

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

Board of Directors
Meeting Summary

July 23, 2015

Present: Karen Cullen, Gwenn David, Marcy Morrison, Annie Schmitt, Julie Vance,
Nicole Nicoletta

Absent: Justin Armour, Rachelle Cully, Tim Haas, Ken Jaray, Christina Larson,
Farley McDonough

Staff: Leslie Lewis

A regular meeting of the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau & Office of Economic Development was held Thursday, July 23, 2015 at Manitou Springs City Hall in City Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. It was determined there was not a quorum available for the meeting so no votes would be taken.

Karen Cullen mentioned the article that had been sent to the Board of Directors concerning "Responsible Tourism" and felt that a lot of what Manitou Springs is doing would be considered "Responsible Tourism" with the exception of the Incline with the negative impact to the community (police, fire, search and rescue). The Incline is on a "conditional use" permit and there is a group putting together all of parties to re-evaluate the regulations and rules and get enforcement of those rules and regulations. Karen suggested the topic of "Responsible Tourism" be placed on the agenda for the Board Retreat. Julie Vance reported recently having what appeared to be a homeless person stop by her office looking for bus fare. He told her he came to Manitou Springs because of the marijuana but wondered when it became such a "touristy area".

After discussion about not having a quorum available the last couple of months, it was suggested that a Resolution be prepared that allows the Executive Committee to meet in place of the Board during the summer months and a by-laws change be drafted that can be approved by the Board and then sent to the membership for approval as well. Karen suggested a Resolution Adopting the Conflict of Interest Statement be prepared as well.

The board will be asked for possible dates for the Board Retreat to be held in September or October. Consensus was that early October would be a better time for most Board members present.

A. Discussion: Summer Business

Board members present reported summer business has been very good so far. Discussion was that the lower gas prices and improved economy in addition advertising had increased visitation. Many businesses downtown are reporting having a good summer so far.

There is concern that a lot of the parking, particularly in the morning, is taken by Incline traffic and creates a concern for restaurants serving breakfast if their customers can't park near them. There was discussion about the need to charge for the Incline to cover some of the increased costs created for the City by the Incline.

The Board discussed with town being busier, the need for additional trash pick-up and clean up of things like weeds along the sidewalks and restrooms is greater. Marcy feels there is a need for additional attention to detail by the City Administration. Staff had included the letter from Mr. Morris, in the Board packets, that detailed the experience his family had while celebrating a birthday in Manitou Springs. The City Council had received an abbreviated version of the letter from Mr. Morris. When Councilwoman Nicoletta responded, she received a very harsh reply from Mr. Morris. In addition to the cleanliness issue, several people have mentioned the need for additional public restrooms in downtown Manitou Springs. The City will be hiring a full time staff person to clean the restrooms. The Board discussed that when someone calls to report a problem, it is too late. The restrooms need to be cleaned on a continuous basis throughout the day. The staff person will also empty trash cans as needed. Annie Schmitt mentioned the need for businesses to pick up trash in front of their business if the can is overflowing as well as depend on the City for trash removal.

Karen wanted to close the discussion on a positive note and reported that the guests at the bed & breakfast that she is the general manager for in Colorado Springs come back and tell her how much they enjoyed Manitou Springs.

In returning to the discussion of the letter from Mr. Morris, several board members mentioned that they don't see the Police presence in town either and the panhandling situation is more prevalent recently. Karen thought the Board should put together a cover letter to send with Mr. Morris' letter and send it to City Council as well as Jason Wells and Chief Ribeiro.

B. Discussion: Meeting in a Box (POST Master Plan)

Annie brought an example of the box that is provided when people are hosting the Meeting in a Box to gather information for the Parks, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan. Annie thought there had been 10 meetings held so far. The results are given to Susan Watkins and Tweed Kazziah to compile. They would like to have all of the meetings held by August 15 and then there will be several public meetings, the first of which will be a community potluck on August 27.

C. Marketing & Web Site Update

The Marketing Task Force has been working on creating commercials which are almost complete. They are overall commercials which promote Manitou Springs in general including attractions and lodging. Some changes were suggested recently so staff has received a request for a deadline extension of up to two weeks to make those changes.

Xcite Media attended the last Marketing Task Force meeting. They discussed the remarketing ads as well as the other web site advertising. They are reporting the conversion rate for the visitors guide requests is 10.44% which is remarkable. The remarketing ads are a little lower than the .25% average conversion but our conversions are good. Julie pointed out the guide requests reinforce the need for a print version of the visitors guide.

D. City Update

The custodial position has already been discussed. Councilwoman Nicoletta is going to take her notes and speak with administration. Council has received a couple of emails from people upset about the vacation rental moratorium. A couple of vacation rentals have been closed for operating without a license. City Council has also recently approved parameters for long-term rentals by hotel and motel properties.

Councilwoman Nicoletta reported Council had worked on policy Tuesday. Jason Wells' contract was approved for another year. They clarified, in the Charter, that the City Administrator is responsible for hiring and firing a lot of the department heads. City Council will have final approval of evaluations and has responsibility for hiring the City Administrator, City Clerk, Police Chief, and Director of Finance.

There is a task force working on Affordable Housing that Councilwoman Toll is heading up. Marcy suggested it be called "Workforce Housing".

Annie asked why the "No Parking" cones need to be put out for bus parking so far in advance and reported that people can't read the signs so don't park in those spaces. Cars cannot be towed unless the area has been posted "no parking" three days in advance. Staff will ask that the writing be larger on the "No Parking" signs.

Councilwoman Nicoletta reported that the work session on Tuesday will focus on discussing moving the operations of City Hall to a new location. In the fall, hopefully September, Council will be discussing the single hauler trash program. Councilwoman Nicoletta would like to include recycle cans in the downtown area in those discussions. The need for additional recycling opportunities was discussed. Annie reported the Bear Smart group is getting information on bear safe cans.

Councilwoman Nicoletta was asked about the status of the Spring Street Bridge. The crews are working on the foundation. Councilwoman Nicoletta believes it will be open the end of the month. Shelly Cobau went up Ruxton Creek with NRCS representatives and there is \$67,000 available for repair on the walls of the creek. They are still discussing the 12% match needed and if that should be City funded for the private property. Shelly will be organizing a meeting of the residents along the creek. Councilwoman Nicoletta reported the \$67,000 won't do much for full repair but can go toward small repairs. Karen explained that the Ruxton Creek wall holds up Ruxton Avenue and feels it is questionable if its City property since it holds up the street. Councilwoman Nicoletta clarified that the City Attorney does not believe it is City property but there is no doubt that the safety/condition of the walls impact the City and public property.

E. URA Update

Marcy shared a map that the URA had created which shows all of the properties in the URA and includes ownership and the utility lines on the properties. If a developer came in and was looking at a property, this would be very useful information for them. Marcy reported the biggest challenge the URA is having is they have \$2,000 Façade Grants that are 50/50 matching grants that they have not been able to get businesses in the URA area to apply for.

The West End Avenue Project meetings are still being delayed. The City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County are fighting (causing the delays) and Marcy believes Colorado Springs wants Manitou Springs to put more money into the project. The Mayor is optimistic and believes the project will begin with the Manitou Springs section and go toward Colorado Springs. Marcy reminded the Board that there is the section from the Highway 24 by-pass to City Hall that will be Manitou Springs' responsibility to make changes to. Julie reported that Colorado Springs Utilities had told her in May that as telephone poles are becoming compromised they will be removed and the utilities undergrounded. The pole in front of her property is one such pole but no changes have been made yet. Marcy reported that the improvements and amenities, such as the lights, colored concrete and

landscaping along the Avenue, in the URA area of the West End Avenue Project, will have to be paid for from the URA funds.

F. Special Events Update

The wine festival gate was \$57,575 and the Excise Tax (5% to the City) was \$2,741. The gross sales by the vendors selling taxable items were \$79,079 which is up from \$72,000 in 2014. The City portion of the sales tax was \$3,000. Councilwoman Nicoletta offered to help streamline the entry gates better next year.

The Ice Cream Social didn't go well this year. The people attending enjoyed the event, but there were not many people there with the 57 degree weather.

Leslie and Brittany attending the Palisade Wine Festival is in the works. Leslie has sent an email to the Wine Industry Development Board asking about discount tickets for the event. Julie has gotten hotel rooms at the ABVI property in Grand Junction at a very good rate. There is a Wine Festival Shuttle pick-up at the lodging property across the street so that will work out well. The Wine Festival is September 18 – 19 and will provide ideas to improve the Manitou Springs Wine Festival.

Leslie will be attending the Governor's Conference on Tourism in Crested Butte on September 13 – 15 and will take the middle of the week off prior to being in Palisade. Leslie will ask businesses to donate items for a Manitou Springs basket that will be donated to the Governor's Conference Silent Auction.

There are 20 teams entered in the Coffin Races so far. Karissa is working on getting sponsors for the event. Brittany has met with the company that does the transportation for Territory Days about running transportation for the Coffin Races. We are waiting on a proposal from them. Annie suggested contacting Goodwill as well as they now have transportation services for hire. The t-shirt sponsorship opportunity has been sent out. Leslie has sent the Metro District an email asking if we can lease the Wichita lot for parking for the volunteers and coffin race teams. The application will be turned in to the City once we have the parking/transportation plan in place.

G. Executive Director Report

The Visitor Center numbers are up 9.8% year to date through June. July is expected to be up as well. We still have openings for volunteers on Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings. Bud Ford has been coming in on Saturdays from 11 am – 3 pm to hit the highest visitation time of the day.

The Office of Economic Development and International Trade had their staff meeting in Manitou Springs last week. Leslie arranged for City Council Chambers for their meeting and arranged for Shelly Cobau to speak with them on the flood mitigation. We have received our 2nd reimbursement check the OEDIT grant.

The CTO Grant information just became available and we will be applying for that grant again for 2016. Our regional approach needs to be better defined in the application.

Leslie met with Susan on the Social Media sites this week. They are not yet all branded alike but we are working on getting them current. Susan is doing a lot of shares on Facebook and Twitter but not a lot on the other sites yet. Photos from the Wine Festival and the Ice Cream Social have been received so those can be added to the Pinterest site.

The Audit is complete. Leslie felt additional adjustments should have been made so will be talking with the CPA firm on those but the audit was turned into the City on time. Quarterly payroll reports are complete. The BID payroll expenses through June were just above \$7,000 and have been paid to the Chamber.

Leslie will be taking the first week of August off. Laura is taking two days off the end of July to judge at the Teller County Fair.

There are 27 buses scheduled with Diamond Tours between August 11 and October 1. Diamond Tours does provide several hours for their riders to have lunch and shop in downtown Manitou Springs.

We shipped 10 boxes of visitors guides to Burlington Welcome Center yesterday and one to Loveland.

Leslie met with Dirk Draper, COO of the Colorado Springs Regional Business Alliance (formerly the Chamber of Commerce). Leslie will be meeting with him and his economic development staff and the County economic development group to figure out what works for Manitou Springs in the regional plan. They are all willing to assist in any way they can.

Councilwoman Nicoletta reported that Ron Ilgen, organizer of the Pikes Peak Ascent and Marathon, came to the Council meeting on Tuesday. He is requesting the Incline be closed on the Marathon day through Colorado Springs Parks Department. Council agreed with that. The Ascent and Marathon is on the International Bucket List for runners. The Chamber will have an information booth at registration for the Ascent and Marathon, handing out the visitors guide, dining information, and mineral water lemonade.

H. **Unscheduled Appearances:**

Annie had friends from Colorado Springs come to the Ice Cream Social who commented to her that they were disappointed that it wasn't a "waste wise" event. She asked that we use recyclable products and have recycle cans available in the future.

The Avenue Hotel is having an open house for their new massage room next Tuesday. Gwenn invited board members to come for free chair massages that day.

Having no other business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 10:25 am