

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

**Board of Directors**

**Meeting Minutes  
March 28, 2024**

**Present:** April Hall, Kat Kilner, Farley McDonough, Anthony Mogck, Lisa Quintana, Annie Schmitt, Denise Howell, Natalie Johnson

**Absent:** Ted Johnston

**Guests:** Neale Minch, Chief Bill Otto

**Staff:** Leslie Lewis

A regular meeting of the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau & Office of Economic Development (Visit Manitou Springs) Board of Directors was held on Thursday, March 28, 2024, in the conference room at 515 Manitou Avenue. The meeting was called to order by President Farley McDonough at 8:33 a.m.

**A. Sales Tax Presentation**

Neale Minch provided a recap of the 2023 Sales Tax revenue for Manitou Springs. Looking at community comparisons, no other community, other than Monument, had a great year. Kat Kilner noted that Monument has had a lot of growth with new businesses opening. With the “traditional” categories, Manitou Springs was down 5% overall for the year.

September and October were down. Neale looked at parking transactions to see if that was lower to draw a conclusion of fewer visitors to the area. However, the parking transactions are almost identical to 2022. Denise Howell provided the average duration of stay from the parking lots.

Lodging, for the year, was down 18%. As this is a major portion of the funding the Chamber receives for marketing and the Visitor Information Center, it is huge concern. Neale shared information from the few properties that report occupancy to him. Leslie is trying to set up a meeting for the lodging properties to brainstorm any additional ideas business owners might have.

Restaurants were flat for the year. Amusements and Bars had a better summer but ended up down 9% for the year and Shopping was flat. The city has made an adjustment with the “Other in City” so the accruals are in the appropriate months. While “other in City” (where the marijuana tax is) is down, it is not down as far as state sales are.

“Outside City” is the one category that was up in Manitou Springs for 2023. This category will be broken into two sections for 2024. One will contain things that were previously designated “Outside City” (utilities for example) and the second will be the online shopping that Manitou Springs receives taxes for.

From the aggregate, it is good that Manitou ended up down only 2% for the year. December, on it’s own, ended positive in a lot of the categories and overall.

Farley asked about how the city tracks vacation rental for lodging tax. Denise explained that the city is contracted with a company that tracks those listing properties for short term rental.

Kat asked if there is a way to reach families coming to visit the Air Force Academy and Fort Carson to get Manitou Springs lodging in front of them. Lesile will see if we can find contact information of how to provide information that the military institutions will make available to their guests and transfers.

## **B. Police Department Update**

The Police Department remodel is almost complete. They will be doing a walk-through April 1, with furniture delivery on April 2. Chief Otto anticipates being fully back in by April 8.

In speaking with the LEAP (homeless outreach team), there is nothing of note in Manitou Springs. They are working with El Paso County on areas both toward the national forest area and 31<sup>st</sup> Street. With the Behavioral Health unit, they are working more to help the homeless find solutions. The Chief is getting a lot of compliments on the team. The officer paired with the clinician has the same type of personality to fit that role well. The Chief requested that if someone sees something (a camp forming) that they call dispatch and not enter it into "See Click Fix".

The Police Department has had some turnover – since November, they lost 5 officers. They have replaced two (in training) and have three more that have the tests and backgrounds. They hope to be fully staffed again by June. The officers left for various personal reasons. All the area departments are facing the same issues.

There have been some crimes like shoplifting going on, but no major violent crimes. The shoplifting group that had been to Cave of the Winds, had also been to Garden of the Gods Trading Post and the Manitou Cliff Dwellings. They are also wanted for crimes in Colorado Springs and Old Colorado City.

There are a few areas that the police receive a lot of traffic complaints about. The complaints are speeding and careless driving. The police are using the speed trailer and are sitting in areas that the receive call about when they can.

The E-bikes are going to be out more. They do not have one officer out alone on the bikes. They will abide by the same safety rules as anyone else riding a bike.

## **C. City Update**

The next Citizen's Academy begins on Monday. There are 16 people enrolled and the course will last 9 weeks.

In speaking with a consultant that provides Comp Studies all over the nation regarding the turnover, he reported the number of positions open in the last year has increased by 40% and the number of applicants has decreased by 60%.

Denise brought a copy of the Work Plan and a couple of copies of the Annual Report for the board to review.

PPACG is putting on a training session for elected officials and City Managers. Pam Shockley is putting on the training. Denise has been working with several other area administrators to get this training put together.

The city is submitting two DOLA grant applications in the next few days. The water tank should be in between August and October. They are also looking at costs of valve replacement for the entire city and hoping to determine where the water loss is happening. With new water meters, it will have an ultrasound system that will identify where leaks are occurring.

The new Planning Directors is starting. He brings 20 years of experience from Clear Creek County. The new code enforcement officer has started. Her name is Tara Gamez and she has approximately 15 years of experience.

The Electric Trams run from Hiawatha Gardens to Wichita to the Smischny lot on Thursdays through Sundays. People can't be let out on the left side in traffic, for safety reasons, so they need to stop in the parking lots. There is a presentation for Via being considered to better meet the residents' needs, such as getting to Safeway. Farley asked if the Via program is being considered for the work force piece as well as resident needs. She also asked if anyone on the Mobility work group for Plan Manitou that can speak on behalf of or represent the work force group. Denise said only people that applied were added to the work groups for Plan Manitou, but there will be a lot of opportunity for people to give additional input. Denise asked board members to encourage people to participate either through the surveys and public meetings to share their input.

The Dillon Motel has to go through abatement (asbestos) and then permitting for demolition so the time frame to be available as a lot will be unknown.

#### **D. CRANE Update**

Crane received Mach Grants for both Art of the Avenue and the Creek Walk Mural project that is planned for the demonstration piece on the back of the Chamber building.

Cookies with Crane – this is an outreach to speak with creatives (artists, gallery owners, etc.) to see what it means, what is needed or missing. They will be trying to hold sessions 4 times per year. They had 10 or 11 people at the first meeting. The next meeting will be April 12 at the MAC at 2 pm. Right after that meeting, they will be holding a vendor meeting for Manitou Made. This meeting will be open to artist currently using Manitou Made as a platform as well as those that have used it but gotten off the platform or those that have not registered to participate. They would like to learn more about Manitou Made.

The Guitar fundraiser is going well. They will continue to run that program through the summer and will work closer with Armadillo Ranch and Kinfolks on those opportunities.

Crane applied for funding through Colorado Creative Industries to expand the mural at 441 Manitou Avenue. They will do four more sections to go with the section painted by Sally Knox-Hall.

Crane is also working on creating an MOU with the City.

#### **E. Special Events Update**

Leslie had sent Jenna's report to the board in advance of the meeting and asked if there were any questions on any part of it. She then reviewed several of Jenna's numbers for sponsorship and a Mach grant received for Carnivale this year. The ManiCrewe had a workday recently and organized their storage unit to hang the puppets there, so they are now out of the Chamber event storage unit.

Jenna convinced Rick Good (Border Burger Bar) to take a team to Estes Park to race for the Coffin Cup, which they won and are bringing back to Manitou Springs.

The Manni Awards were moved to April 11. Jenna is creating the nametags and "swag bags" for the nominees.

The Wine Walk is scheduled for April 4.

The Summer Concert Series will feature Little London Winds on Mondays. The Manitou Music Foundation is working to schedule artists to play on Fridays.

The Wine Festival has 27 wineries signed up and 11 gift vendors. Both have a wait list as well. Jenna is bringing in more food vendors to help with some of the concerns about the long lines. VIP tickets are sold out, and 939 tickets have been sold as of yesterday. Jenna has \$12,500 in sponsorship commitments so far.

Manipalooza is August 10, Jenna is working with the Manitou Springs Heritage Center on their Brewfest and onboarding brewers. She really likes Eventeny and how well it works. Vendor fees are capped at \$30.00 for fees. Jenna is still determining how to enter payments received from sponsors in advance of an event.

**F. Action Item: Approval of January and February Meeting Minutes**

Kat Kilner made a motion to approve the January and February Board Meeting Minutes as presented. April Hall seconded the motion, and it was approved.

**G. Action Item: Approval of January and February Financial Statements**

April reported February financials look like they are in line with the beginning of the year. We have approximately \$20,000 in dues that will come in through the year. We have used 32% of the marketing budget so far, leaving money for the rest of the year.

The revenue from Wine Festival tickets is coming in. It is currently in the Manitou Made bank account, but Leslie will transfer that to the primary checking account.

Kat made a motion to approve the January and February Financial statements as presented. Annie Schmitt seconded the motion, and it was approved.

**H. Action Item: Approval of New and Renewing Members – September through March**

Leslie explained who some of the new members are and encouraged everyone to go visit the new member locations. Kat made a motion to approve the New and Renewing Members list, Annie seconded the motion, and it was approved.

**I. Facebook Page for Businesses**

Because we are working on the text messaging for businesses, Farley asked if we should rejuvenate the Facebook Page for businesses to better reach Manitou businesses. Our current page is followed by a lot of residents of Colorado Springs, Denver, Texas etc. and not just targeted to Manitou Springs. After discussion, the board decided the text messaging system would be a faster, more targeted way to reach businesses and to not rejuvenate the Facebook Page. The text message system will only be used for important messages that need to get out quickly.

**J. Annual Report and Strategic Plan Update**

Natalie will meet with Farley and Leslie and go through the drafts for corrections. She showed an overview of all the work that has been done so far for both. After they are refined, she will put into refined forms to present.

**K. Chamber Sign Update**

The concrete for the sign stability has been poured. The post was also put in. The installation has been delayed to April 3. Leslie asked about tarping and unveiling it or just putting it in and letting the comments come in. Not tarping was the consensus.

**L. Kiosk Update**

The wireframe has been approved. Monica is working on creating itineraries to add. We are not yet sure of the timing for the installation for the office.

**M. Tax District Update**

There was a meeting providing an update of the progress on a different tax district that will cover gateway to gateway maintenance. The firm working on it was hoping for feedback, prior to looking at financial projections.

## **N.     Unscheduled Appearances**

Kat asked about the Chamber getting involved in the Pride Month Celebrations by running a window decorating contest. The Chamber may still have some Ace Gift Cards for prizes. The Pride Parade will be on June 28 (Friday) and the Pride Festival on Saturday in Soda Springs Park. Kat has approval to have the side crosswalks painted with pride colors. Farley asked about getting the street banners, that include the rainbow, back up by then. Kat is asking for businesses near the crosswalks to sponsor the paint for the crosswalks. Kat is going to measure and estimate the cost of the paint for each crosswalk. Businesses wanting to sponsor can also volunteer to help with the painting. Kat wants to wait so the paint will last all month. Kat met with Pikes Peak Pride and shared some of her ideas.

Pikes Peak Region Attractions created a video (approximately 3 minutes) of Manitou Springs. While there are some suggestions for the next one, there have been 160,000 views in the two weeks it has been out.

The Chamber will do a trade with Discovery Maps. Leslie believes it is important to be included if the map is being handed out to the public.

If anyone knows of anyone looking for a retail space in Manitou Springs, the old Southwest Silver building (952 Manitou Avenue) is available as they have moved across the street and combined with Eagle Dancer. Kat knows of someone looking for an office space. Leslie suggested a couple of locations to look at as possibilities.

Having no other business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.