

**Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau
& Office of Economic Development (iManitou)**

**Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes**

July 5, 2012

Present: Tim Haas, Ken Jaray, Marcy Morrison, David Symonds, Julie Vance,
Matt Carpenter

Absent: John Webster

Staff: Leslie Lewis, Roger Miller

A special meeting of the iManitou Board of Directors was held on Thursday, July 5, 2012 in City Council Chambers at City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 8:37 am by President Tim Haas. The purpose of calling the special meeting was to discuss the impact of the Waldo Canyon Fire on business.

Tim recognized "911" as being tragic on many levels and the significant impact it had on the community. The Hayman Fire in 2002 also had an impact on the business community. The Waldo Canyon Fire is in its own category because of the impact, how devastating it has been, and the proximity to Colorado Springs. He expressed concern on an individual basis, an organizational basis, and on a City-wide financial basis and recognized that everything iManitou has been working on needs to take a back seat with the amount of focus that needs to be placed on what else, if anything, can be done. Tim applauded the staff for reacting as proactively as possible. He noticed there has been a lot of misinformation going around and felt the Board should get together to make sure they understand what the organization is doing, what the community is doing in general, and make a determination if there is something else they feel the organization can be doing.

Marcy asked Matt how City Council is feeling regarding the impact of the Waldo Canyon Fire. Matt explained that Council is looking more toward the next phase which is the potential of floods that might follow. They have formed a task force and received the initial Flood Response Plan via email this morning. Bruno has already taken some proactive steps. The concern is that even a ½ inch of rain has the potential to cause more problems. Council received a step by step "recap" of the fire beginning on Friday, June 22. Manitou Springs Fire Department received a call for a smoke investigation at Waldo Canyon. Nothing was found that evening. City Council was informed about the thought process and trigger points of why the evacuation was called. From the City perspective, Matt felt there was a lot that went really well and a few things that need to be tweaked to be better should there be a situation in the future. There should be an education campaign to encourage people to be registered for the Reverse 911 system.

The City is trying to be proactive and has moved jersey barriers to the west end of town, staggering them to try to catch trees and remove them so they don't create flooding problems. The City has also gone through all of the tunnels up to Williams Canyon and cleaned them out. The City is concerned about the rains for years to come. There are plans to vegetate the burn

area to help with the erosion and flooding. City Council is also concerned on the financial front. They did pass an emergency \$20,000 for gear for the Fire Department. Because that gear would not be available for this fire, they are now looking at alternative funding mechanisms for that gear. Ken asked if the City has the resources to deal with the flooding issues and Matt explained that it is a Regional Plan for flooding.

iManitou Staff will create an evacuation plan for the office in case of flooding including maintaining off-site back-ups of the files.

Roger came to the office after seeing the fire on that Saturday. He and Brittany removed the computers from the office. On Sunday morning Roger came to the office to pull some additional files and then assisted the City in going door to door for evacuation notices to Manitou residents. Working with Matt, Roger made the decision to just copy notices put out by the City and place them on our web site. On Monday, Roger started receiving calls from businesses that were concerned about what was being done to bring visitors back to Manitou as well as from around the country with people asking about the status of the fire and if Manitou Springs had burned. Roger was also receiving a lot of calls from media. Roger had spoken with Steve Cox about putting together a Recovery Team.

On Tuesday, a meeting was scheduled with Michele Starling, Doug Price, Chelsea, and Roger, with Debbie Miller and Al White on the phone, to discuss what the message given to callers would be. There was concern for the loss of business as well as concern for the businesses because of the proximity of the fire. Roger received a call during that meeting to evacuate his home.

Matt said on Tuesday he was part of a task force to stop the plan for the Cash Mob scheduled to come to Manitou on Wednesday. He realizes there was concern by business about that decision but they decided to have the Mayor put out a message thanking people for their desire to bring the business to Manitou but to please wait and do it at a time when things were safer. Several members of the Board got together to put out a message that Manitou Springs had lodging available as there were 26,000 people evacuated in Colorado Springs that were being sent to Pueblo for lodging because they didn't realize Manitou Springs had so many available rooms. Roger and Leslie were in constant communication during the first several days while Leslie was out of the area. Steve Cox suggested that the Recovery Team get together as soon as possible. On Monday Roger went to the businesses to remind them to keep interviews positive. Brittany and Sarah did a great job answering the phones and posting correct information on Facebook.

Numbers of visitors were up and down. We were getting the message out to come to Manitou Springs and we were seeing visitors from outside the region again.

As part of the Recovery, there were two teams formed. The teams were people from the City of Colorado Springs, the Colorado Springs EDC, the Colorado Springs Chamber, the CVB, and the State of Colorado. Team One would focus on Economic Development and the second team would focus on Marketing. In canvassing businesses in Manitou, on Thursday prior to the Friday morning meeting, Roger found that most businesses were between 70 – 90% down from the previous weekend through Thursday. Team One ended up re-writing the Air Quality Report

because even though the air quality was “moderate” the air quality even then was better than most days in Los Angeles. Many of the churches asked congregation members to support the businesses in Manitou Springs. An initial assessment survey was sent to businesses on Friday to get basic/immediate needs of business. The Colorado SBDC Business Recovery Intake Form that was sent today is almost identical to the first questionnaire sent. The results that Roger received were only responses received by early Saturday; Manitou was showing \$1,100,000 loss. The Cog Railway had not turned in numbers by that time. As of Tuesday morning, the estimated loss (including businesses in the Centennial corridor) would be \$17,000,000 - \$18,000,000. On Saturday the DRC (Disaster Recovery Center) was opened. Because of the overwhelming response by residents, businesses did not receive much help initially. As of Tuesday, there is a full team of organizations to help business such as DOLA, the Business Insurance industry, along with FEMA, the SBDC, and EDA. A lot of businesses were either not receiving or not opening emails from us so a flyer was created and taken to them. Dan Cochell has started a radio station, which he brought on air on June 24. He is connected to Fox 21 for their broadcasts. Dan has offered to give businesses up to 300 ads that will run over the next three months at no charge to the business.

The top three needs that came out of the survey were Gap financing, employee assistance, and office space for some of the businesses on Centennial. 94% of the businesses that replied said they needed Gap Financing to help with quarterly taxes, payroll and other types of loans. There is a list of 20 questions that need to be asked of insurance representatives. Some will create an awareness of what insurance coverage is needed in the future if they didn't have all of the coverage they should have. There will be money that will be available, and some of it by grant, but no one seems to have the answers on how much or how it will be made available. Banks were not sure how to deal with the situation as they haven't had experience dealing with this extensive of a crisis. It was clarified that it is the regional people at the banks that were struggling to know what to do. There is also a list of things to talk to your bank about.

At a presentation with the County Commissioners, there was discussion about having a tax holiday but nothing was decided at that time. The best thing that iManitou can do for businesses right now is to refer them to the DRC. Team Two will be creating a video of the area which will be an ad spot that everyone can use. The CTO will do some promotion across the country once we reach 100% containment. We have started selling t-shirts and can probably raise \$10,000 through those sales. Roger has heard of 3 fund raisers that will be held to raise funds for Manitou Springs' recovery. Tim asked if Roger knew what the advertising budget is for Team Two but Roger didn't have that information. Tim reiterated that if lodging is down, retail and restaurants will also be down. Julie did report that her numbers look better after the 21st of July. She went on to say she is not full but is optimistic. Dave would like to hear that the state is earmarking a specific amount of money to advertise visiting Colorado Springs. Matt pointed out that many areas of the state have been impacted by fires this year and asked if the advertising would be more “visit Colorado” instead of a specific area. Dave agreed that it could be a Colorado campaign but would like to know if there is a specific budget set to kick in. Marcy suggested that businesses come up with some incentives that could be offered to those visiting. Rob, Manitou Cliff Dwellings, suggested that businesses offer a discount if they show a receipt from another Manitou business. Roger brought up the idea of giving the Manitou Card to lodging properties to give to their guests as an incentive to shop in Manitou Springs.

Ken asked at what point the board was going to have a conversation and focus on the iManitou budget deficit and if they were going to be resigned to taking \$70,000 from the Reserves at the end of the year. Tim suggested the June Financials should be completed and available for the meeting. Ken suggested if the State provides money it would be for marketing, not administrative costs, and he would like the board to make decisions regarding the administrative budget concerns. Tim asked if there is something, from a financial standpoint, that the organization should be doing now to help businesses (if we had the money) in the next two weeks other than continuing to wait to see what the CTO is going to do and refer businesses to the DRC. He further stated if there really isn't anything the organization can do that would have a positive impact, he suggested having the June Financials put together as soon as possible and having the budget discussion.

Dave stated that for him, there are two issues. For 2013 there needs to be a Balanced Budget where there is no money taken from Reserves. In 2012, there will be money taken from the Reserves. He suggested the Board needs a plan from Administration as to how to accomplish this issue. Dave does not feel that iManitou will receive additional funding from the City for 2013 and suggested the amount may be reduced. Roger stated he didn't feel the funding would be reduced and stated many of the City Council members understand the importance of iManitou. Marcy stated she feels the Board needs to make the policy decisions and a plan could be made following the policy. The Board discussed ideas of what the policy could be. Roger stated that the Board needs to also determine the mission of iManitou prior to the plan. The Board should determine what programs they really want accomplished. There are the four functions under the office; it seems the Economic Development (Recovery) has become a priority. The Board discussed the difference in funding level from years prior to the merger of the two organizations. Ken suggested that there are two choices at this point: does the board decrease staff or does the board approach the City and request additional funding. Ken added that the additional option would be to accept deficit.

Roger stated that he has had discussions with several Council Members about the possibility of his position being a job share position. With some of the things he has been working on, it has been discussed as to whether that would be an option with the City. Dave mentioned that the URA had paid the City to cover part of Kitty's time when she was employed by the EDC and had been filling the staff role with the URA.

The board discussed concerns regarding 2013 and the revenue stream for 2013. Roger stated that staff is also looking at ways of decreasing costs in 2013 such as reducing postage by having the Guide more readily available on-line.

Tim proposed there needs to be a determination by the Board of what amount they feel comfortable taking from Reserves in 2012 to balance the budget, the Board also needs to decide their comfort level for 2013, and the Board may need to look at refocusing the iManitou goals. After discussing schedules for the upcoming week, the Board set a follow-up meeting for Tuesday, July 10, planning to have the financial information in front of them and make decisions regarding staff reduction, asking the City for additional funding, accepting a deficit, and looking at job share possibilities. The meeting will be at 8:30 a.m. in City Council Chambers.

Having no additional business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.