

Visit Manitou Springs

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

October 15, 2024

Present: April Hall, Ted Johnston, Kat Kilner, Farley McDonough, Anthony Mogck,
Lisa Quintana, Annie Schmitt, Angela Wilks

Absent: Denise Howell

Guests: Audrey Gray

Staff: Leslie Lewis

The Annual Retreat meeting of the Visit Manitou Springs Board of Directors was held on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, in the upstairs conference room of Venue 515. The meeting was called to order at 8:40 am by President Farley McDonough.

Farley began the meeting going through an overview of her expectations of the agenda, timing, and outcomes for the meeting.

A. Review of Questions Answered by Leslie Lewis

Total Remodel of the Building: Leslie reported “in an ideal world, remodeling the building to accommodate ADA compliant restroom facilities”. With the current footprint and structure of the building, and the restrictions because of the flood plain, there is not enough space to expand the restroom to be large enough for this accommodation. Farley asked for additional clarification on whether there is enough office space or if more space is needed. With the current layout, the office with the event manager and marketing coordinator sharing space works well. Unfortunately, with the layout the Volunteer Coordinator is often left out of conversations and idea sharing.

Leslie explained how the ownership structure of the building changed in 1972, with the expansion of the building, and now belongs to the city when the Chamber vacates. The Chamber currently leases the land (and subsequently the building) at a very reasonable rate. The current lease expires in 2027.

Farley asked conversations of the city having a “welcome center” or kiosk at the Dillon and Hiawatha Gardens lots. Leslie thinks if the city has a fully staffed parking office at the Dillon, people stopping there are not going to then stop at the Chamber for information. The Chamber should have one of the kiosks and maps at that location for the information they need.

Farley asked about the Chamber functions if the Visitor Center was separated out. Leslie explained that the Chamber has never been successful in building those business referrals and the business-to-business functions. She feels 98% of what we provide is the visitor information. As a membership organization, with the visitor services promotion, we would still be able to maintain the 501(c)6 IRS status. Farley talked about other communities she had visited that have separate organizations for the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center. Leslie reminded the board that funding that is received from the city is for both the marketing and visitor center operation.

The board discussed, and questioned, having the new director determine what the organization should be. The board discussed the economic development portion of the organization and everyone's idea of what economic development means and is. The history of the Economic Development Board, BID and URA were explained and discussed.

Leslie explained the formula for funding that has traditionally gone to the Chamber. It is made up of a small percentage of General Sales Tax, a small percentage of Excise Tax, and 100% of the Lodging Tax that is dedicated to Economic Development - Business and Tourism Promotion. In the last several years, a portion of that formula has been withheld by the city and is being used to pay for the holiday lights this year. The formula comes from the last audited tax year numbers. In previous years, the City Council has taken an additional amount of discretionary funds so the Chamber funding did not decrease. For 2025, there is a potential to see a decrease of \$8,000 based on the formula if the city withholds the same amount as in 2024. Annie Schmitt asked about the potential to change the formula as lodging decreases. That is something that the City Council could do. There is also a possibility of asking City Council to change the wording to specify that the funding goes to Visit Manitou Springs, instead of Economic Development – Business and Tourism Promotion (like MACH), at some time in the future.

Farley asked about changes in Marketing and if more digital, and less print, could be produced. There are only a few areas we are still putting into print (BID map, State Vacation Guide, Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak Region Vacation Planner). Leslie talked about the high cost of participating in those print pieces.

Audrey Gray came in to work with the Board to go through planning strategies with the personnel changes coming.

B. What is the future of Visit Manitou Springs?

Location: Current Chamber building along with unmanned assets (perhaps kiosks in pocket parks and at transportation hubs), possibility of summer ambassadors – are these volunteers?

BID: Leslie will handle for one more year – then possibility of a Parking Benefit District?

Functions to possibly outsource: Visitor's Guide, Bookkeeping, also possibilities of lobbying, grants, graphic design

Visitor Center:

Marketing

Social Media

Facility Management

Events

Volunteers

Chamber:

Membership

Board, Council, Staff Meetings

Networking/Advocacy/Office Hours

Chat with the Chamber

Budget

Regional Events/Lunches/Etc.

Qualities needed in a new leader:

Operationally focused

Can see big picture/Creative

Communication – ability to talk to all kinds of people

Energy/Charisma – Strong but not abrasive
Accountable/Solid
Easy to respect
Knowledge of the area
Cool small-town energy

Action Items:

C. Approval of September Meeting Minutes

April Hall made a motion to approve the minutes of the September Board meeting. Annie seconded the motion, and it was approved.

D. Approval of September Financial Report

April reported there are no major changes and the Chamber is where it should be financially for this time of the year. Annie made a motion to approve the September Financial reports as presented. Ted Johnston seconded the motion, and it was approved.

E. Subcommittee to restructure positions:

After discussion it was determined that a subcommittee should be formed to restructure position descriptions (with no personnel in mind) and present those to the board. An Organizational Chart will be included in that presentation. April, Ted, and Farley will be part of the subcommittee. The Board is targeting posting the position on November 1. It will be posted on Indeed and Linked In for at least 2 weeks. The tentative start date would be January 2. Leslie will send April all of the job descriptions in word. The first round interviews will be with the review committee, final interviews will be with the full board.

The Board discussed Leslie going hourly on January 1 and working with the new person during the month of January. She can track hours and report those to the Board for Destination Blueprint. Leslie will continue to work with the BID for the year and is the treasurer for CRANE. April suggested Leslie can create a backup of the BID and CRANE files, that can be loaded on a computer at the DC and Leslie can work there or April can set up access to reach the files remotely.

F. 2025 Goals

There will be goals that come from the Destination Blueprint process but we may not have those available for the City Council presentation in November. The two primary goals from the Destination Blueprint application that can be included are to Champion the Value of Tourism and Advance Off-Peak Tourism Opportunities.

The Board again discussed the ADA compliant restroom. There is not enough room to widen the doorway to the visitor restroom with the existing walls to make that restroom compliant. The Board discussed the possibility of remodeling the other restroom in 2025 and possibly having that compliant for the rare occasion that people come in that are confined to a wheelchair. A sink would need to be moved to the back office (if possible) to move the items from that restroom to that office and create a breakroom there.

Staff have sent two text message tests, but we are not sure if everyone has received those messages. Because it is meant as an emergency notification system, we have not had an event requiring the use of the system. With limitations, we would need to send photos through email and use text messages to tell people to check email for more information.

Updating the signs created by the BID in the mid-2000s. The signs were discussed and ways to update them, and not make them so specific, they need to be changed regularly, were discussed.

Other goals include:

Continuing Sustainability efforts with events

Continuing to increase and improve communications. Under Resources on Manitousprings.org, we will add a Board of Directors section which will include the Board contact list, meeting dates, and minutes once they have been approved. This will be open to the public and not just available to members.

Explaining working with the CTO it became clear that Destination Blueprint needed to be our first step and then applying for a grant to create a Destination Management and Marketing Grant would be next.

The Highway 24 monument sign was discussed – Leslie believes there may be grants that we could apply for to help with the cost of the Highway 24 monument sign. This would need to be approved by both CDOT and City Council.

Public restrooms were discussed but are beyond the Chamber capacity to resolve.

The desire to create a stronger Business to Business network was brought up. Challenges with recommending service businesses were discussed. Increasing the membership portion of the budget could be used to increase what the Chamber covers with

Leslie reported the city is going to offer 2 hours free parking from December 14 – December 25. People will still need to go to the kiosk and register their license plates so we can limit the free parking to those two hours. We are working with Madwoman Marketing for our holiday campaign so we will include the parking information in those promotions.

Annie brought up concerns over the submission chosen for the Visitors Guide cover for 2025. There was one painting submitted during the call for art that she did not believe represented Manitou Springs. In the last several years, we have used a painting for the front cover and photo for the back cover of the Visitors Guide. Monica Rozelle sent some of the photos she has taken, but Calee Parker did not believe they were high enough resolution to use for print. We can reopen the Call for Art and see what else comes in. Stanley Rose has a photo that we might be able to negotiate with him to use and move that photo to the front cover. Leslie will forward that image to the Board for review.

Having no additional business before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.