

**VISIT COLORADO SPRINGS (VCOS)  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
Tuesday, February 21, 2023**

**Minutes**

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Pepper Dombroski, Chair	Scott Marble
Susan Davies, Past Chair	Wendy McHenry
Dave Harris, Treasurer	Brooke Mikulas
Becky Leinweber, Secretary	Lisa Neener
Herman Crawford (via phone)	Greg Phillips
Kristina Coggins Heck	Johnna Reeder Kleymeyer
Andie Doyle (via phone)	Jenny Sherman
Gus Krimm	Andrew Stegen
Crystal LaTier	Tom Strand
Megan Leatham	

**Board Members Absent:**

None

**VCOS Staff:**

Doug Price	Peggy Manter
Jason Cutshaw	Amy Long
Kathy Reak	Christy Long
Melissa Williams	

**Meeting called to order at 8:05 a.m.**

**CHAIR'S WELCOME – Pepper Dombroski**

- Pepper welcomed everyone and requested a motion to approve the minutes from the January 17 meeting. Motion was made by *Susan Davies and seconded by Megan Leatham, and the motion was approved unanimously to accept the December 6, 2022, board minutes as presented.*
- Committee assignments: Lisa Neener is the new chair of the Marketing Committee and Kristina Coggins Heck is the new chair of the Partnership Committee. Pepper thanked them for serving. She asked any other members interested in joining a committee to let her know.
- Pepper updated the board on the Board Leadership Symposium she and Doug attended in Dallas. She thanked Peggy for assisting in navigating the travel in the ice storm. She said it was a great opportunity and thanked the board for allowing them to attend. There were CVBs from across the country and ironically, due to weather, the Dallas CVB had to rely on zoom to attend. She also pointed out that the best practices they spoke of are those VisitCOS already has in place and that the DMAP accreditation is key to providing checks and balances across the organization. She also pointed out that Doug is a true leader in the industry and that he is an ambassador and can connect with everyone.
- Based on an exercise learned at the symposium, she asked the board to work in groups of 3 for one minute develop an “elevator pitch” for VCOS and what we work to accomplish. In sum, we

promote economic vitality to the region via tourism which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest economic driver in Colorado. We are brand ambassadors for the region, we bring today's visitor and tomorrow's talent. We enrich the lives of our residents with tourism dollars. She also asked them to consider the economic impact and how we can demonstrate that residents are enriched. Her example was how the Broadmoor's checks state "this payment made possible by tourism dollars." The members then spoke of promoting other businesses, promotion to residents as well as visitors, reaching out with the message from the time their plane lands until they are departing.

- Pepper then wrapped up, thanking the board again. Doug reported that Pepper met many people and that while they might not have known her, they knew "The Broadmoor." Tom Strand congratulated her on the hotel again receiving a 5 Star rating. Pepper told the board that the Penrose Room future is being contemplated, and that they will have 18 restaurants open this year, including 1858 at Seven Falls.

#### **President/CEO Update – Doug Price, President/CEO**

- Andie Doyle provided an update of the USOPM CEO search. She said they were down to 2 candidates. They hope to make a final decision soon. Doug reported that VCOS donated \$500.00 to the John Suthers Scholarship fund at UCCS and that both the mayor and his wife, Janet, will speak at the Annual Business Meeting next month. The invite to the meeting will include the link for the fund.
- Regarding advocacy, Doug reported that the resolution to oppose HB-23-1118 was approved by the board via mail vote. Johnna told the board that the impact of the bill will be felt by all businesses and that if passed, it would be the worst such bill in the country. She said there are 60 business sectors that would suffer, and even small and medium size businesses would be impacted if they are part of a larger organization such as franchises. She encouraged Visit COS to mobilize partners and get them to call in or attend the meetings on the bill so their voices are heard. Susan Davies talked about the TOPS ballot item. TOPS has been in existence for 25 years, and it has funded a myriad of improvements and purchases of open space. From the bathrooms in Garden of the Gods Park and the development of other parks to trail construction and maintenance, the TOPS funding has benefitted residents and visitors alike. At a cost of \$14.00 per resident per year, it is a bargain! She also pointed out that visitors also support TOPS, 1 penny on every \$10.00 they spend on shopping and dining goes to TOPS. There is no increase in the ballot issue, it is simply an extension of the tax for 25 years. Doug said that he wanted to support the bill as a Board and asked for a motion to approve a resolution of support for the TOPS extension. Motion was made by **Becky Leinweber and seconded by Brooke Mikulas, and the motion was approved unanimously to issue a resolution in support of the TOPS extension.**
- Tom Strand needed to get to another meeting, and he let the board know that a new CEO for CSU will be named tomorrow. He also said City Council is dealing with some issues that were inflaming the public and that both the study on the East - West changes to Constitution Ave and the proposed housing at Highway 24 and Garden of the Gods were generating a lot of controversy.

#### **Finance Committee Update – Dave Harris, Board Treasurer**

- Dave told the board that the committee had reviewed all data, the investment accounts, aging report, balance sheets as well as all credit card charges and expense reports. The Xledger implementation is going well and preparations for audit are moving along.

### **Chief Financial Officer Update – Presented by Jason Cutshaw, Chief Financial Officer**

- Jason reviewed the documents sent in the packet, and he told the board that we were on track with all items. He pointed out the city contract is now in equal monthly payments.
- Jason pointed out that the operating fund was up 15K and it is the more secure program. The opportunity fund is down with the market, but there has been an upward trend in January. Dave and Jason have discussed short term CDs and plan to take advantage of those in June.
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### **Diversity and Inclusion Committee Update – Jenny Sherman, Board and Committee member**

- Jenny said the committee just had their first 2023 meeting, and they are figuring out their best impact lane. They are working on a statement on what their place and role is and hope to have it completed soon. She said it had been a difficult but meaningful process, and she feels it is a great group with a commitment to getting it right.

### **Marketing Committee Update – Melissa Williams, Director of Marketing**

- Melissa said the Marketing Committee just had its first 2023 meeting and had surprisingly good attendance, even with the bad weather. She started with the communications update and told the board that they are featuring four local influencers, one per quarter, and are focusing on disability awareness/accessibility, family adventures, responsible recreation and the foodie scene. They will also highlight diversity and year-round activities. She said they had done a lot around Plan your Vacation Day.
- Regarding our podcast, there are two versions: *Peak into COS* (Doug interviews one or two Visit COS partners) and *Peak Into Our Week* which is with different staffers. They completed one with Jason on his favorite winter activities and will do more episodes with other staff as well. The *Peak into COS* has soon-to-be-released podcasts with Jim Wear of the Motorcycle Museum, Sallie and Welling Clark of Holden House and Liz Blakely of Uva Wine Bar. The 20 podcasts have 2,043 downloads so far.
- She said we are working again with Sam Hines and Lindsay Ross (formally with Design Rangers) on our core advertising campaigns. Ink & Bone (Laura Tiller) and Mark McMullen will do freelance work on the Crafts & Drafts campaign and other one-off projects and advertising production.
- She gave some stats on the 2022 advertising campaigns (83.8 million impressions, 5.8 million video views, 0.35% CTR, 292,831 clicks) and listed the 2023 campaigns. With the 400K ARPA grant for meetings and events Orange 142 won the bid process to buy digital and print media. The 2023 Official Vacation Planner has been printed and delivered. Work on the 2024 edition starts soon. The DSG is next in the pipeline and there will be electronic and printed versions. They are working on the upcoming Annual Business Meeting and the Tourism Awards Celebration in October.
- Amy and Melissa then gave an update on the website how the repairs are proceeding. She said the new site launched April 1, 2022 and while a dip is expected to occur, what we experienced was too deep of a dip and it went on for too long. Once we identified the issues that were causing the problems and addressed them with Tempest, we have been slowly inching towards recovery. Seasonal trends of performance remained consistent between 2021 and 2022, but total traffic in 2022 was down 26% and organic was down 34%.
- Given our website is cyclical in nature, comparing one month to the previous isn't a good measurement for recovery so instead we looked at recovery on a quarter-to-quarter basis, giving a more holistic comparison and we need a little more time for the first quarter to close before we have all the data. Tempest has waived charges to the tune of \$30,000.00 and are adding additional content services valued at \$70,000 at no cost for the rest of the year.

- Knowing the Things to Do was at the root of the problem, our staff and Tempest worked to organize, optimize and update this section to increase search ranking and overall traffic to these pages. The changes took effect Jan 26, and since then we are up 15% over the previous 3 weeks. Scott asked if the repairs were all done and Amy said yes, and they are monitoring it closely. Pepper pointed out we still vary from day to day as #1 and #2 ranking with TripAdvisor.
- Melissa said they will continue to monitor closely – checking daily for big issues, weekly to watch for trends. They will continue to optimize pages and add more content and drive as much traffic to the site as possible. Her team has started a SEO RFP and is identifying potential vendors. We will issue RFP if improvement is not to our standard by end of May/early June. Melissa also pointed out that the 4<sup>th</sup> generation Google will launch July 1, 2023, and reporting structures will change, for the better.

#### Wrap Up – Pepper Dombroski

- Pepper asked each board member to give a quick update on their organization.
- Doug reminded everyone that ballots will be mailed to registered voters on March 10.
- Pepper adjourned the meeting at 9:39 a.m. The next meeting is March 21, 2023.

Submitted:



Peggy Menter  
Executive Assistant

Verified:



Becky Leinweber  
Board Secretary