staff has since January been focused on monitoring the current travel sentiment and determining when to turn on paid search and marketing messages, done in conjunction with simpleview. Paid search was resumed on April 1st, resulting in an immediate uptick in web traffic. The instate campaign, directed to the alaskavisit.com special offers page, is expected to drive a lot of traffic to the website as well. Bonnie noted that Justin is engaged in the fifth round of member calls, sharing information about the instate campaign, encouraging members to post their special offers, and updating on their member page the amenities they are offering. He is also promoting the upcoming Summer Showcase webinar scheduled for next week.

Bonnie reiterated that the three key focus areas have been monitoring travel sentiment and messaging, reaching out to our partners with that, developing the travel safe video, and continuing with stakeholder outreach which Bonnie has been using to strengthen community support for the Mat-Su CVB.

Bonnie chose to highlight a few items from her emailed report. She noted that in February the Mat-Su CVB bought into the ATIA audience extension coop to help drive traffic to the Mat-Su CVB website. Facebook ads were placed targeting the eight cities identified in November’s research. Bonnie noted also that the Mat-Su CVB will be placing a full-page ad in the 2022 State Vacation Planner, taking advantage of the advertising discounts being offered by the ATIA. Brilliant Media Strategies will produce the ad for placement. She added that 250,000 copies of the Vacation Planner will be printed and will be part of a large marketing push by the ATIA in the next year.

Bonnie continued, stating that 35,000 2021 Mat-Su visitor guides will be mailed to fresh leads that will be purchased from the ATIA next week, the guides scheduled to drop on April 28th. Print ads placed to-date have resulted in 3,300 leads from the AARP magazine ad, with 600 leads from other sources.

Bonnie reported that the Mat-Su CVB has been working with the borough supporting the bid for the Arctic Winter Games for 2024. The bid was submitted in late February which was accepted by the international bid committee. A virtual tour of the borough venues was scheduled in place of the usual site visits due to COVID precautions. The virtual tour was an all-day affair undertaken this last Friday and both Casey and Bonnie participated in a big way with a presentation. Justin submitted a great deal of video footage for the presentations. Another meeting to finalize the bid will be held later this week. As there are no others bidding, it is expected that the Mat-Su Borough will be hosting the 2024 Arctic Winter Games. Bonnie stated that community support and enthusiasm helped in securing the bid. She specifically thanked Cheryl and her Rotary who stepped up to help secure some of the 2,000 volunteers needed for the Games. After the formal acceptance of the bid, the Mat-Su CVB will lead the creation of the host society, a nonprofit 501 (c)(3), that will handle the finances and operations of the Games. Bonnie stated that the borough manager and staff are really thrilled with the Mat-Su CVB participation and leadership for this event. Bonnie particularly noted the work and contributions of Casey in this endeavor.

Bonnie concluded by noting the many webinars staff has hosted since January and announcing that six more have been scheduled between now and the end of May.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**RECOVERY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Rick reported for the recovery committee. The committee identified opportunities for spending economic recovery funds that may become available. He drew attention to the committee’s initial effort towards recovery that features an Instagram account set up by Casey that promotes jobs for members, emphasizing that not only is Alaska a great place to visit, it’s also a great place to work. Rick added that the account will be as successful as members and businesses make it with their contributions of information and images.

Rick then detailed three borough-focused, Mat-Su CVB-controlled ideas developed by the committee to promote recovery: a mobile VIC, marketing of the borough as a destination and rebranding of the Mat-Su CVB, and developing a new destination map design. Also identified were three potential projects the borough could undertake that would aid the industry. The first is continued advocacy for trails development, publicity, and partnerships. The second is developing and implementing a wayfinding plan that includes community signage that shares a unified look and feel. Lastly, is the development of parking, with restrooms, at public sites.

Bonnie asked for a board motion to approve the plans proposed. After a short discussion, Cheryl moved to support the recovery committee recommendations and that the organization move forward with the suggestions. Rick seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**DRAFT BUDGET UPDATE**

Bonnie stated that since the funding for FY2022 has already been secured, and the uncertainty in planning resulting from Covid, no budget was submitted to the borough to be included in the MSB FY2022 budget. The borough manager agreed that the Mat-Su CVB could submit an FY2022 budget to the borough by the end of June. Bonnie therefore asked that a board meeting to approve the budget be held by mid-June.

**EDA GATEWAY GRANT UPDATE**

Bonnie reported that the EDA Gateway VIC grant application was submitted on October 20, 2020. On February 16th, the EDA requested further details and information, which was gathered and compiled by the borough, HDR, and Bonnie. Bonnie stated that the requested information was submitted yesterday. She added that the complete grant application totals about 650 pages.

The grant requires a 20% match of unencumbered funds. Bonnie offered $156,000 of Mat-Su CVB funds as a placeholder until the borough can identify the necessary funds (could be unappropriated bed tax collections), which will require Assembly approval. The borough manager told Bonnie he was confident the borough would be able to resolve. Bonnie concluded by noting that the American Rescue Plan has more funds and more favorable language for tourism that may help secure the grant.

**CHAIR’S REPORT**

Mark stated his desire to have an informal, face-to-face get together of all board members in two to three weeks. He suggested doing so at Turkey Red in Palmer. Mark asked everyone to contact him personally about their availability and any Covid concerns they might have before he sets a date for the get together.

**BOARD MEETING DATES**

The board decided by consensus to meet next via Zoom on June 17 at 7: 30 am.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 am.

Respectfully submitted, Attest,

Neil Campbell, Recording Secretary Israel Mahay, Secretary

Date Date