



HUERFANO COUNTY TOURISM BOARD MINUTES

January 10, 2024 at 2:00 PM

La Veta Public Library - 310 S Main St, La Veta, CO 81055

Office: 719-738-3000 ex 200 | Fax: 719-738-3996

Join via Google Meet: <https://meet.google.com/pfy-merc-xoc> | Meeting ID: pfy-merc-xoc

1. CALL TO ORDER

Attendance:

Robert Gilbert

Sarah Jardis

Marilyn Russell

Hannah Ferrari

Stephanie Thompsen

Carl Young (Virtual)

Kim Trujillo (Virtual)

Alex Jessup (Virtual)

Greg Garrett (Virtual)

Bob Kennemer (Virtual)

Brad Reitmair (Virtual)

Called to order at 2:07PM

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. December 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes as compiled by Stephanie & Robert

Motion to approve the minutes by Hannah

Seconded by Greg

Motion passes.

3. BOARD CHAIR ELECTION

Sarah nominated as board chair by Bob, Greg, Stephanie.

Nomination passes, Sarah re-elected as board chair for 2024.

4. FINANCIAL REPORT

a. Updated Fund Statements & Balance Sheet

Down a little over the last year, but still missing a report from the state. \$85,161 vs last year of \$91,092. Sarah reminded of an issue with May's reporting by Travelocity. 11k was plugged back in to mitigate numbers. Down from last year, ahead of budget, still making recovery.

b. Updated Sales & Lodging Tax Trends

This spreadsheet is available in the shared drive for everyone. February, May, August, November are the biggest months.

Kim said Treasurer did not have the final numbers for La Veta, Cuchara for the last several months.

Sarah reminded everyone her reasoning for having the sales tax information – it reflects travel patterns and where people are going. Love's also is inflating Walsenburg's numbers and potentially masking some of the data.

Carl informed the group that the sales tax data is split based on car registrations.

If the Town and the City will share the data it would help. Otherwise there are reports we can try to run and reverse engineer to get the data.

Sarah will come back to it with community conversations.

5. BILL PAYMENT

a. Resolution No. 24-01-TB Payment Authorization for Schuster's Printing & AdPro

Bob made a motion to approve. Greg seconded. All in favor. Motion passes.

6. BOARD AND DIRECTOR UPDATES/REPORTS

a. AdPro Report

For February socials, Stephanie likes the images more this month than in the past. Greg agreed.

Stephanie commented that the drawing post was neat. Alex is following up with an exact posting schedule for the socials.

Stephanie suggest mid-to-tail-end of January for Oso Cold Winterfest.

Alex wants pictures from the kickoff on Friday Feb 2 so that some of those photos can be used.

Alex wants to do a media advisory ahead of time for the Winterfest also.

Sarah: can we use the format of the logo that doesn't have the white background?

Alex: we will do what we can to revise that.

Sarah: should we spotlight the Fox at all?

Stephanie: We did already in terms of the undergoing major renovations.

Sarah: We could do a specific post that is a rehab update but otherwise we should swap it out.

Discussion about whether or not to support the Fox's donation but chose to avoid the appearance of favoritism.

Stephanie: Francisco Fort Days plus two more from the Bachman calendar.

Alex: Team is analyzing the metrics from last year's posts, including what was most popular and why.

Alex: is there anything else on social media?

Stephanie: are we doing reports once a quarter for social media analytics?

Alex: I did pull last month's data but do we want to do it monthly or quarterly?

Sarah: Suggested it be included monthly moving forward.

Stephanie: Referenced last month's report regarding gender trends and how it has shifted to more female engagement.

Marilyn: La Veta Trails is experiencing the same thing.

Alex: Social Media Engagement Report for December

- 3,681 Facebook likes with 754 engagements, 10,059 page impressions
- Top 3 posts: Nunda Canyon (1 @ 1,800 impressions), Hidden Gems in SPC (2 at 1,499 impressions), and Calling All Adventurers (3 at 1,024)
- Followers are 63.6% women and 36.4% men
- By age group, followers are predominantly 65+, 55+, 45+, and 35+ - 25-34 age range is the 5th highest and lags more than 50% behind 65+.
- Instagram is a lesser presence. 1358 accounts reached, 335 accounts engaged. Top content 12/14 @ 106 engagement, 12/22 @ 99, 12/29 @ 79

Alex: CTO Leads from 6/1/23-12/28/23

- +2000 leads, top states Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Illinois
- Alex's team will investigate global leads to determine if authentic or junk

Stephanie: Total snow counts at the end of February/beginning of March would be good posts.

Sarah: Ski bus is active at CMP also. Snowmaking at CMP might be a good post also.

Sarah: Does PSC have a mountain cam?

Alex: I can confirm if there's a mountain cam.

Stephanie: Real Estate Office – Jimbo's – has a mountain cam that could be posted.

Sarah: I had a conversation with Seth from Open Snow that they'd share if there's a mountain cam. I'll share if that opens.

Sarah: Do these numbers include paid FB or are these organic?

Alex: No, no paid ads as of yet. I believe we discussed doing this in February.

Sarah: Google as well?

Alex: Yes, but I think this is more effective to do after the new website launches.

Sarah: I went back and looked at our previous reporting from VistaWorks. Something like 50k contacts in that mailchimp account.

Stephanie: Is there a way to funnel through if the VistaWorks list was a lot of spam?

Alex: We have drafts of newsletters for Jan and Feb we will send to you. Since we haven't had that in a while, we will look through the list and clean-up spam contacts in post-deployment.

Alex: HTOUR Suggested 2024 Public Relations Plan

Jan – winter trails press release – Amy talked to Bob for easy, moderate, difficult trails, send this to outdoorsy publications or ‘things to do in the winter’ sections.

Discussion about trails that are easy, moderate, difficult – La Veta has an infographic that covers this information for La Veta Trails, which includes weather-related information.

Sarah: discussed how including snow count totals, this type of information, plays into Front Range tourism and segments of information people that people are searching.

Discussion around Huerfano Peak and whether or not to include it because it is very difficult and inaccessible.

Alex will send over this press release to review.

Alex: Publication looking for spring break leads/ideas. Can we talk about spring break lodging and if any our partners can do anything with it?

Sarah: Let’s send CTO calls for opportunities such as spring break packages to Robert so he can disseminate with Brad and other area partners to capitalize as much as possible and get used to the cadence throughout the year.

Alex: Discussed plans for publications throughout the year.

Sarah: Do we need to have lead time on these to get into publications at those times?

Alex: Yes we do.

Sarah: Please send newsletter review to Robert and I.

Brad: Oso had a lot of pre-planning without a lot of community input. I was hired in November and am trying to get something together for it. 2 ice sculptures in Trinidad, 2 in Huerfano. One Huerfano sculpture will go to Miner’s Park, and the other will go to CMP. Mentioned the pancake breakfast at the golf course on Sunday morning following the event also.

Sarah: Happy to help with a survey afterwards also to help determine how effective the festival was.

Brad: Thank you.

Sarah: Will they have the audio stories live before the festival?

Brad: Yes, they will.

Sarah: Keep us posted so we can have Alex promote them.

Alex and Brad will work together on festival coverage.

b. Website Redesign Review, update from Sarah

Sarah will now step in at Stephanie’s request to communicate with Brian/Vistaworks throughout the remainder of the website process. Bob/Greg put in additional notes on the spreadsheet. Sarah will source an update from Brian ASAP.

7. PARTNER REPORTS

Marilyn Russell: Will there be a visitor’s center hosted by the HCED or Tourism? *Passed out paper copies of Spanish Peaks Region 2023 guide, plus new address information for the guide.

Marilyn: Was the visitor’s center [La Veta] ever open?

Sarah/Stephanie confirmed it was open limited hours and when not open, there was a sign directing people to the Francisco Fort Museum.

Marilyn: Who should I follow up with for guide updates/visitor’s center in La Veta?

Sarah: Sue Hanneman or Bradley Reitmair.

Sarah: Walsenburg City Council meeting last week talked about having a visitor's center at the train depot in Walsenburg. I met with Interim City Administrator and deputy clerk and they supported the visitor's center. It would be the west side of the building, needing utility consideration. Suggested to Brad that he and Carlton work with Sharon (Interim City Administrator).

Sarah: I'm not sure this actually answers your question Marilyn.

Funding for staffing the visitor's center was discussed. Tourism Board specifically only provided financial help, but not planning or staffing assistance. 2024 HCTB included line item for supporting Walsenburg as well as La Veta.

Marilyn will follow up with Susan. Brad will have some office hours at the visitor's center also to help cover the hours. Carlton will do the same thing.

Sarah: Terry Patrick with Spark the Change, Tom Lopez with Colorado Workforce, maybe can help get staffing. Kiosks for days they aren't open as well. In Walsenburg it could direct to MOF/Mining Museum.

Marilyn: HC Chamber of Commerce should go on to the Spanish Peaks Region guide now too.

Sarah to Brad: Should we direct traffic only to SPC or split?

Brad: Let's direct to SPC because we're still developing.

Marilyn: Organize visitor's information perhaps with a chart for what days what centers are open and where.

Sarah: Every visitor's center in the guide could have a QR code that takes people to current data.

Cuchara Mercantile, Lathrop open year-round.

Stacy Cristelli: visitor's center at health center, chairs/tables/lobby, can have information there at the front desk, admin, etc.

Marilyn: Kiosk column for anytime.

Sarah: The café at SPRHC is open to the public correct?

Stacy: It is and that's why we put the guides there. We are staffed 24/7 and admin staff is there until 7PM.

Marilyn will connect with Stacy.

Sarah: Great to partner with the hospital staff.

Stacy: There are volunteers and the gift shop and different people who are waiting who are milling about as well.

Stephanie: Perhaps organize visitor resources by different areas.

Marilyn: We've also delivered guides to Alamosa and Trinidad welcome centers, but Colorado City does not let them stay there.

Sarah asked for additional locations: Ft. Morgan, Taos, La Junta, Kansas were suggested.

Sarah: Marilyn's publication isn't until April. Let's work on compiling a list of official welcome centers and other target locations as well as a list of guides themselves.

Marilyn: Buena Vista Chamber.

Sarah: Brad, when you communicate with other chambers, can you ask about cooperative kiosks to share guides?

Brad: We could put some at a brochure holder at the Wheelhouse.

Budget for La Veta Trails guide is for 10k units in the new printing.

8. OLD BUSINESS

a. Gravel Adventure Field Guide May 4th, 2024 Launch Party Social Ride

Deferred to February for additional discussion.

b. La Veta Short-Term Rental Update

9. NEW BUSINESS

a. Strategic Planning Meeting for 2024

Sarah: Target for 2024 should be a back to basics year and doing a better job of building relationships with our lodging partners. Does the board have any additional feedback?

Bob: I like the idea of building stronger relationships and community engagement and stronger connections with the lodging partners.

Stephanie: Gravel Guide was a huge project with minimal execution for launch. I understand we have something in May. I think we should push the guide more, socially or otherwise.

General agreement.

Hannah: Back to basics and communication is good. Tourism-based business perspective is that everything is muddy and you forget/find it confusing. It isn't simple. Perhaps go in person to an event to talk about some of it.

General agreement.

Stephanie: I understand that the newsletter will start again. Does it include elements like: What have we accomplished? What did we do in the past month? How do we show what we did?

Sarah: Newsletter focus is more for visitors, but I'd think it accomplishes what you're saying if it has local folks receiving it as well.

Carl: Fold some communication to the locals into a County letter.

Stephanie: Our goal is to communicate with those outside, not so much those inside, so this would help.

Greg: I think we also need to be looking at what our next big thing project is. Are people coming here because of the audio tours or is it a cool thing to do when they're here? Gravel guide is cool. I'd like to see us do something big/out of the box to bring people in.

Sarah: Are you thinking event or different marketing/approach?

Greg: More like the Trolls. Musical Road. Wind sculpture that plays music when the wind blows. Something unique.

Sarah: Gravel Guide includes 2 years of supportive marketing. The launch ride in May is their event but they'll need some help from us on the ground. Guides have a big part of their distribution in the state, New Mexico, and Texas.

Sarah: Building better relationships with the shareholders locally will potentially open up an ability to data-share even in aggregate to benefit all of us.

Hannah, Stephanie, Sarah discussed lodging trends and data – number of bookings, how much in advance, data from previous years. Example: La Veta due to inn and golf course.

Sarah: brainstorm a few specific data points to request and share it with shareholders, in return we'll share lodging tax numbers.

Sarah: correlate all the data together, also provide visitors' centers information. Let's work on an idea of what we'd like to share and what we'd like to ask for from the shareholders and communicate more about this in February's meeting.

Stephanie commented about being open year-round and how businesses debate whether or not they can stay open or if they'll lose money to stay open.

Hannah: You can't stay open year-round if others don't stay open year-round.

Sarah: do we invite restaurant and retail?

Stephanie: Yes, broadly. Ask for peak months.

Sarah: We can also ask if they had anything anomalous.

Stacy: Discussed the hospital as a hub – people receiving treatment ask where to go to eat, drink, etc. Also, out-of-state applicants for their jobs and talking people into moving out here and what there is to do in Huerfano, and how the hospital wants to support growth in Huerfano.

Sarah: mentioned medical tourism in Vail and how it's definitely a driver.

Stacy talked about destination for surgery – come, stay for the procedure, recreate whilst here.

Stephanie will be out through March for maternity leave.

Sarah: regarding next big thing – world rally championships, ride the Rockies, events are happening around us that move around, should we be trying to reach out to those events and get on their radar.

Greg: Race Across America

Steamboat has their sales/lodging tax only to the city and not to the County so they don't see the impact.

Sarah: let's brainstorm the events that we don't necessarily have to do something for, but we can capitalize on them passing through or being nearby. And if there are ones we can solicit to come here.

Kim: Ride the Rockies was in the 90s and we could reach out again – could they do Highway of Legends?

Stephanie: Money to do an ad in a popular magazine?

General assent.

Geology, stargazing, cycling guides.

Ads and opportunities for PR and articles/journalist attention.

Sarah: work on compiling list of print publications under different subcategories – fishing, hunting, geology, stargazing, cycling, 4x4, geography (front range, calendars for kid-friendly stuff).

Sarah/Stephanie: ask adpro to help with the list.

Discussed PR, organic and paid social metrics, general communication for what we want out of our marketing focus.

Focus on Formatting and Functionality for the website. AdPro can do content.

For the hiking page, put in boots, hats, side profile, dog photos, some of the hunting ones. This can help cover the hiking trail tiles on the website.

Sarah – Ideas: Highway of Legends is being designated as an Electric Highway. Revisit a conversation regarding Be Legendary, Where Legends Roam, previous campaigns etc.

Pueblo bridal show is coming up, let our partners know about that.

Bridal page for website and where you can have weddings.

Hannah gets many inquiries for weddings and will work on putting together some resources for that.

Sarah: perhaps go to shows in Pueblo and Denver to determine vendors willing to travel down here.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 4:33PM

11. UPCOMING MEETINGS

- a. Wednesday, February 14th, 3PM-5PM, Huerfano County Courthouse BOCC Room, Walsenburg