

**VISIT COLORADO SPRINGS (VCOS)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Tuesday, September 9, 2025**

Minutes

Board Members in Attendance:

Michelle Talarico, Chair
Megan Leatham, Vice-Chair
Marisa Wigglesworth, Treasurer via phone
Ed Okvath, Secretary
Dani Bolling
Curtis Bova
Scott Flexman
Jen Furda
Christina Haywood
Rob Henderson
Crystal LaTier
Wendy McHenry
Lisa Neener
Jenny Sherman
Torie Giffin
Alex Kovaks
Dr. Cary Snow

Board Members Absent:

David Leinweber
Dan LeClerc

VCOS Staff:

Doug Price
April Perez
Peggy Manter
Melissa Williams
Alexea Veneracion
Amy Long
Dina Worthen

Chair Welcome & Update – Michelle Talarico

- Meeting is called to order at 8:05am. Michelle asked Jen to read the new mission statement on the conference room wall, and Michelle read the vision statement. She welcomed everyone back from what was, hopefully, a profitable summer. Michelle asked for a motion to accept the board minutes from June. The motion was made by Jen Furda and seconded by Scott Flexman to accept the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously. Michele then said her name (as chair) and Marissa's (as treasurer) need to be added to our bank accounts. She asked for a motion to approve, and motion was made by Ed Okvath and seconded by Megan Leatham to approve the names being added to bank accounts. The motion passed unanimously.
- She then told the board that Rob Henderson had resigned his position at the Space Foundation and would be leaving the board. He said he needed a career change.

President/CEO Update – Doug Price

- Doug told the board that his current contract runs through Dec 31, 2026, and he does not have plans to extend the contract. He, along with Michelle and Megan, has already started laying the groundwork for moving forward. They met with Mike Gamble of SearchWide Global to gather information about the search process. They were all impressed but no contract was discussed. Doug pointed out that the cost of the search needs to be in the 2026 budget, including relocation and moving allowance expenses. They intend to get a few bids, so they budget correctly. Megan pointed out the meeting with Mike was extremely high level. Jen thanked Doug for getting the process started and giving the board the gift of time.
- Doug thanked Rob for his service to the board and wished him well. He said the governance committee was meeting immediately after the board to discuss the two open seats we will fill for 2026: Rob's seat and Jenny Sherman who terms out in December.

- Doug then asked for board involvement with the Strategic Roadmap. At the last meeting, Wendy had agreed to lead Imperative 2, grow overnight visitation in the off season. Imperative 3, to increase the average length of stay to enhance impact and better support local business will have Amy as staff lead, and Dani will be board lead. For imperative 1, securing additional promotions to build year-round visitation and length of stay, will have Ed as the board liaison.
- Doug then moved to the five initiatives we support. He asked Alex to lead the Increased Air Service with Doug and Dina. Signature Events will be Scott with Mar/Comms. Arts and Culture will be Mar/Comms and Marissa. He said he would ask David Leinweber if he would lead Parks and Trails along with Kim and Cheryl. And the Sports and Entertainment piece is right in Megan's wheelhouse, with Cheryl as staff lead.
- Doug moved on to the Clean and Safe pilot program and each attendee was given the Clean and Safe Services Guidebook. Jen then said the Downtown Partnership is not leading this solo. Lots of partners have stepped up including VCOS. Pat Rigdon is running the show, and it is a heavily data-driven pilot program. She stressed this is a work in progress, and if it creates issues elsewhere while cleaning up downtown, they will deal with it. But something needed to be done. It is modeled after the extraordinarily successful program in Cincinnati. The task force staff are trained and paid personnel for the large part. Dani asked if a digital version of the book was available, it is. Peggy will send it after the meeting. There is confidence it will be an effective, important program.
- A LART update was next. Doug, along with Michelle, Dani and Megan met with Mayor Yemi about the tax. They discussed the pros and cons and resident sentiment on tourism. At this point, the November 2026 ballot looks crowded. The risks of waiting to put the item on the ballot must be weighed against the risks of rushing. The group will reconvene in October. A lot of work would need to be done to make 2026 happen. The US Travel report data has been shared with the board, and the LART committee also has the data on tax rates across the US. Only one major city has a lower rate than Colorado Springs – Hilton Head, SC. They also said it needed to be clear exactly what the mission and goals of the LART tax are.
- Amy then listed some upcoming events – The Tourism Awards on Thursday evening at Garden of the Gods, the PPLA annual meeting on Sept 30 where Mel will present on AI and Reanna of Savvion HQ will present on a tourism program modeled on the successful careers in construction program for the hospitality industry. Doug said Gov Con will be at Hotel Polaris Oct 22-24, with the opening reception at the USOPM.

Communications Neighborhood Update – Alexea Veneracion, Director of Communications

- Michelle asked Alexea to present on the Neighborhoods project. COS and the Pikes Peak Region were divided into 25 neighborhoods or areas. Each area has a brief film, narrated by Kate Hertz (VCOS Content Coordinator) with scripts written by Sheridan Powell (VCOS Communications Manager), which highlight what makes that neighborhood special. It uncovers some hidden gems and speaks to the variety of things to see and do. It has been a big hit with locals and visitors, and realtors really like it!

Financial Update – April Perez, Director of Finance and Marisa Wigglesworth, Treasurer

- Marisa told the board that the Finance committee had met over the summer and reported they continue to refine best practices and operations. She believes they are in a good routine, and they meet again tomorrow.
- April reviewed the financial dashboard with the group, noting that the monies previously in the money market savings account and a CD have been moved to another CD and the opportunity fund. The year is tracking as expected, however the P&L shows the initial investment of \$100K to Clean and Safe –which was not budgeted. She continues to work with the Symphony dashboard to define and refine the data to ensure accuracy.
- The 2026 budgeting is currently underway. The 2026 budget will be presented to the board for approval on Dec 3, but the budget itself will be sent to all members 30 days prior to allowing time for review. (November 3)

Wrap-Up – Doug Price and Michelle Talarico

- Michelle asked the board to give a brief update on their summer, and we went around the room.
- Michelle thanked everyone for all their hard work and time. Doug reminded all of the Tourism awards on Thursday evening. The meeting adjourned at 9:26 am. The next meeting is October 21, 2025.

Submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peggy Manter', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peggy Manter
Executive Assistant

Verified:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Okvath', with a stylized, angular script.

Ed Okvath
Board Secretary

