



ACRA DEFY ORDINARY

ASPEN CHAMBER RESORT ASSOCIATION

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT | MEMBER SERVICES | SPECIAL EVENTS | VISITOR SERVICES

Board of Directors Meeting

Date: April 25, 2023

Zoom

Present: Cristal Logan, Charlie Bantis, Cari Kuhlman, John Rigney, Donnie Lee, Dan Bartholomew, Debbie Braun, Patti Clapper, Matt Cook, Nina Eisenstat, Andrew Ernemann, Michael Goldberg, Heather Kemp, Lisa LeMay, Maria Morrow, Justin Nyberg, Henning Rahm, Dave Ressler, Steve Skadron, Heather Steenge-Hart, Justin Todd, Bill Tomcich, Torre, and Kathleen Wanatowicz

Absent: Jeff Bay, Rose Abello, David Baugh, and Alan Fletcher

Staff: Jennifer Albright Carney, Susan Bantis, Alycin Bektesh, John Clay Davies, Savannah Grant, Jessica Hite, Nichole Hellinger, Sarah Reynolds Lasser, and Eliza Voss

Guests: Geoff Buchheister, Linda DuPriest, Kristi "K2" Kavanaugh, and Jon Peacock

Call to order:

Cristal Logan called the meeting to order at 8:32 AM

Approval of the March 28th Minutes:

Approved

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest:

None

Introduction of Geoff Buchheister, CEO of Aspen Skiing Company:

Geoff Buchheister is introduced as the new CEO of Aspen Skiing Company, following the retirement of Mike Kaplan, who served as CEO for 17 years. Geoff is described as being raised in the ski industry and is enthusiastic about joining the company. He speaks about the importance of strong partnerships and relationships within the community and his eagerness to learn and understand the community before forming opinions. Geoff shares his background, growing up in Winter Park, Colorado, ski racing, and his career journey in the ski industry, including stints in Park City, the Midwest, Keystone, and Whistler. He stresses the importance of providing continuity for Aspen Skiing Company and continuing to focus on sustainability, climate change, community and events, and inclusion. Geoff also acknowledges the challenges faced by the community, such as housing, mass transportation, and traffic, and expresses his desire to work together with the community on these issues.

Airport and Air Service Updates – Dan Bartholomew and Bill Tomcich:

See [attached](#).

Brush Creek Park & Ride Construction – Linda DuPriest:

See [attached](#).

Chair's Comments:

Cristal Logan praises Mike Kaplan for his 30 years at Aspen Skiing Company and 17 years as CEO, noting that he provided stable leadership and looked out for the workforce. She appreciates his contributions to the community and acknowledges the great snowfall as a fitting send-off. Cristal also congratulates the Aspen Chamber team for the Business Outlook Forum and highlights the Economist's insights on the labor shortage being a long-term trend that needs to be managed. Finally, she mentions that the institute has an exciting summer plan and encourages everyone to stay tuned for updates.

President's Comments:

Debbie Braun thanks everyone for attending the meeting and reports that the master agreement with the city of Aspen has been signed. She mentions a few events, including the Business Outlook Forum and the Food & Wine luncheon, and advises not to wait too long to sign up for the latter. Debbie announces that ACRA will be receiving an employee retention credit of over \$300,000 through COVID relief funds and will work with the executive and finance committees for consideration on how to use the funds. She emphasizes the importance of applying for such funds if eligible. Finally, Debbie acknowledges that it's officially the off-season, with municipalities taking over and lots of construction, but she remains optimistic.

Directors' Remarks:

Donnie Lee enjoyed today's presentations and found them informative. He anticipates a busy summer and encourages the group to enjoy spring.

Torre expresses excitement for the off-season and summer, welcomes Geoff as the new leader of Aspen Skiing Company, and emphasizes the city's commitment to working together with them. He congratulates and thanks everyone for the Business Outlook Forum and notes that the city is currently calm and preparing for summer events. Torre invites everyone to share ideas or suggestions on how to make the upcoming summer more successful than the last by emailing him at torre@aspen.gov. He apologizes for having to leave for another meeting and wishes everyone a wonderful day.

Patti Clapper notes that updates were already presented on the airport and Brush Creek. She mentions an ongoing discussion about the jail, including safety and potential remodel or new construction. Patti also shares that Pitkin County is exploring ways to promote childcare opportunities in partnership with the City of Aspen and looking forward to new developments in 2023. She then mentions participating in an upcoming meeting about the FBO at the airport. Patti expresses excitement about meeting the new ski company CEO and mentions that she recently gave Mike Kaplan a farewell gift of homemade chocolate chip cookies.

Charlie Bantis congratulates the staff on an excellent meeting with great presentations and commends Dan and the airport team for their work. He emphasizes the importance of addressing misinformation in the community about the airport and encourages everyone to politely correct any false information. Charlie celebrates the end of a great season and encourages everyone to take a break before preparing for the summer.

Cari Kuhlman doesn't have much to add but expresses her gratitude to the staff for the Business Outlook Forum and praises the presentations. She appreciates being informed about what's happening in the community and being able to report back.

Dave Ressler notes that healthcare faces its own challenges in addition to economic and demographic impacts. He announces the health fair on June 1-2 at Aspen Valley Hospital and June 3-4 in El Jebel, where people can get low-cost lab work. He encourages visiting [Aspen Valley Hospital's website](#) to sign up. Dave also mentions it's election season for their district, with three candidates running for two open seats. Ballots can be dropped off at AVH or mailed in the next few days.

Nina Eisenstat appreciates the informative presentations, which she believes will help board members answer community questions. She is pleased with Geoff's appointment as SkiCo's new CEO and appreciates the detailed updates on the airport and the Brush Creek Park & Ride. She acknowledges the long-term challenges of hiring, training, and retaining employees and finding housing. Nina also mentions excitement for the upcoming summer season, which appears to be filled with arts, culture, and activities.

Michael Goldberg shares that the offseason has arrived, with many restaurants closed and Sunday or Monday nights being particularly hard to find reservations. While most restaurants have experienced good sales, rising costs, particularly in labor, are affecting profits. The ongoing conversation about offseason tourism continues, with differing opinions among restaurant owners on whether they would want to stay open if there were more visitors.

Lisa LeMay reports that most retail businesses had a decent winter, though March was lackluster. However, a boost in April due to late spring breaks from big cities helped. One customer commented that Aspen has lost its appeal due to potholes and construction sites, and Lisa mentioned that Highway 82 is state-controlled, rather than managed by the city. She encourages everyone to enjoy the shoulder season and looks forward to seeing everyone in a month.

Justin Nyberg echoes the positive comments about the Business Outlook Forum, complimenting the staff and speakers. He particularly enjoyed the report on macroeconomic trends affecting the resort community and the presentation on the state of the commercial core. Justin is glad to be in the offseason and appreciated the energy on the ski hill up to the end of the season. He looks forward to seeing everyone after vacations and anticipates a great summer.

Steve Skadron appreciates the comprehensive report from Dan and Bill. He highlights CMC's growing involvement in the community, including its investment in a commercial teaching kitchen, expanded footprint in Basalt, and the purchase of deed-restricted units and office space. Steve sees CMC playing a significant role in valley-wide conversations. Lastly, he requests that the location of each month's meeting be included at the top of the agenda for clarity.

Heather Kemp praises this morning's presentations and the Business Outlook Forum, appreciating the great programming ACRA brings to the community. She notes that town is currently quiet with several hotels closed and a lack of visitors. Aspen High School's prom is coming up, which might provide some business to open restaurants and hairdressers. With the airport closure, she doesn't expect normal business to return until Food & Wine, but remains optimistic for a great summer season.

Justin Todd appreciates the opportunity for in-person meetings and looks forward to more of them on the Aspen Meadows campus. He mentions that they are finishing up a guestroom renovation and highlights the St. Regis renovation as well. He thanks Bill for his presentation on the airport and emphasizes the importance of improving access to Aspen for the hotels, restaurants, and the entire community. Efficient and safe travel is essential for bringing guests in and out of the area.

Kathleen Wanatowicz expresses her support for the airport development and thanks Dan for his presentation. She mentions that she'll reach out to Nina to organize a service sector lunch during the offseason.

Matt Cook acknowledges that most points have been covered and highlights the poor road conditions after the winter season. He notes that driving from Aspen to Denver has been challenging and suggests everyone be careful on the roads. He appreciates the slower pace, allowing everyone to take a vacation before the busy summer season.

Maria Morrow appreciates the informative presentations and expresses hope that ACRA will provide links or materials to clarify the myths surrounding the airport. She notes that the community's understanding and involvement in the decision-making process seem unclear, and she urges for more information and advocacy to address misinformation. Maria also acknowledges the professional industry's busyness and staffing challenges, which appear to persist regardless of economic conditions.

Bill Tomcich thanks everyone for their time and appreciates the opportunity to present information to the ACRA Board. He emphasizes the importance of addressing misinformation about the airport and encourages everyone to help. Bill offers to share his monthly updates via email for those interested. Lastly, he shares the news that John Norton, former Senior Vice President of Aspen Skiing Company, has been inducted into the Colorado Snow Sports Hall of Fame, celebrating this honor in Vail on August 27th.

Dan Bartholomew thanks everyone for allowing him and Bill to present and mentions their plans to ramp up communication efforts within the community. He reminds everyone that the airport will be closed for pavement maintenance from May 10th to May 24th and that there will be an open house on May 11th for more in-depth information on the airport redevelopment. Dan extends an invitation to anyone interested in a tour of the airport facility or airfield, either individually or in a group, to showcase the planned changes.

Adjournment:

Cristal Logan adjourned the meeting at 10:32 AM