

Visit Manitou Springs

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

March 27, 2025

Present: April Hall, Ted Johnston, Farley McDonough, Annie Schmitt, Angela Wilks, Natalie Johnson, Denise Howell,

Guests: Chris Dwyer, Neale Minch, John Weiss, Andrew Aragon

Staff: Leslie Lewis, Jesse McCoy, Monica Rozelle

A regular meeting of the Visit Manitou Springs Board of Directors was held on Thursday, March 27, 2025, in the upstairs conference room of Venue 515, 515 Manitou Avenue. The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by President April Hall.

A. Introduction & Brief Marketing Update

Jesse McCoy was introduced as the new Marketing Coordinator for Visit Manitou Springs. He reported that the 2025 Visitors Guide is almost completed. He is working on using videos and animation in a new style of advertising, as well as using "Elevate" as a tagline. "Elevate Your Stay", "Elevate Your Dining", "Elevate Your Lodging" etc. He is also completing the Colorado Fun Guide Ad and creating a new full-page ad for Broadmoor Magazine.

B. 2024 Sales Tax Presentation

Neale Minch provided a thorough report of the 2024 Sales Tax by category. "Traditional" (shopping, dining, bars/amusements and lodging) business numbers were collectively flat thanks to lodging and restaurants reporting increased sales. The summer of 2024 wasn't too bad, but Q3 and Q4 were disappointing. Traditional revenue takes up half of all revenue with outside City (Marijuana) and utilities making up the rest. January and February 2025 lodging is currently down significantly from last year with only 28% occupancy and March projections are showing a 35% occupancy rate, which is a 4-year low. Neale explained the lodging occupancy information is received from the small group of properties that participate in our monthly survey. The marijuana sales in Manitou Springs were -10% vs the state of Colorado sales at -8%. Recreational sales in Colorado Springs are allowed to begin in April, which will even more greatly affect Manitou Springs sales. Neale also explained that the "Outside City" includes tax from online purchases coming to Manitou Springs addresses. The retail delivery fee does not come back to Manitou Springs, it stays with the state. The state budget deficit was discussed.

C. City Update

Natalie reported City Council is working on an Incline Management Plan that would connect to the Dillon parking lot so that those coming to just visit downtown businesses have additional space available in the Hiawatha Gardens lot. Creek Walk Phase 4 received historical approval, but the City is holding off until after Labor Day to begin construction with the goal of having most of the traffic impact completed before Coffin Races. The Hiawatha Gardens Parking Lot will not be closed for construction this summer, but it might not be usable during the Coffin Races. Denise would like to have the changes in the Hiawatha Gardens lot completed by next summer. They need to get the construction drawings and design work created first and will do what they can to have the lot available in October if it still meets the completion deadlines.

The City is working with CRANE for a proposal to improve the old Chase Bank property.

The Council budget meeting will be held in May to discuss any needed budget adjustments. This will be in executive session.

Graffiti and vandalism are outrageous in town with over \$35,000 in damages so far in 2025. Everyone was asked to report anything they see.

D. Events Update

Jenna Gallas is out of town, so Leslie reported Wine Festival ticket sales are going well, as are vendor signups. We're reducing the number of tickets available and adding another food vendor because those are the #1 complaints we receive each year. Jenna has increased the ticket price to still reach the same revenue as 2024. There are still sponsorship spaces available.

Our annual Wine Walk is scheduled to take place on April 10th but is questionable due to low ticket sales. Staff will make that decision a week out from the event.

The Event Coordinator position is open. Jenna and April will begin interviewing candidates next week. Denise recommended having Meghan sit in on second interviews.

E. CRANE Update

As mentioned earlier, CRANE is partnering with the city to beautify the old Chase Bank building and extend the "pizza ducks" up the Creek Walk towards Memorial Park. Phase 1 of the Chase Bank building is to paint the outside once the city removes all the bank signage. Phase 2 will look at adding something where the drive through area is.

Action Items:

F. Approval of New Board Member Appointments – Chris Dwyer and Rachel Milar

Annie Schmitt made a motion to approve the appointment of both Chris Dwyer and Rachel Milar to the Board of Directors. Farley McDonough seconded the motion, and it was approved.

G. Approval of February Meeting Minutes

Ted Johnston requested the section of the City Update in the minutes be corrected to reflect the date of the City Council retreat as February 22 instead of March 22. He then made a motion to approve the February meeting minutes with the correction, which was seconded by Angela Wilks. The motion was approved unanimously.

H. Approval of February Financial Statement

There is not a lot of revenue that comes in during February. The special events expense was primarily for the Gumbo Cook-off. The Wine Festival revenue is beginning to come in.

The Visitor's Guide has not gone to print yet. We are waiting on a couple of full-page ads. We are reducing the number of pages in the guide by 8 pages due to lost advertising. Because we are so late in the year, there is a consideration of reducing the number printed to 55,000. Leslie would like to see the guide back on track to print the guide in January. The board discussed tracking how many guides are recycled each year to continue to reduce the number being printed.

With the new parking office being built, and staffed, at the Dillon Parking lot, we would like to put the smaller kiosk in that office for people to be able to get information prior to heading into town. Denise

didn't anticipate that office opening until August or September, there was a recommendation to take the mobile kiosk to the library for use.

There were no additional questions on the Financial Statement. Ted made a motion to approve the Financial Statement as presented. Angela seconded and the motion carried.

I. Approval of New and Renewing Members List

New Members are Holiday Inn Express, Manitou Creative, Pikes Peak Inn, Quantum Fiber Internet, Ride Colorado, and Ritso. The motion to approve the new and renewing members was made by Farley and seconded by Annie. The motion was approved. Ted recommended reaching out to several of the new businesses in Old Colorado City.

New Business

J. City Council Work Session

The work session between Visit Manitou Springs and City Council is set for June 10th. Leslie would like to see City Council have a better understanding of what the Chamber does with the funding we receive from the city (Marketing for Manitou Springs and operating the Visitor Information Center). Jenna has met with a couple of the City Council members already and will continue setting up meetings with additional council members. Ted suggested asking the city council what they think the Chamber does and what they expect from our organization prior to the work session.

The board discussed creating a strategy, beyond presenting the Annual Report, and determining additional goals to discuss with the council in the work session. They also discussed asking Council what else they would like to see from the chamber in the year.

Leslie will reach out to Neale for a report that will show the tax impact from sales tax vs property tax and if possible, the percentage of businesses that are members of the chamber to include in the Annual report.

Old Business

K. Gateway Sign Design

The Highway 24 Gateway Sign is faded and falling apart and should be replaced. Looking at the CDOT regulations, it is a Type 4 sign and doesn't look like the new sign can be installed through access from the highway. The city will need to agree to take care of the landscaping within a certain distance of the sign. There is electricity in that area from the previous sign. The next step is reaching out to CDOT for a preliminary meeting to find out what is possible and then begin looking for design ideas and quotes. City council will have to approve any design and the replacement of the old sign in a resolution for CDOT. Leslie will reach out to set up a meeting with CDOT and with the Sign Company. Farley recommended not approaching the City Council with the sign until after the work session.

L. Board Openings

We still have two board openings. Greg Cobble and Jen Barrow will be approached. April recommended reaching out to Katie Snyder at The Loft Espresso as an option as well.

Having no additional business before the board, Farley made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Angela at 10:41am.