MARKETING & COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE MEETING:

October 1, 2026

IN ATTENDANCE:

Doug Price, VCOS
Melissa Williams, VCOS
Alexea Veneracion, VCOS
Sheridan Powell, VCOS
Kate Hertz, VCOS
Reed Tafel, VCOS
PK McPherson, PPRA
Kelsee Swenn, Downtown Partnership
Johanna Blickenstaff (?), Colorado College
Torie Giffin, Buffalo Lodge Bicycle Resort
Annie Rosack, U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum
Brenton Maddox, Orange142
Bria Yatsko, Norwood Development Group
Aidan Ryan, COS Airport
Joe Hollmann, City of Colorado Springs
Sara O'Brien, The Broadmoor

I. NEW & EXCITING UPDATES:

WELCOME, SEAN DIXON

Incoming VCOS President & CEO

- Start date: Oct 19
- President at Visit Topeka (6 years)
- Marketing Director, Springfield CVB (10 years)

MEDIA & INFLUENCER VISITS

COMPLETED

- Influencers
  - Bridget Beck and family, Allegiant nonstop route (Tampa)
- In the news
  - New CEO announcement (The Gazette, Southern Colorado Business Forum & Digest, Sports Travel Magazine)
  - MICHELIN recognitions (Fox 21, KOAA, KRDO)

UPCOMING PRIORITIES:

- Influencers
  - Kwasi Hope, continued roll out of history content
  - Exploring one or two last local collabs for winter
- In the news
  - Pitching fall/winter itineraries and events; what's coming in 2027

PEAK INTO COS PODCAST

- RECENT
  - Brianna Goodwin and Amanda Rhea Warren | Labor Day Liftoff
  - Jordan Malara | Outrider Hotel
  - Peak Into Our Week | Itineraries Hub
- UPCOMING
  - Pure Distilling
  - RAD Hostel

KATE'S CONTENT SPECIALIZATION SPACE

- RECENT
  - **Voiceovers –** videos with "influencer-style" voiceover scripts (ex: "Come with us to try _____") consistently outperform others in engagement
- UPCOMING
  - Did You Know With Doris: Arts Month Edition! (4 episodes)
  - A change to the Tourism Takeover Tuesday program
  - Inspiration from Content Marketing World

Q: What's content marketing world?
A: Content Marketing conference not specific to the tourism industry. In Denver this year.

BRAND ANTHEM VIDEO: https://youtu.be/y3JmCukBtds?si=femuE4VUislkcW2Y

GOV CON AWARD!

Pikes Peak Neighborhoods Project

- Winner for "Best Large Budget Campaign" at the Colorado Governor's Tourism Conference
- Landing page > VisitCOS.com/areas

2026 CAMPAIGNS:

Wrapped Campaigns:

DESTINATION STEWARDSHIP

- **Impressions:** 3,220,645
- **Clicks:** 133,673
- **CTR:** 1.05%
- **Video Views:** 173,548

We had to wrap this early—this had really positive sentiment when launched, but that shifted once news about Project Taurus started picking up. The message began to feel inauthentic to our audience, and we were receiving a lot of negative comments. With the help of Orange142, we made the difficult decision to pull it. We did not restart it because we did not want it to do a disservice to the work. We are going to relaunch/potentially reuse this creative next year. We want to let the dust settle, and we also want to work on finding a way to distinguish ourselves as an organization, separate from the city. The work does not stop with the ad campaign!

Q: Is this on the website? With comments off?
A: The ads are off entirely. We did not want to just turn off comments because we did not want our

community to feel like we were silencing them. We felt like this was the best course of action for now. We are, however, continuing to do the work on the ground. Taking it day by day, the work isn't stopping because the ads are.

There are things that can happen out of our control, and taking things down is a strategy that we use.

We are reallocating those dollars to our winter campaign.

FALL LEISURE

- **Impressions:** 22,222,376
- **Clicks:** 103,449
- **CTR:** 0.47%
- **Video Views:** 5,981,882

Attribution data will be mature on 12/30

Don't have visitation data yet, the campaign was pretty straightforward.

Other Campaigns:

ARTS MONTH – Running 9/25 - 10/31

Launched last week. In collaboration with the Cultural Office. Bandwango Bingo pass to gamify the pass further. Once you get a BINGO you can pick a custom arts month sticker made by a local artist in town and be entered to win the Creative Stays Giveaway grand prize. Creative Stays giveaway

1. An overnight stay at The Mining Exchange in the Downtown Colorado Springs Creative District
2. A family four-pack to the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo with free giraffe feeding
3. A $150 voucher to the Ent Center for the Arts Box Office
4. A $200 gift card for a cooking class at the French Kitchen
5. A gift certificate for one free art class at Cottonwood Center for the Arts
6. SWAG bag with awesome gifts from Visit Colorado Springs and the Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region

BRAND ANTHEM – ends TBD

We had a marketing matching grant from the CTO. Focused on local pride with who we are and what we value. We did have some bleed-through from the Project Taurus comments, etc. Put a pause on that but will be restarting next week or the week after. We think we will be able to start it back without as much uproar. We also have an obligation to the CTO to use those dollars.

Lesson here: Project Taurus will be heard the week after the elections in April and to be prepared for that.

Q: Do you have to finish running that by the end of the year?
A: Yes, so we have some time to figure out when to push it

ADVERTISING 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 (0.45%) – 2.93%
- Across the board, it's 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 matured

Q: Which visitation platform are we using?
A: We are partnered with Tourism Economics

WEBSITE NUMBERS

Organic traffic continuing to be affected by AI

- Nearly half of all searches end without a click
- The more traffic a website has per quarter, the more impacted they are
    - The more content/the more traffic historically, the greater the losses we are seeing today
- DMO site searches are informative which is where the bulk of AI overviews are stepping in

What we are doing: Shifting from clicks to visibility – influencing the AI answers and ensuring we are included in the conversation

- Continue to bolster a strong SEO foundation, ensuring discoverability in traditional search
- Enhancing content for ingestion by AI with curated content, meta data and website schema (how its organized through code in the background - tells the AI how to crawl the website for information)

Q: Can we ask what Brenton is seeing with other destinations with this?
A: We are not alone. The authoritative voice we use is great with AI, but we've been hit harder because of this. Across the board these are making it so we need to reevaluate what we are using to indicate success. Not limited to the tourism industry.

Been valuable that we've invested in attribution tools so that we can see true measures of success.

Reframing how we measure success:

- Seeing a large increase in impressions > 2.1M in Googles AI features since May 18
- More emphasis on conversions/actualized visits and economic impact
- Working collaboratively with both our organic and paid strategy teams to ensure we are aligned and working towards meaningful shifts in engagement
    - Offset organic losses with paid support, new campaigns, etc.

Still seeing massive growth in LLM traffic

- Although LESS traffic is coming from this source, the audience is HIGHLY engaged (average 68-70% engagement rate) coming to our website. That means, instead of asking the chatbot more questions, they'll click on the source cited which is typically our website

Working hard to ensure VisitCOS.com is being cited in these queries – using a multi-pronged approach

- Making sure our content is *relevant, authoritative, and extractable*
- Ensuring content is found across different platforms (website, social media, podcasts, google listings, etc) so wherever it's crawling, it'll find the information needed
- Can now see citations in LLMs/AIO via Google Analytics

TERMS

- **Overall Citations:** sum of daily citations from ChatGPT, AIO, AI Mode, and Perplexity. This counts single citations (similar to sessions), not unique citations. For instance, if a citation appears every day in the month of June, it's recorded as 30 citations. Due to current limitations.
- **AI Overview Citations**: from Google's AI Overview widget – our domain appearing as a (blue) source link, the number of times we are linked in responses
    - The box that appears when doing a search
- **ChatGPT Citations**: daily citations from ChatGPT
    - Samples – don't have access to the actual questions
- **AI Mode Citations**: daily citations from Google's AI Mode tab
    - Its own self-contained LLM experience, pulls you out of the Google search experience
- **Google AI Impressions**: monthly impressions populated in Google Search Console's Generative AI Report. This report shows how often landing pages have been viewed in Google's AI platforms such as AI Overviews and AI Mode. How many times users have been exposed to our website (as a source) in Google AI.

Important to make sure that our information is authoritative and going to be pulled successfully into those AI searches. We have resources that are helping us with these numbers and understanding them so that we can make the best strategic decisions.

WEB ATTRIBUTION:

- How we tie actualized visitation to the website.
- Top pages that are pulling people into the community: Farmers Markets, Pikes Peak Highway, Territory Days
- Average visit time is very similar to the ads at around 40 days.
- Similar to Longwoods data as well. That planning window is staying steady.

DIGITAL PASSES

We now have three (+ Arts Month but no data on that yet) live digital passports through Bandwango! A fun way to encourage visitors to explore the community and incentivize them to visit our partner businesses.

The Wellness Pass is going strong for a first-time pass, just launched in February

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

Crafts & Drafts is also performing well, launched in May

- Running through the end of the year
- Over 2,500 sign-ups and more than 2,815 redemptions – the people that are using are using it repeatedly

- Sign up at VisitCOS.com/passport
  - Sign-ups down 25%
  - Redemptions down 17%

COS Culture Pass

- In collaboration with the CSPM, this pass commemorates America 250 | CO150 but we do see this having a lot of potential outside of that. Differentiated from the arts month pass
- Live now through the end of the year
- 271 sign-ups with 55 check-ins
- Quiz-style pass that highlights our community's 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 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
- Sign up at VisitCOS.com/history

II. COMING SOON—WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

MISSION2MARKET – Music tourism strategy

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

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 – *complete*
   - Recruit, interview, hold workshops, engagement
4. Surveys – c*omplete*

- Residents, stakeholders & visitors

5. Strategy Development & Marketing Opportunities – *September – October*
6. Plan Delivery, Activation & Champions – *October*

Mission2market is an agency that has worked with other destinations (Including the state of Colorado) on helping strategize to drive visitation around music/cultural offerings.

- 1,500 responses from the survey. Lots of great info there.
- The task force met this past week. Had people from tons of venues around town. Felt like a pivotal moment to get those people in a room together to help collaborate. M2M will be taking notes and info from that meeting to come up with a strategy that will be presented in Oct
- Applied for a tourism marketing grant for next year to see if we can get help with a marketing campaign next year pushing this out.

WEBSITE REDESIGN
Completed

- New navigation approved, including
  - More prominent meetings section
  - New passport hub
  - New section for live music and entertainment
- Cleaning up nav and consolidating pages
  - updates to site search will improve user experience and discoverability on the website for content
- Approved design direction
  - Opens new creative opportunities for the team to showcase partners, etc

Timeline

- **October – December:** Content migration & iDSS (CRM) integration
- **December – January:** VCOS Reviews & training
- **February 2027:** Launch

Not a total departure from our existing design direction; very thoughtfully done

STEWARD COS HUB

- Reframing stewardship
  - How we steward
  - Toolkits for visitors and partners
- Let's take a look: VisitCOS.com/about-us/steward-cos

On the webpage, we work to define stewardship. A lot of destinations are orienting themselves around destination management; we are using this as a means to do so without rebranding.
STEWARDSHIP definition

- Protecting resources
- Prioritizing inclusivity

- Improving accessibility
- Marketing Responsibly
- Preserving Culture
- Involving Residents

We hope all of this helps gain support of tourism on a local level and eventually would love to see the LART tax on the ballot for an increase.

Will be links to toolkits for partners and visitors – ready now but just being reviewed

Q: Do you think college students would be interested in something like this?
A: Lots of parallels around CC's campaigns to get people to visit the college and invest more in the community. We'd love to come talk to CC about collaboration.

Q: Where we define stewardship on the page, what do you think about putting that "why we have nice things" back above before we get deep into the stewardship stuff?
A: We like that and can certainly think on that. We do also have a local's corner already, but it would be great to pull it in as a bridge.

WINTER LEISURE
Saying that we have something for everyone without explicitly saying it. We are trying to prepare for our messaging to shift potentially if we see a lot of snow this winter, as is currently being predicted. Targeting a lot of direct flights, especially from warmer places.
Launching Oct 5 – Nov 15

- **Primary audience**
  - Adults 30-54
  - All genders
  - Parents and non-parents
  - Household income: Middle to upper-middle income (75k-149k)
- **GEO Targeting**
  - Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; San Antonio, TX; Phoenix, AZ; Tampa/St. Pete, FL; Atlanta, GA; San Diego, CA; Las Vegas, NV; Albuquerque, NM

III. UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Tourism Master Class –** OCT 14
  - On stewardship!
  - 2-3:30pm
  - Glen Eyrie Carriage House
- **Annual Tourism Celebration –** NOV 10
  - 5:30 - 9:30pm

    - The Broadmoor
- **Holiday Open House** – DEC 16
    - 3 – 6pm
    - Visit COS Office

IV. MEMBER UPDATES

Downtown Partnership

- Oct 11 - Banana Cat Bar Crawl
- Candy crawl happening again this year
- Skate in the park, holiday strolls
- Beginning to kick off rebrand starting in January, modernizing

Q: Do you all still have the holiday coupon guide?
A: Yes

Colorado College

- Staycation campaign coming up in October – look to collaborate with VCOS
- New PR, media relations and social media team as of September
- Mid-process of refresh and redesign of Fine Arts Center – goal to launch in Fall 2027

Buffalo Lodge

- 10-year anniversary, best year ever!
- Fringe season is getting a lot of groups for the senior cycling clubs
- Buffalograss 3 days, 16 bands, 2 stages. Sold out!
- Has become a music venue as well as a bicycle resort
- Kids on Bikes collab
- Cycling Santa first week in December
- Thanksgiving event
- Going to the El Tour de Tucson to Mesa with 11,000 riders – taking VCOS swag and having a table
- 50th podcast: Bike the Springs
- Opportunities to target the cycling market/destination

USOPM

- New Decathlon exhibit
- Activations last week with athletes that came out

Norwood Dev Group

- Meanwhile Block
- Country line dancing – Mondays in the Barrel Building from 5-10pm
- Farm and art market – Wednesdays through Oct 21

- Moon Market – starting up Oct 10th
- Doing a lot of Weddings and Proms booking quickly in 2027
- Keep the Meanwhile Block event venue in mind!

COS Airport

- Won Gold with SoCo Business Digest – Reader's Choice Business of the Year
- Last 5 days of USA TODAY reader's choice best small airports
  - VOTE (daily voting)
- Hiring two new positions
  - Public Communications II
  - Program Administrator
- 100th year coming up
  - Highlighting through partnership with Cottonwood for the rotating arts exhibit

The Broadmoor

- Brand new website launched on Sept 15
- Seeing a lot of success and good feedback
- More imagery and assets will continue to go live with that
- The Penrose Room received a MICHELIN award
- Wilderness properties close at the end of the month for the 2026 season; has been successful despite the varying conditions this summer
- Working on getting all the holiday information up on the website
- More events to come!

City of COS

- Oct 16 Broadmoor 8am – state of the city address – theme is the anniversaries CO 150 America 250
- Focused on how a better Colorado runs through Colorado Springs
- Parks & Open Spaces Master Plan is close to being finalized – still seeking public feedback
- Budget will be passed along to City council in the coming weeks
- Launching a city-wide Volunteerism program: Marriage of 150 neighborhood gatherings & neighborhood cleanups
- Finalizing contract with LA28 to demonstrate we're willing to have a torch relay come through Colorado Springs (to include USOPC, USOPTC cauldron, etc.)
  - Will kick off in Atlanta & pass through all 50 states en route to LA
- Chamber will be leading a trip to Huntsville to demonstrate the peaceful transition of Space Force from COS > Huntsville