

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

Board of Directors

**Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2013**

Present: Jennifer Brown, Tim Haas, Tara Hawbaker, Marcy Morrison, David Symonds, John Webster, Matt Carpenter

Absent: Karen Cullen, Ken Jaray, Julie Vance

Staff: Leslie Lewis, Marcy Morrison

A regular meeting of the iManitou Board of Directors was held Thursday, February 28, 2013 at Manitou Springs City Hall in City Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order 8:37 a.m. by President David Symonds.

A. Action Item: Approval of January Meeting Minutes

John Webster made a motion to approve the minutes of the January meeting as presented. Tim Haas seconded the motion and it was approved.

Marcy Morrison reported that all of the details for the Highway 24 sign have been finalized and it will be completed soon. Marcy suggested that until we know what water restrictions will be, planting by the sign should be put on hold. Dave Symonds offered to contact Mary Ellen Montgomery regarding what could be planted in consideration of the drought conditions.

B. Action Item: Approval of January Financials

John Webster reported iManitou has assets of approximately \$157,000, the majority of which is cash in bank accounts and CDs and accounts receivable of \$31,890. There is about \$18,380 in fixed assets, most of which is depreciated. Most of the liabilities are the employment taxes due. Leslie explained that the January Income and Expense statement reflects the 2013 income and expenses received or paid in 2012. At the end of the spreadsheet there is a current Event income/expense summary. Tim made a motion to accept the Financials as presented. Jennifer seconded the motion and it was approved.

C. Action Item: Approval of New & Renewing Members

The Buffalo Lodge had been a member years ago but discontinued their membership for financial reasons. Staff believes they are rejoining for the additional exposure they will receive through our web site and the Visitor Center. Marcy sent a letter to many businesses that had either not renewed their memberships or had not been members previously to personally invite them to join iManitou. Buffalo Lodge is one of the businesses that received the letter. She has explained to some businesses that they can pay their membership in quarterly or semi-annual payments if the annual investment is a concern. Several other businesses were discussed. Tim made a motion to approve the New, Renewing & Non-renewing members. John seconded the motion and it was approved.

D. Marketing Update & Discussion

Staff reported that some of the marketing funds have been spent or committed but we do still have approximately \$31,000 that has not been committed. Recently staff hired Electronic Storefronts (ESI), an internet company out of Denver, to perform an evaluation on our web site. The evaluation was given to the board. All of the suggestions that ESI made to improve the site have been done. Staff further recommended hiring ESI to do some SEO in other areas. ESI pointed out that if you are looking for Manitou Springs, our site comes up very well but if you search on Colorado Springs Cabins, for instance, we are not found. They have quoted a price of \$225 for that service. ESI created the original web site for the Chamber and we have maintained a relationship with them. They offered special rates to the Pikes Peak Country Attractions members for the evaluation of the site and SEO. Leslie will coordinate with Mary, at Electronic Storefronts, if the board determines they would like to move forward with SEO. She will ask Mary to come to a board meeting. It was suggested that we coordinate a meeting when they are coming to the Colorado Springs area for another meeting and hold a special meeting for the purpose of brainstorming the web site. Under Board direction, staff will sign a contract with Electronic Storefronts for the SEO.

Jennifer asked if there has been discussion about the Social Media side. Marcy has talked with the people who have been involved in our Facebook posting for the last year or so. She went on to say staff needs to know what others are posting on our pages and need to work with those people. Marcy has met with Susan Wolbrueck and Karen Cullen to explain what Marcy believes should be the structure and that any changes they recommend should be approved by staff and the board. Under Marcy's suggestion, Susan has invited several people to be part of a Social Media Task Force that will be meeting on March 19. Staff has met with both Pikes Peak Country Attractions and the Colorado Springs CVB to find out what they do and how they use Social Media.

After the last meeting, staff signed a contract with the Military newspapers. We will run ads in March, April, September and October to try to attract the military to Manitou Springs in the shoulder season.

Dave brought up the app that Co-pilot Creative is creating for the Incline that will have a GPS start at the bottom and finish at the top. They are looking for businesses to sponsor with rewards. Dave thought it would be a good idea to find out if there will be a place on the app to connect to manitousprings.org for additional information on Manitou Springs. Floyd has been in contact with Austin, who is creating the app, about having a splash page for Manitou that will have all of the Manitou deals and specials listed on it.

E. Colorado Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau

Doug Price, President for 2 years, and Amy Long, Vice President of Marketing and Partnership Development for 7 years, of the Colorado Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau were introduced. They wanted to express appreciation for the things we have been able to do working with Manitou. Doug emphasized that Manitou is a huge part of the experience for visitors to the area. Marcy and Doug have met previously and creating a closer working relationship for our organizations. Marcy invited Doug and Amy to share the things the CVB is working on. Amy showed a new ad that they have created, featuring the Incline, which will be running soon.

Amy shared some of things going on at the state level that communities can benefit from at no cost. The CVB takes advantage of everything they can and will share their knowledge with Manitou and help us connect to the state either through the CVB or directly. Chelsy Murphy, Director of Communications, loves to promote Manitou Springs. The state tourism office's (CTO) fiscal year begins July 1 and they just received funding of \$15 million. The state will be launching a new web site in April. The ad agency for the state is Karsh and Hagen; the PR agency is MMGY. The state has traditional and online media buys as well as a PR and social media team. The CVB helps with hosting writer tours, providing lodging and meals when writers are in the area. Amy said it is possible to sign up to host the state's instagram account for a week at a time. Instagram helps drive traffic to each area. There is a summer and winter version (different covers) of the state vacation guide which was created as a flip book this year. One side is like a magazine with the other as a planner. There are also summer and winter smaller versions that are completely inspirational. Amy suggested someone from Manitou attend the CTO marketing committee meetings and possibly apply for a position on the committee when an opening is available. There are also the heritage committee, international committee, and a group travel sub-committee. Amy suggested making sure the state is getting press releases from Manitou Springs.

Amy discussed the state's regional matching grant program which is available up to \$15,000. The grant applications have to be regional. The CVB has partnered with the Pioneer Museum in the past to promote history and heritage in the region. This year they are promoting the Welcome Back campaign. Amy suggested we brainstorm ideas for a possible partnership application for a 2014 grant.

The state is launching a \$200,000 campaign to begin to attract group and motor coach traffic. The state is a good place to find out best practices for social media. Amy suggested making sure our site is following the State on Facebook as well as asking them to follow Manitou Springs. Ifilm.org is another free site to make sure Manitou is connected to. The CTO offers other "pay to play" opportunities.

The CSCVB has approximately a \$3 million annual budget, 80% of which comes through the LARP. The other 20% comes from their partnership (they have changed from the membership model). The CVB now has paying partners as well as free partners. The marketing, or paying, partners will receive priority however, when you go to the dining page of the web site, all restaurants can be listed to give the visitor a more complete picture of all that is available. CVBs across the country are moving to the partnership models.

Last year, the CVB, through donations, were able to launch a \$200,000 campaign in late summer – early fall to drive visitors guide requests and web site traffic. The CVB also received a federal grant for \$100,000. The CVB received an additional \$100,000 from the City for promotion this year.

The CVB is working on a revised Crisis Communication Plan and would be willing to share that plan with iManitou. While every situation is different, you can ask the same questions for each.

The Board discussed the difficulty for large groups (conventions) getting to the Colorado Springs, especially with the changes at the Colorado Springs airport. The Denver airport was discussed. Doug reported that the properties he has talked with regarding to forecast for the coming year report reservations are very strong. Doug and Amy were thanked for their time.

Marcy will contact Doug and invite him to a meeting again in the future for periodic updates. John Webster reported that Doug had visited his service club, handed out the Visitors Guide and given them an update on things the CVB was doing and asked if iManitou offers this service. Staff reported that we have, at times over the years, visited the Kiwanis Club and will contact them for a time to speak to their group. Staff will look into visiting other groups, as well as getting Manitou information to running clubs in the area.

F. Discussion – City appointment to the Board of Directors

Tim stated that he appreciates Marcy's willingness to fill in as the COO with no projected end date in mind by the Board. Dave asked Matt Carpenter about the possibility of having the City appoint an alternate to serve on the iManitou Board of Director that could fill in until such a time as Marcy is no longer the COO so that she could return to that City appointed position at that time. Matt agreed to speak with the City Administrator about that as a possible option and report back to the Board of Directors.

G. City Update

Matt reported that the Outdoor Seating Ordinance passed on second reading. City Council also enacted an ordinance on Trash. The Nature of Things Chainsaw Art had his variance renewed, received an extra half hour of carving time, and does not have to apply for the variance every year. The Manitou Springs Collaborative received \$15,000 to print the Vision Plan. Several Council members are getting correspondence from people wondering why the Library Tax is already showing on tax bills as taxes are paid in arrears.

Matt believes the parking is coming together well. City Council has finalized the contract with Roger Miller. They haven't finalized all of the details on the Standard Parking contract yet. The proposed plan is for enforced paid parking 365 days a year on Ruxton and has an off period (December – February) in downtown where paid parking will only be on the weekends. There is still discussion about putting in time limits on Ruxton; there are graduated fees for parking in downtown. There will be free parking for the first 15 minutes which hopefully will relieve some of the concerns. There will be kiosks for every 8 – 10 parking spaces. The proposed machines will only take coin and credit cards. There are concerns that if the machines take bills, they won't give change which will create issues. Dave stated that he had put a change machine in the Wichita Lot because the merchants complained about people coming in for quarters. Dave is asking the City to put machines that take dollar bills in downtown for that reason. The parking lots will be \$5 for parking all day. The City Council is in agreement, though the vote is still to come, on having Standard Parking take over enforcement as well. The kiosks will be installed in May. The board discussed concerns about tickets for visitors who may be a little over the lines. Matt stated that the warning rates will go down as they are currently about 30%. Center lane permits were discussed.

Matt explained that the west end road construction is on hold because the ground is frozen. Construction will continue as soon as the weather allows. Matt will check to see if the sidewalk was put in when it was too cold and will have problems with cracking. The project is scheduled to be complete in May (weather dependent).

H. COO Update

The sign on Highway 24 is in process. Canon Signs will be doing the sign. We will share the cost of the refurbishing with the City. There are two signs on El Paso Blvd that are being replaced as well. One has the signs totally gone with only the frame standing; the other still has the Manitou Springs sign but is in very bad shape.

The iManitou building will be painted soon. The City washed the building prior to the paint bids. The City has agreed to patch the parking lot and paint the parking stripes. Dave asked when the last time the lot was sealed was and if that needed to be done. He is currently getting bids on having the three lots in the City sealed and will ask the company to look at the iManitou lot as well. Bruno told Marcy the side lot was in bad shape but he would look at it and get back to her.

I. Special Events Update

The Gumbo Cook-off was a success. The revenue was up over 2012. There was a good crowd and the weather held. Eric and Tamilla Wright provided Zydeco music for the event. They have recently started an internet radio station. They offered to provide the music to give back to the community.

The 9Health Fair is the next iManitou event coming up in April. Tara is helping recruit volunteers. An email has gone to restaurants requesting food donations for the volunteers. Floyd has had a very positive response from many of the restaurants already. Flyers and ads are in process. Dave asked about developing a paycheck stuffer that can be given to the businesses to add to employee paychecks. A lot of promotion will be done through social media.

The Wine Festival is coming up. We have all 25 wineries and 4 others on a waiting list. We have 3 food vendors and are looking for one more. The gift vendor booths are filling as well. The wine totes have been ordered. Manitou Springs Real Estate is sponsoring the totes so that will help reduce our cost and their logo will be on the bag. Floyd will do a count of glasses to order what we need for 2013.

Leslie turned in the park/event applications for the Wine Festival, Concert Series, Ice Cream Social and Coffin Races this morning.

Having no additional business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 10:47 a.m.