

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

**Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes**

March 26, 2015

Present: Karen Cullen, Gwenn David, Ken Jaray, Christina Larson, Farley McDonough, Marcy Morrison, Annie Schmitt, Julie Vance, Nicole Nicoletta

Absent: Justin Armour, Rachelle Cully, Tim Haas

Guests:

Staff: Leslie Lewis

A regular meeting of the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau & Office of Economic Development was held Thursday, March 26, 2015 at Manitou Springs City Hall in City Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 8:39 a.m. by President Karen Cullen.

With two new members and a new City Council liaison, the Board provided self introductions including the many activities they are involved in beyond their businesses and this board.

Annie Schmitt mentioned that she is involved in a new community group working on Bear Awareness (not sure what they are calling themselves yet) that includes representatives from a lot of other organizations. They would like to have a person from the Chamber working with them. The meetings are every other Wednesday, 4:00 pm, at the MAC. Ken Jaray suggested that Annie could represent the Chamber as she is already involved with the Bear group.

A. ACTION ITEM: Approval of March Board Meeting Minutes

Farley McDonough made a motion to approve the March Board Meeting minutes as presented. Julie Vance seconded the motion and it was approved.

In follow up to the discussion of a quorum in the last board meeting, staff read the position as written in Robert's Rules of Order. After discussion, Ken made a motion that once a quorum has been established; the board continues to assume the quorum is present. Marcy Morrison suggested that in an emergency an electronic vote could be taken in absence of a quorum. Discussion continued. The motion failed because of lack of a second.

B. ACTION ITEM: Approval of March Financials

Ken asked about the revenue for the Visitors Guide. Some advertisers need to be billed the 50% balance. Having the Visitors Guide created in-house, saved approximately \$6,000. Ken would like a more clear idea of where the organization is in relation to the budget than what he feels there is. Karen suggested the board have a budget discussion a little further into the year. Ken made a motion to approve the March financials as presented. Julie seconded the motion and it was approved.

C. ACTION ITEM: Approval of New & Renewing Members

Staff reported that “iheartradio” would like to have a trade membership with the organization. Most of the radio planned is in the Denver area so staff is not sure what the benefit would be to the radio station. After discussion, the board recommended the representative be invited to speak with the Marketing Task Force. Several renewing members were discussed. Julie made a motion to approve the new & renewing members. Farley McDonough seconded the motion and it was approved.

D. Marketing & Web Site Update

Karen reported that Amy Mogck had been working on getting the updates for the landing pages to the businesses. That process is moving slowly so staff will attempt to help speed things up and is sending emails to all of the businesses. There have been a few issues with the site that we are working through with Xcite Media. Karen feels the web site is coming together though. We still need more photography for the site. Christina Larson offered to send some of her photos for possible use.

Based on recommendation from Xcite Media, we will be spending \$15,000 on Facebook advertising. The Facebook campaign started yesterday. Karen, Susan Wolbrueck and Leslie met to determine the advertising target for the first campaign. Karen reported we will be spending the balance of the \$40,000 on digital advertising and \$12,000 on remarketing advertising. Karen explained what remarketing ads are and thought those ads would begin the first of April with pay-per-click beginning the middle of April.

The board discussed changes in Facebook and other social media platforms. Karen reported the April campaign will target empty nesters, people with anniversaries, people making \$100,000 – 250,000, grandparents, and working women. The cities targeted are Dallas, Denver, Albuquerque, Houston, Austin, Phoenix, Oklahoma City, Fort Collins, Colorado Springs, Chicago, Las Vegas, San Francisco, and Boulder. Our demographics on Facebook are mostly women between the ages of 25 - 65 so we targeted women between 30 and 65 and frequent travelers. We can see how the ads are doing and change them at any time. Farley is seeing a trend with people moving toward Instagram (more photos), not as personal as Facebook. The other thing we will be doing with Facebook is boosting posts for events.

The marketing task force is also working on beginning a radio campaign in April. They are considering Colorado Public Radio in Denver and have received a bid from KYGO which is a country station in Denver. Farley will help with messaging. Julie asked if the Marketing Task Force had looked at KBCO which is a Denver/Boulder station.

The task force will be running digital advertising on Peak Radar. Christina suggested the task force also look at Tumbler and Pinterest when working on social media expansion. Tumbler can be linked to Facebook and Instagram. Karen reported that Pinterest has just come out with advertising. Gwenn reported she has had a really good March (up 13 – 14%) but the web site (Manitousprings.org) is not performing well for them. Karen explained that was to be expected because the site now randomizes instead of being alphabetical. The board then discussed

Manitou properties not always showing first on the site with the randomization. Ken asked if a report that could be provided to businesses telling them how often they come up on the first page. Karen will ask Xcite if that type of reporting is possible. Karen stated the Visitors Guide is alphabetical and Gwenn stated her ad was placed in the Campground section. Annie was invited to join the marketing task force.

E. CSCVB Tourism Survey

Leslie attended the presentation of the Tourism Economics Study that had been commissioned by the CSCVB. The link was sent to the Board for the full Study. In brief summary, the study says that Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak Region, compared to other similar markets, is underfunded and under marketed. They recommend raising the \$3 million marketing budget to \$8 million and suggest that be done by increasing the LART from 2% lodging and 1% automobile rental to 4% for each and add a 4% excise tax to the attractions. The third component to raise the funds would be to create a regional marketing district which would be the three counties they represent (Fremont, El Paso and Teller counties) and have the lodging tax from all of those kick into the CSCVB. There are questions about how this works with Manitou's existing 2% lodging tax which supports the Chamber and 5% excise tax which goes to the City's general fund. Leslie was unable to attend the last PPCAA board meeting but understands from Tim that the attractions are in favor of these initiatives. She also understands the Broadmoor is in favor of the increases. Karen feels that we should speak with our legislators about tourism taxes and how they are divided. She also feels the report should be sent to the CTO and ask them to increase the money spent and grants provided to the Pikes Peak Region. The board members representing lodging all agreed they were concerned about raising the lodging tax as they all receive complaints from visitors on the high tax rate now. Leslie had received a questionnaire from Ryan Cole, PPCAA, which Leslie was hoping to get feedback from the board to fill out. The first couple of questions were on the tax rates. Karen thought more information would be needed to determine whether the Board supports raising the LART. The board discussed other questions on the survey, an increase would make it a more expensive destination and possibly we need to be more expensive to attract a higher end target market. Ken suggested that the organization might need to change and focus on the user experience and economic development and partner with the CVB for the broad national and international marketing with our focus on local traffic. Karen received a text message from Tim stating he believes the attractions and Manitou Springs need to take the lead with the CVB or risk getting left behind and he thinks the attractions are in favor or in favor at least of the concept. After all of the discussion, the board recommended inviting Doug Price to speak at a board meeting to answer some of the questions. Karen suggested Ryan Cole also be invited to the meeting.

F. Economic Development Discussion

Copies of the summary from the EDAT were handed out to the Board. The top challenges for Manitou Springs as well as the recommendations for those challenges were included. Leslie is working with Karen Berchtold (Planner) and Mickie Valente (Economic Development) on putting together a stakeholder's meeting for May to work on building an economic development strategy that can be included in the Master Plan that Karen is working on. Nicole Nicoletta how Mickie

defines economic resiliency and Ken asked if that could be broadened to how do you build resiliency into the economy. Leslie thought part of economic resiliency includes diversification of business and making sure businesses have a business continuity plan. Karen pointed out that the Strategic Marketing Plan includes Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Leslie is meeting with Liz Hershberger (SBDC) next week. There is still grant money available and the parameters have expanded to include businesses with economic impact back to the Waldo Canyon fire. Some businesses that received some funding in Round 1 of the grants but not the maximum amount are eligible for funding in Round 2 as well. Currently the SBDC is working with 22 Manitou businesses. Business continuity should include having emergency funding plans in place in case of an incident.

Karen stated she believes the URA is part of the economic development plan and asked about the plans for their available funds. Marcy said the URA is working on changing some of the zoning and there will be more money for investment. City Council has the authority to make changes to the amount of sales tax the URA board receives for that area should they choose. Farley said the URA fund is growing but they are limited with what they can do so their strategy is to make it an easy place to develop and to map all of the utility, sewer and gas lines. The community was vocal in wanting the east end to serve the community and did not want it to duplicate downtown Manitou Springs. The URA is looking at including affordable housing. They will be looking for retail locations that are more local based. The economic development discussions have included the need for affordable housing.

Marcy asked if there is anything that the Chamber needs to be doing in downtown. Manny (Whickerbill) told staff there are communities that have processes in place where building owners are fined if their storefronts stay vacant too long. Staff is concerned that there are 4 vacancies in the 700 block of Manitou Avenue. The Ten Spot has moved to the 900 block and Whickerbill will be closing by the end of the month and moving into the shop being vacated when the Kitchen Shop closes. Farley didn't think fining building owners would work in Manitou Springs but feels we can encourage them to clean up their space. She further stated you can have a vacant space that looks inviting. Ken suggested we reach out to the owners and find out what they are looking for and what their rent rates will be and be proactive to help those people get tenants in. Ken asked what the experience is for people coming to Manitou, is it good or bad and how can we improve it. He further stated cleanliness is critical. Every trash can needs to be emptied on the weekend and washed out, the cigarette butts need to be picked up and the restrooms cleaned. Gwenn said the biggest complaint she receives is about the kids hanging out by the Mate Factor area. Ken suggested the Chamber take a stronger lead on cleaning. Farley said when she was on the BID their budget was split 50/50 between cleaning downtown and marketing. The majority of their budget does go to paying Hawk. The temporary replacements for Hawk have not been doing as good of a job as Hawk does. Ken suggested the Board lay out a standard of the downtown being clean 7 days a week, 365 days per year and Leslie needs to figure out the details of making that happen. It was suggested an RFP be sent out to companies.

Julie asked about offering to help businesses that are in buildings that are dilapidated apply for grant funds to improve the appearance of their buildings. The state of Rockey's building was specifically discussed. Leslie has met with Shelley Cobau (Flood Recovery Manager) and Don Moore and discussed looking for additional grants that business can apply for. The original discussion was a grant that several businesses could apply for collaboratively to build a flood wall for additional structure protection. Nicole suggested Historic Preservation would be a good place to look for grant funds for Rockey's building. Marcy brought up the concern that if the buildings look run down, it will have a negative impact on everyone's business. Ken asked who is responsible to make sure that town is clean, which falls under the BID. The Chamber may need to supplement the BID Budget for cleaning if they move to a company.

Staff had sent out the Economic Development Assessment. As the report is 21 pages long, staff did not print the full report. Karen asked how we contact members of the BID. Currently we do not have email contacts for all businesses in that area. Leslie is requesting a copy of the business license list and will find out more from Erie Economic Development about getting the incorporations list from the Secretary of the State's office. Karen suggested that staff move forward with building an email database for all businesses. The Economic Development Assessment list has many holes that need to be filled in.

The Board discussed the fire in the building under the Ten Spot and Whickerbill. Marcy asked if there was anything the City can do to help with getting owners to care for the appearance of their buildings. A lot of people worked hard and spent a lot of money to get rid of the reputation of being "shabby". The BID was formed specifically for the general upkeep of downtown; however, it was pointed out that some of the problems being discussed are beyond what the BID can do. Ken suggested that many things can be accomplished through relationships and having a relationship with the business owner to approach them and find out what is needed to bring up the appearance of the building. Farley suggested that we look at the Façade Improvement Campaign that the URA had put together and see if that is something that could be done. The URA had a matching campaign for things like fixing windows, painting, or replacing doors and windows. Karen suggested mini grants could be run from the Economic Development budget. Farley and Marcy will ask that the information on the Façade program be sent to staff.

G. City Report

Nicole said she would be happy to bring information discussed by the Board today to City Council. She had been wondering whose responsibility it is when occupied or vacant buildings are run down and dirty so she will check with the City Administrator and City Planner and bring information back. She offered to go around to the businesses and share cleanliness standards once they are set. She will also talk to the City about the importance of maintaining the infrastructure. Nicole asked what the Board wanted to see from her as liaison. Marcy said she would like her to be a messenger going both ways and Karen asked her to be an advocate for us.

City Council passed, on first reading, a moratorium on vacation rentals. They are impacting neighborhoods in a negative way, taking away business from hotels/motels, bed & breakfasts,

and using real estate that could be affordable housing. Vacation rentals are a national “hot topic” - that there are too many. As Manitou Springs is beginning to work on a master plan which will be addressing housing, the moratorium was set for 12 months to have time to gather the information that will have an impact on vacation rentals. At the Council meeting, there was debate about allowing the two properties in process to be exempt from the moratorium. The moratorium does not impact properties previously approved.

The new public works director will begin April 13. Becky Elder was appointed to fill Sarge MacDonald's seat. The Jenkins property on Ruxton is a hot topic right now. Ken reported an Economic Feasibility Assessment by Standard Parking will be done the first part of April and the Mayor will talk about the issue further once that report is complete.

H. Special Events Update

The Health Fair will be April 18th. Patti Clavier is still working on getting the medical volunteers all set. The Epilepsy Foundation sent an email and would like to participate. Requests for food for the volunteers have been sent to restaurants. The Health Fair will be held at the Community Congregational Church again this year.

The Wine Festival is set for final approval at City Council the first part of April. We will be moving the food vendors to the street which will mean the loss of a few parking spaces but was done at the request of PARAB to not have any vehicles in the park. The vendor spaces are now full. The Cliff Dwellings will be the primary sponsor this year with their logo on the glasses. The Cog Railway will be the tote sponsor. These two sponsors needed to be secured to start the printing process. Event bright ticket sales are going ok with over 100 sold so far. Julie reported receiving reservations for that weekend. Both Gwenn and Karen also have reservations associated with the wine festival. The board again discussed trying to create a two day event. Karen suggested a survey of the wineries to ask if they are interested in participating in a two day event and the possibility of having different wineries on the two days. Leslie will contact Doug Caskey, head of the Wine Industry Development Board to get his thoughts on different wineries.

Ken asked if the expenses for events include staff time and was told they do not. He requested that staff create a log with the approximate time spent on events each week.

Annie Schmitt was asked to consider being the chair person and helping rebuild a special events committee. She has a lot going on but will look at it. Karen and Leslie will meet with Annie to discuss further.

Leslie has reached out to the company that works with Old Colorado City for Territory Days to discuss the parking and shuttle logistics for the Coffin Races but has not yet heard back from them.

I. Executive Director's Report

Leslie will focus on Economic Development to learn more about it as well as setting up more

meetings for members/Manitou businesses on things such as a webinar for Business Continuity Planning.

Leslie will be out of the office Friday, March 27 and Monday, March 30. She will check the City Council agenda for March 31 and be at that meeting if there are agenda items concerning the Chamber.

Neal Yowell has resigned as chair of the Parking Authority Board and has been hired to be the Parking Manager for Standard Parking. He will replace David Gagnon whose last day will be April 3. Rachel Buller, Manitou Springs Real Estate, will be opening her new location on April 3. Sylvia Garcia, Messages Jaye's Way, is moving into Rachel's previous location. We will have a ribbon cutting for Messages Jaye's Way.

The Board discussed membership plaque options. By consensus it was decided Board members preferred a window cling instead. Staff will design and order.

Christina Larson did not receive the emails regarding the meeting. Staff will make sure she is added to the list. Emails with the sales tax reports including the breakouts have been sent through the December report. Every industry, except restaurants, is up. New businesses were discussed. The soft opening for the SunWater Spa is scheduled for May 1, 2 and 3.

Having no additional business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 11:21 a.m.