

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

**Board of Directors
Meeting Minutes**

May 26, 2016

Present: Justin Armour, Gwenn David, April Hall, Whitney Hedgpeth, Farley McDonough, Annie Schmitt, Lisa Quintana

Absent: Karen Cullen, Rachelle Cully, Tony Mogck, Jay Rohrer

Guests: Karen Berchtold, Natalie Johnson, Neale Minch, Chief Joe Ribeiro

Staff: Leslie Lewis

A regular meeting of the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau & Office of Economic Development was held Thursday, May 26, 2016 in Manitou Springs City Hall in City Council chambers. The meeting was called to order at 8:35 am by President Gwenn David.

A. Presentation & Discussion: Master Plan Update

Karen Berchtold began with the Planning staff in October 2014 to focus on creating a Master Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan for Manitou Springs. A grant was written to fund the plan costs. She has been holding meetings for feedback since February. She gave the board an overview of the process. The City has never had a comprehensive plan that goes from visions to specific actions. She is working from a lot of plans to pull those together. There are several meetings planned for the public. Goals will help the team get more specific on what they hear from the community. There will be a step to prioritize the actions and then put those together in an implementation plan.

There is also a Hazard Mitigation Plan being developed. The team includes staff as well as regional partners. They are identifying the risks and mapping those risks. They will look at the community assets which include the built environment, natural environment, people and economy. They will create a strategy with specific actions and include that in the Master Plan. Karen and the consultants are also working on a land use plan for the whole community to map what is currently available and develop a plan for what is wanted for the future.

There is a web site that includes summaries of the meetings after they happen as well as information that is developed for meetings. They do want input and comments from the community. It will help guide recommendations from the consultants and teams working on the plans. There will be a workshop in September on resiliency (looking at hazard mitigation issues) that Karen invited board members to participate in to provide focused feedback from the business community. Surveys are provided at the community meetings as well as on-line. Karen thought it would be helpful if the board could provide input as a group. The group is making an effort to increase their social media presence for input from the community. Karen asked about a good way to reach individual businesses and it was suggested it be hand delivered. Several options for that delivery were discussed. Karen anticipated the general survey to be available in mid June.

B. Action Item: Approval of April Meeting Minutes

Farley McDonough made a motion to approve the April Board Meeting Minutes as presented. Justin Armour seconded the motion and it was approved.

C. Action Item: Approval of Financial Statements for April

The audit is being wrapped up. The auditors are still waiting on a couple of confirmation to come in. The audit committee will get together as soon as that is complete and go through the audit with the accounting company. The committee can then present a report at a Board Meeting.

The income and expenses are in line with typical spending at this time of year. Both will increase with the wine festival in the next two months.

Justin made a motion to approve the April financials as presented. Farley seconded the motion and it was approved.

D. Action Item: New and Renewing Members

There were four new member applications. We don't have the paperwork from the Silver Saddle but they did pay the membership investment. On the Creek Reiki has moved into the location where Revitalizing Waters was located. We are working on scheduling a ribbon cutting for On the Creek Reiki but don't have it scheduled yet. Maggie's Farm and Swirl Wine Bar were the other two new member applications received. Farley made a motion to approve the new and renewing member applications. Annie Schmitt seconded the motion and it was approved.

E. Marketing Update & Presentation: Google Analytics

Neale Minch has been providing some additional analysis on the Chamber web site using our Google analytics and determining forecast patterns. Neale began with a baseline from 2015 and reviewed session numbers. The percentage of new users compared to returning users is consistent. Neale pointed out spikes in the patterns and how they tied to events, particularly the Coffin Races. He suggested this could be used as a tool to measure effectiveness of advertising. Neale pointed out the analytics can be used for benchmarking, using as a predictor for event attendance and he believes it might be used as a predictor for a sales tax model. He then cautioned that it wouldn't be something to look at daily as you don't want to over-react and finding a balance when looking at trends. With the Gumbo cook-off data, we had a problem with the web so some of the data was lost. Prior to the last week (when the problem occurred), the traffic was trending down 10 days prior to the event, he believed we would see approximately 20% fewer people which is about where the revenue came in. He is currently looking at the Wine Festival data with Brittany. He is looking at presale tickets and page views. We began ticket sales about a month later this year so the sales were down initially compared to last year. Neale suggested that we map promotional activities and see how those impact ticket sales.

In speaking with the Marketing Task Force and setting goals for 2016, it was determined that a quarterly review of the analytics with a summary to the board, the opportunity to link the larger events to the social media campaign to increase engagement on a more regular basis, event tracking, and using web site traffic and other data sets available to predict sales tax. Longer term goals discussed were benchmarking with other organizations and increasing engagement through the web site request forms.

There were 2,257 non-duplicated entries into the sweepstakes for the May 15 drawing. We are putting an ad in a USA Today special Travel section that was a last minute offer. The Colorado Fun Guide just came out and the Summer Fun Guide will be out soon. We will also have an ad in the Westword Summer Guide. The BID map that we use on the front counter just came in. Brittany put that piece together for the BID and we do pay a portion of that because it is our primary hand out on the counter.

F. City Report

Chief Ribeiro reported that City Council had approved funds for additional officers on a walking beat in downtown through the summer. Chief Ribeiro will use El Paso County deputies and Manitou Springs police officers (as they have availability). The interns will begin as well and serve more as ambassadors. Their schedule will begin mid June (with the semester).

The Police Department has 3 candidates in background checks and 4 candidates on standby for background checks to fill 2 positions. Chief Ribeiro is going to be talking to City Council in June about increasing the staffing. He is then hoping to use Manitou Springs officers for the walking beats full time. He reported that they are sometimes receiving 40 calls per day. Leslie asked if the crime rate had gone up and was told it had not. The call volume has gone up but not the crime level. The calls are quality of life issues (ie noise complaints). The Police Department does have leads but have not had an arrest in the armed robbery. He did report drug issues and an increase nationwide in heroin use and dealing.

Ruxton Canyon is a hot topic. Chief Ribeiro encouraged the board to have someone get involved in the incline management group. Problems with the incline were discussed.

G. Creative District Update

Natalie Johnson had sent an email to the Board letting everyone know that Manitou Springs had not been selected for the state designation as a Creative District after working on the process for two and a half years and seemed to be doing everything right. At the Colorado Creative Industries conference, Natalie and Farley learned that the Boettcher Foundation had discontinued their funding which was a significant portion of their funding. Natalie reported that fifteen districts had applied which has been narrowed to eight currently. Three of those will be approved but at this point there is no funding. The first Creative District Board meeting is set for June 2 and how to go forward will be the primary topic of discussion. The selected districts will be announced the middle of June. Susan Fries, at the State office, encouraged Natalie to keep going with keep going. Natalie has spoken with a couple of private donors who are interested in supporting next year's Creative District so she will continue to pursue that.

Natalie is actively working with the Westside Avenue Action Plan on branding and stamping for the east end, guidelines the Creative District can help support such as planting trees on private properties and sign guidelines for the backs of buildings. Natalie is working with Karen Berchtold on the Master Plan for the URA area.

The first "Art Attack – 3rd Friday Art Walk" was held. Natalie and Gwenn felt it went well. Natalie had mixed feedback based on location of the participants. That was also graduation weekend and there were also two memorial services being held for young people from Manitou Springs. Gwenn did a great job of getting balloons out and "Art Attack" stenciled on the sidewalks which created the festival atmosphere. The stencil will need to be power washed off of the sidewalks.

In June, the Board will re-examine the Strategic Plan to see if any changes are needed after not receiving the state designation. El Mac, an internationally known artist, will be painting a mural on the MAC. The mural on Manitou Lofts and Shops is complete and looks great. Manitou Soles, created by Shante Toll, will be held the middle of June. It will be a camera set up taking photos of people's shoes.

Natalie can still apply for grants. Art projects aren't usually funded but grants are given for economic development and community building projects.

Natalie will continue to report to the Board at the monthly meeting.

H. City Special Events Coordinator

Joy Vernon has been hired to fill the newly created Special Events Coordinator position. She will be reviewing the applications and coordinating all aspects of the events to make a smoother process. She can help applicants through the complete process beginning with filling out the applications. She has taken over Schryver Park reservations as well which has previously been managed by the pool. Joy would like to get a basic calendar on line so that people can see when a park is available.

Joy is also working with all of the banner requests including the poles in downtown.

Annie Schmitt had decided she would not coordinate the Fruitcake Toss again based on some of the changes that had been made and her upcoming commitments. After John and Carol O'Donnell came to talk with the Board about the Holiday Parade, Annie reached out to them and has decided with their help and support she will continue with the Fruitcake Toss.

I. URA Report

Farley reported that the URA is preparing to give recommendations to City Council on the program improvements. They are narrowing it to 3 or 4 sidewalk color choices. The Board feels it should match the downtown. Because it is a smaller area for an amenity zone, they are looking at adding an interesting stamp in the sidewalk. Farley is working with Natalie and the arts council to come up with a cool stamp idea from local artists. The Board will be meeting at Adam's for their next meeting so they can walk the district at that time. They will be giving their recommendations to City Council on June 28 and they will break ground in the fall.

Farley has been talking with one business from Colorado Springs about creating a second location in the URA area. Leslie spoke with one person who has a group of investors that is looking at purchasing two lodging properties in the URA area.

In the URA discussions on the stamp, they started to see a need for a landscape plan as part of the Master Plan in the URA area. With the limitations of the URA and the input from the community in meetings, there is no place for green space or to plant trees in the public right of way. A landscaping plan could carve out areas for small pocket parks and show where on private property you might put certain plants, the URA might be able to somehow incentivize private development to include a specific design.

J. Events Update

The wine festival is set with all of the licensing in place and vendors registered. There are 611 tickets sold so far. Staff is concerned about parking.

The Summer Concerts are hopefully going to be on the June 7 City Council agenda. There will then be 21 concerts throughout the summer. These are scheduled to create positive energy in the park.

We are receiving entries for the coffin races. Leslie will get that application to Council soon after the Wine Festival.

Leslie is talking with someone about bringing a plein air show back into Manitou Springs in 2017.

We have received a request from Molly Wingate (Poetry Heals) for a donation for a program ("Poetry and Pottery") that she is putting together with Mark Wong. It will be a bridge between the City of Manitou Springs and the young transients that are open to help. After discussion, the board asked for additional information including a budget for the program from Molly.

Working with Diamond Tours, we have had 6 buses in May and have 17 scheduled for June.

Doug Price and Cathy Ritter will be hosting a round table discussion on tourism on Wednesday. Whitney and Gwenn will attend and represent Manitou Springs.

The collaboration of the banners between the Cog Railway and the Manitou Springs Education Foundation was discussed.

The Ruxton Avenue merchants have requested the 9 parking spaces in the first block of Ruxton be changed to a 2 hour time limit with no extensions allowed. The Parking Authority Board has agreed to recommend the change to City Council.

In order to expand events and add other small events, we need to create a Special Events Committee. Lisa volunteered to be on the committee. We will ask Annie if she has time to join the committee. Leslie suggested if anyone knows other people in Manitou Springs that are creative, we could ask those people to join. Farley suggested Christine Critch and will contact her to see if she might be interested.

Having no additional business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 11:09 a.m.