



Visit Estes Park  
The Destination  
Marketing Organization  
VisitEstesPark.com

# Board of Directors Minutes September 1, 2015

**Board Members Attending:** Bill Almond, Karen Ericson, Steve Kruger, Lindsay Lamson, Jon Nicholas, Adam Shake, Scott Webermeier

**Also Attending:** Town Trustee Ron Norris  
Town Trustee Bob Holcomb  
  
Elizabeth Fogarty, President & CEO  
Visit Estes Park Staff Suzy Blackhurst

**Public Comment.** None

**Board Comments.** None

## A. Action Items:

1. Approval of Minutes from August 18, 2015 and August 21, 2015 Regular Meetings  
Scott Webermeier moved that minutes from the August 18, 2015 and the August 21, 2015 regular meetings be approved. Jon Nicholas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## B. Discussion Items and Reports

1. Ron Norris, Liaison from the Estes Park Town Board  
Trustee Norris noted that:
  - Frank Lancaster, Town Administrator, Travis Machalek, Assistant Town Administrator, Mayor Pro Tem Wendy Koenig and he attended a joint meeting with Visit Estes Park to discuss each organization's roles as they pertain to an intergovernmental operating agreement. Several points are being clarified for a second meeting.
  - The PUP committee will meet September 10 and will include an update on planned Dry Gulch Road improvements.
  - Barnes Dance findings should be received by October.
2. 2016 Operating Plan – President & CEO Elizabeth Fogarty  
Highlights of the plan reviewed by Fogarty included:
  - The draft plan's structure submitted to the board remains the same as that presented for consideration in 2015. One change is the inclusion of comprehensive research to back up direction of the strategy used in the coming year. One major challenge anticipated for the coming 18 months will be the reconstruction of Hwy 34. While the Colorado Department of Transportation hasn't provided final information, Visit Estes Park plans to support the construction by providing information on alternate routes, although we do not have the luxury of Hwy 7 as an alternative like we did during the Hwy 36 construction.
  - Travel Trends will continue with the "silent" traveler in their 20s and 30s who are difficult to find and difficult to convert because they talk with friends and through social networks. To reach this audience Visit Estes Park is using social media through influencers, and engagement with that traveler. Those influencers are followed through their social channels and blogs.

- There is a positive outlook on the state of the American traveler as the number of people traveling is anticipated to increase through the coming year. Personalizing the approach to each market segment is important as is finding the right distribution channel and the right device.
- Print is stronger than ever. The rate travelers use print is now at 50.6% percent, which is the first time in 10 years that it has been that high. Newspapers, magazines, and Visitor Guides are all forms of print that are included. The newspaper and magazine visibility does include the benefit of the online subscription member.
- 34% of Americans say they plan to travel more in 2016. Spending on travel also is increasing and is up 35%.
- Content is king, and presenting things to do is most influential on decision-making. For example, talking about hiking won't engage the hiker. But if we talk about the moose you see while on your hike, engagement goes way up. Lindsay Lamson noted that increasing content may stretch staff resources. Fogarty noted that management of social media and website work, currently done by one person, likely will be split between two people next year.
- One topic discussed in the plan deals with budget cuts and subsequent ramifications of that happening. Fogarty noted that the town of Breckenridge gave its DMO \$200,000 last year. Lamson said the information isn't just for the Trustees, but also to get stakeholders to echo the information. Elizabeth encouraged Town Administrator Lancaster to ask municipalities at the next CAST meeting about the relationship mountain communities have between the town and the DMOs.
- Niagara Falls, NY is an example of what can happen to a destination when investments are not made in product development. The US city's population dropped from 102,000 to 50,000 while Niagara Falls, Canada has invested in product development and is flourishing by comparison.
- Karen Ericson noted that she hears from customers about the amount of city tax and they ask for a discount. The group agreed that no matter how much the tax is (high or low), there will always be a minority of people complaining about taxes. Estes Park is still below average compared to other destinations, when lodging tax is factored in.
- Partnering more with Larimer County and the US Forest Service may allow for relief to the park during peak visitation. Fogarty said Visit Estes Park will be talking more about the national forest, although many of the trails are still flood-ridden and there does not appear to be money to fix them. Estes Park is incorporating much of what Kyle Patterson has shared (i.e. hike midweek rather than weekends) to assist, although Visit Estes Park will never be able to walk away from summer, we do continue to ask how to be good stewards of our land.
- Staff will continue to work collaboratively with the Community Services Division of the Town, and hopes the Town thinks of Visit Estes Park as a partner in developments such as wayfinding signage, economic development and destination product development.
- Visit Estes Park hopes to join with other national parks to request a grant from the CTO to promote all of Colorado's national parks.
- Visit Estes Park will elevate what it has done for international travel in the past by having both Brooke and Becky focus on it, although we will still partner with CTO for the bulk of the international FAM's.
- VEP will continue to champion wellness tourism and will reach out to the Estes Park Medical Center to see what can be done to keep the conversation going. The state of Colorado continues to focus on wellness, and while Visit Estes Park can't "own" the conversation it will be interesting to see what Avalanche (consultants for the Estes Park Economic Development Corp.) proposes for short term and long term wellness initiatives.
- Marketing will continue with the "century campaign." There will be an expansion of hero photographic shots. The elk currently on the footer of the website will be replaced with photos of locals from our video series with AIM.
- The brand will evolve into an awareness campaign by naming more specifics and citing specific businesses. Guests want relevant and detailed info., not general conversations about a destination.
- Winter and spring seasons will provide the biggest opportunity for growth. Visit Estes Park will get more aggressive with marketing winter and will continue with content while leveraging the National Park Service 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary campaign.

- Visit Estes Park will continue to test the website and direct marketing strategies there.
- Regional marketing will focus on “relaxing getaway.” The national conversation will include snowshoeing, cross country and back country skiing (because they likely won’t travel that far for the relaxing getaway concept).
- While Visit Estes Park can provide data about who has gone through its ad channels, it needs lodging facilities to provide data about who they book and when. The CRM provides for that reporting. Steve Kruger suggested EALA could help champion this cause and assist with gathering the information.
- Visit Estes Park will partner with stakeholders to create packages and may use a Survey Monkey survey to find the most popular package. There will be more impact on the destination if Visit Estes Park finds better ways to market the destination by co-oping packaging efforts.
- The Official Visitor Guide will be in brochure racks throughout town resulting in greater in-market engagement. The Guide is now a pre-planning and in-market guide.
- In Public Relations efforts, the ability to track coverage is becoming challenging as it is difficult to track social channels. Stakeholders are engaging more when fam trips are in town as they increasingly see the value in participation. The staff member recently hired is expected to play a significant role in growing Visit Estes Park’s international market. We also plan to add new collateral in addition to custom bilingual content to the VEP website.
- The responsive VisitEstesPark.com site will be finished soon. Once that goes live, VEP will be able to create microsites within the overall site, which is expected to assist in providing additional coverage for Town events. Content for the responsive site already is being created.
- The consumer e-newsletter is expected to take on co-op advertising.
- VEP is working with the town to post Happenings in all the Town restrooms.
- Exemplary brand strategy examples by stakeholders will be highlighted in the community.

Trustee Holcomb asked how product development fit into the operating plan. Fogarty noted that money and projects are part of the conversation, but culture also is important. She said the communities that are growing double digits go beyond infrastructure. Those communities have a close bond between the town government and DMO, and because of that, they are attracting investors, developers, and have a cooperative culture between the two organizations.

Scott Webermeier said product development won’t be successful without workers in the community, and suggested the town address housing concerns. Norris said more strategic planning is needed between the town and the Visit Estes Park board regarding subjects like housing, downtown development plan, river mitigation, etc., and could be addressed during the upcoming IGA planning meeting.

During a philosophical discussion on how to measure accomplishments, Fogarty noted that the monthly dashboard/key indicators provide information beyond sales tax revenues. Webermeier said the organization should not be held responsible for sales tax because Visit Estes Park’s role is to get people to town. Norris asked how stakeholder engagement would be measured. Webermeier suggested 2014 key indicators and year-to-date indicators for 2015 be included in the operating plan document.

Norris said it would be appropriate to include a town investment amount in the operating plan budget.

Board members were asked to provide further feedback to Fogarty by end of day on September 7.

  
 Suzy Blackhurst, Recording Secretary

  
 Bill Almond, Chair