MARKETING & COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE MEETING:

August 6, 2026

IN ATTENDANCE:

Doug Price, VCOS
Melissa Williams, VCOS
Alexea Veneracion, VCOS
Lindsay Cluckey, VCOS
Sheridan Powell, VCOS
Kate Hertz, VCOS
Reed Tafel, VCOS
Lanna Searle, VCOS
Devin Wood, COS Airport
Aidan Ryan, COS Airport
Mackenzie Carder, Pikes Peak – America's Mountain
Annie Rosack, U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum
Sierra Moon, Orange142
Joe Hollmann, City of Colorado Springs
Kelsee Swenn, Downtown Partnership
Kristen Cannon, Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation
Jonathan Toman, Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region
Gabby, Garden of the Gods Resort
Bria Yatsko, Norwood Development Group
Vivienne Downing, Norwood Development Group
Torie Giffin, Buffalo Lodge Bicycle Resort

I. NEW & EXCITING UPDATES:

MEDIA & INFLUENCER VISITS

- COMPLETED
  - Gwyn & Ami, LGBTQ+ travel
  - Kwasi Hope, History & heritage travel
  - Monica Villa, Allegiant nonstop route (Santa Ana/OC) > Flying Horse Resort collaboration
  - Cory Lee, Accessible travel (CTO collaboration)
  - Media FAM & Tamara Gane (freelancer) > Hotel Polaris collaboration
  - Coverage highlight > BBC Travel for 250 / 150
- UPCOMING PRIORITIES:
  - Bridget Beck and family, Allegiant nonstop route (Tampa)

PEAK INTO COS PODCAST

- RECENT
  - Ruth Thurston and Michael Amidei | Flying W Ranch
  - Eliza and John Hill | Sherwood Showdown
  - Nathan Richie | 250/150
- UPCOMING

- Labor Day Lift Off
- The Outrider Hotel

KATE'S CONTENT SPECIALIZATION SPACE

- RECENT
  - **Did You Know with Doris** – Special guest (Dennis the Emu) featured for the 10th episode
  - **Instagram Carousels** – The algorithm is starting to give more love to collections of images again, a great opportunity to include a lot of partners at once
- UPCOMING
  - A more community-focused approach to I Love Colorado Springs Facebook page
    - Fostering local pride without it directly coming from the DMO
    - Community-focused stories, feel-good news, highlight good things happening in and around the Springs

ITINERARIES HUB

- **What:** Hub of detailed itineraries, organized by various user search categories
- **Purpose:** Inspire longer stays; encourage more overnight visitation; showcase how "you can't do it all in a weekend"
- **Features:** Starting with 20+ itineraries; will be able to add more; trained Guide Geek AI chatbot to refer to hub and itineraries for related user questions, mix & match capabilities, customization, etc.
- **VisitCOS.com/itineraries**
- Aiming to increase visitation beyond the average 2.6 day stay

MISSION2MARKET – Music tourism strategy

GOAL: Leverage our music infrastructure to create a unified strategy, stakeholder coalition, and public champion of music tourism in COS; ties into Destination Masterplan

TIMELINE

1. Project kickoff & discovery – *complete*
2. Research & benchmarking – *complete*
   - National benchmarks – Nashville, Austin, Memphis, etc.
   - Colorado Context – make sure COS is complementary, not duplicative
   - Visitor demand analysis
   - Economic context
   - Digital footprint scan – How are we showing up?
3. Stakeholder engagement – *in progress*
   - Recruit, interview, hold workshops, engagement
4. Surveys – *August – September*
   - Residents, stakeholders & visitors
5. Strategy Development & Marketing Opportunities – *September – October*
6. Plan Delivery, Activation & Champions – *October*

Looking to also fill that content gap around live music that has already been identified as an area of improvement.

2026 CAMPAIGNS:

Wrapped Campaigns:

1. CRAFTS & DRAFTS
   - Choose your character & video game theme
   - Each with an inventory box and fun nods to nostalgic 8-bit games
   - Archetypes including coffee connoisseur, beer fanatic, wine lover and cocktail enthusiast
   - Encouraging folks to patron our craft beverage establishments
   - Placed across Meta and Instream (Roku, Samsung, Vizio, Scripps, Direct TV, LG_Apps, and Tubi: Free Movies & TV.)
   - Targeting 21–55–year–olds across the Front Range, interested in summer activities, craft beer, wine, spirits, etc
   - The paid campaign has wrapped, but the passport will be available until the end of the year. We'll still do periodic pushes through our organic channels.
     - **Impressions:** 1,698,313
     - **Clicks:** 6,910
     - **CTR:** 0.41%
     - **Video Views:** 169,974
     - **So far…**
       - 2,541 sign-ups
       - 1,445 check-ins
       - 1,266 redemptions
       - 35 shirts claimed
       - 50 stickers claimed

Q: Is there any part of this campaign that emphasizes NA options?

A: We do have coffee shops and other options like Milkshakes, but we would absolutely love to include more NA options. We're also open to suggestions!

2. **DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP –** ends on 9/30
   - New for this year, targeting locals and visitors
   - Uses language to promote visitors and locals alike to take care of the region
3. **FALL LEISURE** – ends on 9/30
   - Marketing our beautiful fall weather and activities

Remaining campaigns for the year:

- Arts Month
- Winter

WEBSITE ATTRIBUTION

- We look at a 90-day attribution window (Jan-March) to allow for visitors to show up in market
- Benchmark is being far exceeded
- Across the board taking about ~43 days from exposure to showing up
- Will be able to show more numbers confidently at the end of the year once all the data is in and cleaned up

Attribution Impact

- YTD through March – influenced 3.29K visits and $1.29M direct influenced spending
- Going to work on creating a webinar with Tourism Economics for partners/board to better articulate the data and show case study for partner referrals.

Q: Can we use this to make changes in what we're doing / how long does it take?

A: Distilled down, we can see what messages or content are hitting with which markets. We take everything together and use that to make informed decisions more or less in real time (what content people are engaging with, data we get from attribution/points of interest audience is visiting, etc) and/or YOY (getting the full picture of how a campaign performed with other data we collect – attribution, clicks, content that performed the best, etc)

WEBSITE NUMBERS

- AI overviews is changing how users interact with search - website metrics are being heavily impacted
- In general, over half of all searches end without a click
- We are not dipping lower than before, but we are not seeing the climb and recovery that we initially thought we were due to the weeding out bots that were coming from direct traffic
- Working to get AI tools to direct people back to our website
    - People who click to our website through AI overview are very engaged
- We are still holding on to SEO practices – those need to stay the primary driver of how we develop content
- Making sure our content is ready for AI to crawl
- Seeing more visibility in Google AI
- Working collaboratively with organic SEO and our paid side to make sure both work to benefit the greater health of the website

Q: Biggest dip looks like it's in partner referrals; what does that mean?

A: This is due to the dip in overall traffic – when all site traffic is down, that will have ripple effects that cause referrals also to be down.

- Tourism Economics did a case study on us where we saw that although partner referrals are down YOY, the people who click are more engaged. Looking into perhaps having a webinar to go over these findings.

TRAFFIC FROM LLMS

- That's the really engaged audience
- Benchmark is higher – aiming for 2.5-3%

- All pages January through March are at 5.32%

NEW SALES DIRECTION

- Goal: Standing out among the noise – what sets us apart?
  - Access/proximity to nature
  - Inspiring scenic beauty with a little fun

ATTENDEE'S GUIDE TO COS

- New landing page
  - Highlights "terminal to trails" language and promotes Fly COS
  - Showcases itinerary-based content, events, nightlife, food & drink, etc.
  - Encourages more "come early, stay late" mentality & to bring family members along
  - Connects attendees with the area's savings passes and deals/discounts
- Will be sent by our sales team to confirmed groups > VisitCOS.com/an-attendees-guide-to-cos/

DIGITAL PASSES
The Wellness Pass

- Year-round with periodic social highlights of each participating business (launched in February)
- Over 1,200 sign-ups to date (great for a first-year pass) and 73 redemptions
- Sign up at VisitCOS.com/wellness

Crafts & Drafts

- Running through the end of the year with an 8-bit video game style
- Over 2,500 sign-ups and more than 2,815 redemptions – the people who are using it are using it repeatedly
- Sign up at VisitCOS.com/passport

COS Culture Pass

- In collaboration with the CSPM, this pass commemorates America 250 | CO150
- Quiz-style pass that highlights our 5 pillars:
  - Founders & early days
  - Military, Industry and Aviation
  - Natural Wonders
  - Sports & Wellness
  - Western & Gold Rush
- Users who check in at 5 locations by Labor Day are entered to win a grand prize experience package
  - VIP guided tour for a family of up to 4 at the Colorado Springs Pioneer Museum
  - General admission for a family of up to 4 at the Space Foundation Discovery Center

    - Pikes Peak – America's Mountain admission for one vehicle
    - General admission for a family of up to 4 at the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum
    - Admission for a family of up to 4 at Flying W Ranch
- Live now – end of the year
- 271 sign-ups with 55 check-ins
- Sign up at VisitCOS.com/history

II. COMING SOON—WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

WEBSITE REDESIGN
Information Architecture

- New navigation approved
    - New hubs: passes, live music, will be moving meetings and groups to a higher visibility spot
- Currently reviewing the final list of page migrations

Design Direction – reviewing on Aug 11
Timeline

- October – December: Content migration & CRM integration
- December – January: Review & training
- February 2027: Launch

STEWARDSHIP TOOLKIT
TOOLKITS THAT INSPIRE

- **VCOS Partners:** What stories can we tell? How can we reach more visitors?
- **Meeting Planners:** How can we give back to the community? Can we plan zero waste events?
- **Visitors:** How can we take care of COS like the community does?

Steward COS: Using the word "steward" to inform about all aspects of stewardship instead of shying away from using it

BRAND ANTHEM VIDEO

- Rough cut came in last week, gave feedback, production company is integrating now
- Private screening for models and partners who helped.
- Ashley Cornelius wrote a full-length poem to guide this video
- Coming soon!

CEO SEARCH – *In progress*
Working with Searchwide Global

- **Previously**
    - 50+ stakeholder interviews > board members, community members, tourism partners, staff members
- **Next**
    - Video interviews with top 6 candidates

- In-person interviews with final candidates

Hope to have the new CEO in place in November

III. UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Partner Mixer** – AUG 12
  - 5:30-7:30pm
  - Cheyenne Mountain Zoo
- **Partner Academy –** SEP 16
  - 2-3:30pm
  - Location TBD
- **Tourism Master Class –** OCT 14
  - 2-3:30pm
  - VCOS Office
- **VisitCOS Tourism Awards Celebration** - Cheers to the Years – NOV 10
  - Coming soon!

IV. MEMBER UPDATES

Pikes Peak – America's Mountain

- Shuttle services switch to weekends august 9; stopping after Labor Day
- Kayak and Paddleboards available for rental at Crystal Lake
- New website launches Tuesday; more accessible and easier to use
- Ranger Talks To Go
- New Guinness World Record – Most Donuts Dunked Simultaneously

Pikes Peak Outdoors

- Sep 13 - Hoedown, live music, line dancing
- Awards nominations end tomorrow
- Save date for Jan 28 for State of the Outdoors

Cultural Office

- October is arts month!
- Artsoctober.com has all the details
- Sept/Oct - Cultural Office is celebrating 20th anniversary

Norwood

- Meanwhile Block: 120 events booked this year
- Country line dancing every Monday from 5pm-10pm
- Farm & Art market has moved to the food truck lot on Sierra Madre and Cimarron
- The Garden Brothers Nuclear Circus is coming this year! Aug 10-17
- Parade of Homes begins on Sept 11 throughout september

Buffalo Lodge

- Podcast: Pedal the Springs – 50th show this month
- Sept 12: Rampart Rager gravel race; over 30% came from out-of-town last year
- October: Buffalograss music festival
- Crushed July
    - Lodging was down, but concerts and other revenue put it over the top and best month ever

COS Airport

- Last week team from Allegiant came on a tour; great rapport building
- Upcoming visit with Southwest
- Building cases for new routes and maybe a new airline
- Gearing up for a busy fall
- The "travel easy" messaging refresh is going well.
- Rebranding from small airport to travel easy – make sure any partners are also switching this messaging
- New art rotations to celebrate Colorado 150
- Launcing LART campaign soon
- Working on adding Spanish translation to airport kiosks – will touch base with VCOS

Downtown Partnership

- Starting Aug 14: Weenies and Tinis is coming back
    - 2 weeks, 10 restaurants
    - New themed bar crawl coming in October

The City

- Data centers going through council on Sep 15
- Council will vote on using rec marijuana dollars to create security for the S Nevada / Creekwalk area
    - Ensure PD resources are going to higher acuity calls
- Great turnout to United We Rock at Rock Ledge
    - Raised about $50k for Rock Ledge Ranch Living History program
- 150 Table initiative going through September with Hey Neighbor
- Park and Enterprise launched a campaign to push people more towards our parking garages
- Park side: Confirmed the emerald ash beetle is here – fyi will be working on trying to get rid of those beetles
- Wild Horse Ranch out east was just acquired > 1,000 acres that will be preserved as open space
- Blodgett Peak just finished expansion

GOG Resort

- Redesigning website; launch soon
- New tech in guest rooms by end of year
- Working on a brand book/brand voice repositioning