

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

**Board of Directors  
Meeting Minutes**

**September 21, 2016**

**Present:** Justin Armour, Karen Cullen, Gwenn David, April Hall, Whitney Hedgpeth,  
Farley McDonough, Annie Schmitt, Lisa Quintana, Jay Rohrer

**Absent:** Rachelle Cully, Anthony Mogck

**Guests:** Anna Mekeel

**Staff:** Leslie Lewis

The Annual Retreat meeting of the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau & Office of Economic Development was held Wednesday, September 21, 2016 at the Garden of the Gods Trading Post. The meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m. by President Gwenn David.

**A. ACTION ITEM: Approval of August Meeting Minutes**

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

**B. ACTION ITEM: Approval of August Financial Statements**

Leslie Lewis gave a brief review of the Income and Expense statement for August. Karen Cullen made a motion to approve the August financial statements as presented. Lisa Quintana seconded the motion which was then approved.

**C. 2015 Audit Review**

Copies of the 2015 Audit were given out. In looking at changes from 2014 to 2015, and the Notes to the Financial Statements, some of the expenses were categorized differently between the two years. The opinion of Woodley, Hilderbrand & Sanders LLP is that the Financial Statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the organization in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States.

**D. Social Media Review**

Anna Mekeel has been running the social media contract for 2016. She handed out an update on social media efforts and results so far. She has been sharing photos she was posting on Facebook with Instagram which has increased the engagement and fans. Anna's efforts have been directed toward Facebook, Instagram and Twitter this year. Anna's philosophy is to "Establish, Create, Expand" so her goal in 2017 is to strengthen those channels, while she begins work on increasing engagement with Pinterest and tests the waters of "Snap Chat". Research Anna has done shows the Millennials are planning vacations on Pinterest, posting them on Snap Chat and Instagram.

Anna talked about the importance of businesses promoting each other on social media channels as well. She wants to build the Chamber's promotional opportunities for engagement (use # for a chance

to win a t-shirt, as an example). She plans to build Pinterest with things that interest those users such as having created an “Emma Costumes” Board to expand the brand which she will share on Facebook. Photos make a big impact but video is even better.

At the Governor’s Conference, the social media sessions talked about the need to post regularly so you don’t lose your audience. If your post is really important you can repost it with the #icym or #icymi (in case you missed or in case you missed it). They also talked about running contests to boost engagement. Stories and photos can be submitted to HARO (Help a reporter out). Gwenn talked about asking visitors to post photos as well. People are more drawn to photos posted by others, not staged photos. The board discussed a fan photo contest with a special prize giveaway.

Karen asked about the Social Media Roundtables and if they are continuing. Anna will be scheduling one soon and asked for feedback on what people would like to see.

The Board discussed the need to maintain a balance with online and print. According to American Traveler, print usage is at the highest level it has been since 2007.

#### **E. 2017 Marketing**

A draft Marketing Budget for 2017 was handed out to the Board. The Colorado State Vacation Guide is in the top 5 referral sources to our web site and we receive a significant number of weekly leads from the publication that we then send the Manitou Springs Visitors Guide. The CSCVB and Pikes Peak Country Attractions Association contact the Chamber to see if we would increase our ad size in the State Vacation Guide back to a full page and go into a regional spread they are creating. We run a similar ad in the Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak Region Visitors Guide so we will increase that ad from 2/3 page back to a full page ad as well. Leslie explained that as a member of Pikes Peak Country Attractions, we also receive placement in the “Top Spots” section of the guide. The rest of the proposed budget was reviewed with each of the line items explained.

The board talked about restaurants in Manitou Springs and the need for additional diversity. Farley brought up the lack of buildings fitted for restaurant space and the major expense involved in adding fixtures such as grease traps and hoods.

The Marketing Task Force is meeting with Xcite media today. One of the things that Leslie wants to see discussed is changes to the web site. We have more new users but are not seeing as many page views. Leslie feels like the mobile web site needs to be changed. The CVB is having a new site designed and are using a strategy called “mobile first” for the design. Once the site is where they want it on a mobile device, they will look at how it appears on larger devices. Through discussion, Justin suggested that we get outside input. Karen said there are sites that have pop-up boxes that ask questions about the web site for feedback and maybe we should have that added and collect input for a year before making changes. There are other platforms, such as Trip Advisor, Yelp, etc that are attracting people for trip planning and being used instead of town sites. The Board also discussed that we are not changing the content on the web site which should be done regularly to keep the site fresh.

Karen pointed out that some of the domain renewals are not included in the budget. That needs to be adjusted.

The Super Fine Design proposal was handed out. The proposal includes a new logo design for the Chamber. Currently we don't have a logo different from the City logo. Farley said the Creative District is talking about signage. Karen stated if we rebrand, we will need new signage. There was discussion of trying to bring all of the groups together to determine the brand for Manitou Springs. The elements of what all would be included with Super Fine Design (fonts, colors) were discussed. A lot of what they will be working on will be incorporated more in the 2018 designs because it will be too late for the 2017 ads.

In discussing signage, Karen pointed out that once a design is approved, we could work with CDOT to replace the sign on Highway 24 but wouldn't want to replace the sign at the Chamber location until we know where the offices will be. The current lease for the building expires in May. Jay was asked if we need to discuss a new lease with the City Administrator or the Mayor. Jay suggested we begin with the City Administrator. Staff would like to secure a new lease on the current location and then put in a new electronic sign (which would require a variance as electronic signs are not allowed in Manitou Springs) as well as cameras and a new phone system. The board talked about discussions of moving the Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau & Office of Economic Development to the Hiawatha Gardens property. Though the timeframe for anything definite to happen with that building are unknown, several board members did not think that a move to that location would be bad. There was additional discussion of whether the sign and "?" could be moved to that corner.

Karen suggested and Gwenn agreed that the budget for photography needs to be increased. The contract labor in the Marketing was set with public relations in mind. The Rack Card and the BID map were included in the proposed printing budget.

#### **F. 2017 Budget**

We are not yet sure exactly what the number we will be receiving from the City is yet. Gwenn and Leslie are meeting with Jason Wells and Rebecca Davis to present our ideas for the budget. There are funds in our projected budget for the Creative District salary. The Board consensus was to ask for as much money as possible. The board discussed the need for someone with Economic Development expertise. Natalie Johnson, with the Creative District, was brought on to do some of the Economic Development. Farley wondered about expanding the expectation of the Creative District and increasing that funding as well. For positioning with the State if Manitou Springs applies again, the Creative District does need to have a line item on the City budget as well but there will be things that the Creative District will need additional funding. Building shoulder season and holiday traffic is Economic Development. Farley brought up the need to invest in town for holiday decorations and creating a plan for gateway to gateway decorations.

The idea of having smaller events in the off season is another form of Economic Development. One of the other things we should be doing is looking to attract more boutique events. Farley suggested we add a line item in the budget for attracting those smaller events.

Justin suggested we create a "scream zone" or haunted house experience for the month of October. Jay suggested you could do something as a pop up haunted house in a tent in Memorial Park. Karen talked about the Fruitcake Toss and that we should take that event back as Annie is unable to continue it. The Board determined in order to add events, there needs to be an events person, at least part time, to take these responsibilities on. The budget would also need to include funding for day

labor for events. After discussion, it was determined that the person could not only add smaller events and coordinate all of the larger events as a fulltime position. The board discussed the need to extend the events to two day (or longer) events. Justin talked about having gone to a “silent disco” and how much fun that was.

The board returned to discussing holiday decorations for 2016. Leslie is waiting to hear from the City on what they currently have for decorations. After a lot of discussion, the board decided to offer the City \$5,000 for this year to purchase new lights, will allocate additional funds in the budget for 2017 and a to be determined amount in the budget each year following to maintain or expand new decorations.

In going through the budget, the board suggested adding \$40,000 to payroll to add an events person, \$20,000 for Contract Labor, \$25,000 for boutique meetings/conventions, increase Special Events by \$10,000, Economic Development to \$10,000 with the Creative District at \$20,000, \$30,000 in funding for a new sign, \$40,000 for holiday decorations to cover gateway to gateway, and \$1,000 for General Donations. In discussing the 2017 Marketing budget, the board added \$7,000 to the radio budget that could be used to promote events on public radio in Colorado Springs and \$7,000 to the non-holiday television budget. Karen suggested bringing the web site up to \$5,000. Additional discussion included increasing the advertising around the year round shuttle. The shuttle, Barr Trail and the Barr Trail lot were discussed.

Other ideas for expanding the Wine Festival were adding a Friday evening pop up dinner (Farm to Table) on Canon Avenue or in a tent, or Whiskey and Wine event with distilleries, in addition to closing off El Paso Blvd and incorporating 7 Minute Park into the event.

Farley reported the URA is trying to attract development which is difficult as the Westside Avenue Action Project hasn't put a shovel in the ground yet. Down the road there will be discussion about what types of businesses the URA wants in that area which will fall to an Economic Developer or the Creative District to recruit those businesses.

The restaurants in downtown were discussed. Parking was discussed. The Ruxton merchants went to City Council and requested parking in the 100 block of Ruxton be changed to a 2 hour limit with no time extension. Whitney reported a lot of incline users parking on Manitou Avenue in the morning but many are done and have left by 10 am when the stores open.

Leslie will put all of the projected changes in both the marketing and overall budgets and send it back out to the board once they are complete.

Carnivale was discussed. Sharon Earle-Palmer is taking that over. She has reached out to several businesses for assistance. The board discussed the Chamber might need to take it in to make sure it continues.

Karen suggested we speak with Natalie about how they are promoting the Skeleton Craze and help with that. She is putting out a press release. The skeletons will be on display through November 1. We believe the Creative District bought 40 or 45 skeletons. The chamber is asking anyone who bought a skeleton on their own to contact the office so we can get everyone on the list for people to

vote. Ballot boxes are located at Whickerbill, Tracy Miller Studio, either Goldminer's or the Poppy Seed, and the Chamber office. The Bulletin is running ads for the promotion and staff believes the winners will be announced on election day. There was concern about skeletons being on the sidewalk but Leslie had pointed out the ordinances in the downtown area that allows for a display at each business.

Gwenn reported that at the Governor's Conference on Tourism, the Pikes Peak Region ranks lowest in the state for tourism growth in the last 5 years. While the state doesn't report why, it only reports statistics, there was speculation that the winter destinations are pushing so much harder to increase their summer business. Karen pointed out that Doug Price is trying to increase the LART to have additional funds to compete with the ski destinations.

### **G.     Unscheduled Appearances**

Karen brought up things discussed in last year's retreat such as "Responsible Tourism" and a succession plan and wanted to make sure those things are still being done. An operations manual has been created with contact information but Leslie was not sure it is a true succession plan.

"Responsible Tourism" was explained. Karen asked what thoughts were on a work session with Council to discuss "Economic Development" and what that is.

Farley asked about the status of the BID. The board meets about every 2 months. Their budget is about \$50,000. They are cleaning up trash daily, power washing in the summer and shoveling snow in the winter. Most of their funds go toward the clean up. They do still run an ad on Military Cable. The weatherbug camera is still there but there is a problem with the wiring so we can't get the weather statistics. The camera image is on the front page of our web site.

Having no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 12:47 p.m.