

**VISIT COLORADO SPRINGS (VCOS)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
March 17, 2026**

Minutes

Board Members in Attendance:

Michelle Talarico, Chair
Megan Leatham, Vice-Chair
Marisa Wigglesworth, Treasurer
Ed Okvath, Secretary
Dani Bolling
Curtis Bova
Scott Flexman
Jen Furda
Torie Giffin
Christina Haywood
Alex Kovaks
Crystal LaTier
David Leinweber
Wendy McHenry
Dave Namesnik
Lisa Neener
Dr. Cary Snow
Samantha Wood

Board Members Absent:

Dan Leclerc

VCOS Staff:

Doug Price
Amy Long
April Perez
Alexea Veneracion
Melissa Williams
Dina Worthen
Jamie Singer
Kate Hertz

Chair - Michelle Talarico

- The meeting was called to order at 8:04am. Michelle welcomed all and said she thought the Business Meeting was excellent. She was pleased at how the program aligned with our strategic plan.
- April introduced the three auditors from BiggsKofford (Peyton, John & Katie). Partners from BiggsKofford will present the audit report at the May board meeting.
- CEO Search Update - The goal is to have the new President/CEO start November 1. Questions from the board should be directed to SearchWide Global via Megan Leatham. This is a nationwide search. This position is referenced on the SearchWide Global website, but the actual job description is not yet up. We will not settle and will keep looking until we get the right person. SearchWide Global will be here for the needs assessment in June.
- Board Minutes: *The motion was made by Marisa Wigglesworth and seconded by Wendy McHenry to accept the minutes as presented, and the motion passed unanimously.*
- There will be an Executive Session and the May board meeting. Several subjects will be discussed, but we do not plan to extend the meeting time.

President/CEO – Doug Price

- The 2025 Annual Report was distributed to each board member.
- Tourism Pays tri-fold cards were also distributed. Doug encourages everyone to hand them out and request more as needed. There is a QR code on the back that takes you to the Tourism Pays page on VisitCOS.com. We discussed that Outdoor Recreation is a key driver to our region. Kate Hertz explained that one of the key goals of the Neighborhoods Project is to highlight lesser-known parks and trails and encourage people to spread out.

- The statewide MICHELIN Guide program has been announced. We have no influence over what restaurants are visited by their staff. The announcement for their picks will be made later in the summer. Doug interviewed Brother Luck and Matthew Sniper on the *Peak into COS* podcast, which is now posted on our site as well as most podcast platforms. The culinary scene in Colorado Springs has elevated recently, and the room for visitation growth through culinary travel is exciting.
- DMP Updates:
 - **Imperative 1: Increase Tourism Funding** - Polling is necessary in terms of LART awareness and to gauge if voters would support a ballot initiative, which could happen in 2027. Doug was recently on a panel at a BizNow event and had the opportunity to share the positive impact of travel and how our LART compares to other cities. A second resident survey will be done later this year by Visit COS. Visit COS recently wrapped up a LART awareness campaign targeted at Colorado Springs residents.
 - **Imperative 2: Off-Season Visitation** – Staff is in the process of recruiting partners to create an off-season visitation task force. A Winter leisure campaign launched in 2025 and ran through February and achieved strong performance. Our attribution system calculated 7,100 visits from visitors who saw at least one of our ads. The MarCom team created packages including lodging, adventures and attractions that were posted on our website. Our Group Sales and MarCom teams collaborated to create a winter incentive program (rebates) for meetings taking place now through 2028. We have awarded rebates to two events so far. Scott Flexman commented that this program is “a good arrow in our quiver” and that he very much appreciates it. We are also working on transitioning from being a Destination Marketing Organization to being a Destination Management Organization. This evolution brings in sustainability and caring for the destination, which is imperative for long-term success. We are working with Destinations International to find other DMOs that have followed this path to see what best practices we can learn. It is the right thing to do and creates goodwill among the community.
 - **Imperative 3: Increase Length of Stay** – A new itineraries hub in development for the website, which will capitalize on the way people are shifting to build itineraries - using AI-integrated platforms (such as Guide Geek on our website). We will ensure that our website content for itineraries is robust so that it is considered an authoritative source for AI search results. A comprehensive itinerary hub on VisitCOS.com will serve as a foundation as we explore options to work with partners to create inspirational and money-saving packages as a long-term goal. Hosmer Visitor Center is opening May 16 to the public; Visit COS is temporarily hiring two part-time employees to work exclusively at the new visitor center through the end of 2026. Visit COS has been collaborating with Chamber staff on their Source COS program, helping to create and share messaging to attract business and events to Colorado Springs. Group Sales team is exhibiting at Space Symposium for the first time with a meetings/events-focused strategy.
- State Assembly Bills:
 - HB1005 – This bill would remove the state’s unique second election requirement in the Labor Peace Act, making it easier for unions to secure union security agreements that require all employees to pay union dues, even if they are not members. It is expected to pass the Senate, though Governor Polis says he will veto the bill.
 - HB1210 – This bill would ban businesses from using certain automated systems and surveillance data to set individualized prices for consumers or wages for workers. The Colorado Chamber and the Colorado Hotel & Lodging Association are against it.
 - SB116 – Municipalities including home-rule cities like COS will allow them to seek voter approval for how lodging taxes are spent. Some communities are diverting lodging tax funds to childcare, housing, and transportation. The tourism industry is fighting this bill. The hearing will be on March 24, 2026.
 - SB098 – State & Local Noise Abatement Authority. Under current Colorado law, there are statewide noise level limits for different times and areas, and exceeding those limits is considered a public nuisance. This bill amends these rules to reaffirm local authority to regulate noise independently, while making specific exemptions.

- Dave Leinweber pointed out that if you have an opinion on any of these issues it is important to reach out to your representatives and make those opinions known. Representatives need to hear from constituents on how these bills will affect businesses and citizens.
- Desert Harvest is current through March with their rent and utilities payments. We are working on a settlement to allow them to exit the contract. We have hired a commercial listing broker to lease the space rather than having Desert Harvest work with a broker who is trying to sub-let the space under the original terms of the DH agreement. The space is 6,300 sq feet, including two large, climate-controlled service bays. The office space would need to go to one tenant – that tenant may choose to have other businesses join them. The service bays could have different tenants if the office-space tenant does not need one or both service bays.
- Doug proposes that at future board meetings we move approving the board minutes and financial reports to a consent agenda at the beginning of the meeting rather than have separate votes. The board members agreed with this change.

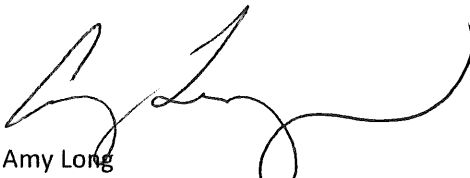
Financial Update – Marisa Wigglesworth and April Perez

- The Finance Committee meets monthly and at last week’s meeting, they discussed the items below.
- Contract Approval: The motion was made by Meqan Letham and seconded by Jen Furda to approve the Level 1 contract as presented. The motion passed unanimously.
- Policy Approval: The motion was made by Meqan Leatham and seconded by Ed Okvath to approve the updated policy for Emergency and Opportunity Reserves Investment and Use as presented. The motion passed unanimously.
- April will create a one-page document that outlines the updated policy for the Emergency and Opportunity funds.
- April reviewed the dashboard. In January we are overspent compared to budget, but that will even out in the coming months. LART was up 6.37% in December, and the entire year was down by .89%. January LART collections were down 5.19%
- Please refer to the packet and direct any questions about the performance reports to April and/or Marisa.

Wrap-up – Michelle Talarico

- Michele went around the room for board member updates.
- The meeting adjourned at 9:40 am.

Submitted:



Amy Long
Chief Development Officer

Verified:



Ed Okvath
Board Secretary

