



ACRA DEFY ORDINARY

ASPEN CHAMBER RESORT ASSOCIATION

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT | MEMBER SERVICES | SPECIAL EVENTS | VISITOR SERVICES

Board of Directors Meeting

Date: February 28, 2023

Aspen Meadows Resort

Present: Cristal Logan, Jeff Bay, Charlie Bantis, Cari Kuhlman, John Rigney, Donnie Lee, Rose Abello, Debbie Braun, Patti Clapper, Matt Cook, Nina Eisenstat, Alan Fletcher, Heather Kemp, Lisa LeMay, Maria Morrow, Justin Nyberg, Dave Ressler, Steve Skadron, Justin Todd, Bill Tomcich, Torre, and Kathleen Wanatowicz

Absent: Dan Bartholomew, David Baugh, Andrew Ernemann, Michael Goldberg, Henning Rahm, and Heather Steenge-Hart

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

Guests: Myha Gallagher and Jamie Tokuno

Call to order:

Cristal Logan called the meeting to order at 8:34 AM

Approval of the January 31st Minutes:

Approved

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest:

None

Presentation: Visitor Profile & Resident Sentiment Survey – Myha Gallagher and Jamie Tokuno Destination

Analysts

See [attached](#).

Chair's Comments – Cristal Logan:

Cristal expresses excitement about how busy the community is and the presence of John Rigney, who is busy with the World Cup activities. She thanks the Chamber for hosting the candidate forum and acknowledges Alycin's contributions to it. She mentions convening with Alan and the Arts and Culture CEOs and feels positive about the progress being made.

President's Comments – Debbie Braun:

Debbie informs the group that Sarah Ott will be having an executive session with her council to review the master contract, which includes marketing and lease. She reassures everyone that no issues are expected, but Sarah will reach out if there are any. She also welcomes Savannah to the team and expresses gratitude to those who participated in the election forum series, either by submitting questions or watching online. Lastly, she encourages everyone to remember to vote.



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Finance Committee Update – Charlie Bantis:

Charlie reports that the Finance Committee reviewed the year-end financial numbers and congratulates Fred Soyka and the staff for producing them in less than 60 days. He says that the Chamber and DM had solid financial years and have good reserves. While there were non-essential expenses, they could have been cut if necessary. Looking ahead, both entities will have uses for their cash, especially with upcoming projects at the armory and an overage of tax revenue that will be funded back into a reserve account. Charlie notes that they are cautious about 2023, as they don't know what to expect, but believes that the Chamber is the strongest it has been in his almost 20-year history with the organization.

Directors' Remarks:

Donnie Lee expresses his gratitude to the ski company for bringing the World Cup back and acknowledges the amount of work that has been put into it. He anticipates that it will be a fun weekend. He reports that the winter is progressing well with good occupancies expected to continue into April. However, the summer outlook is behind pace and the demand is softening, with lead times contracting. The lodging industry's forecasts for 2023 indicate a modest growth of around 3%, much lower than the previous years. Donnie believes that the summer will still be good, but the demand will be softer and coming in a little later.

Torre predicts a low voter turnout for the upcoming election and encourages people to vote. He plans to discuss the Palm Tree Music Festival in Aspen with city council and would like Chamber member feedback. He also raises the question of extending the season to May and acknowledges the hard work of the Chamber in supporting local businesses. Torre suggests exploring ways to activate downtown and support struggling businesses, including engaging with a developer who has multiple closed properties. He asks for updates on the arts and cultural meeting and suggests the Chamber could help the city support affordable commercial and local small businesses.

Patti Clapper apologizes for the airport closure in May, stating that they had a plan to avoid it but safety issues forced the FAA to intervene. The airport is preparing for the next generation of jets and making adjustments to accommodate them. The city is launching a new composting program, and Patti hopes to educate visitors on recycling programs and reduce the use of one-time water bottles. The county is still working on the growth management committee, which is looking at house size and energy efficiency. The airport is also looking to renegotiate contracts and build a new terminal. Clapper encourages people to vote in the upcoming election.

John Rigney expresses gratitude for the support and efforts put into the World Cup event, acknowledging the significant contributions from various stakeholders. He provides a high-level rundown of the event schedule, mentioning the opening ceremonies in Snowmass, race times, tributes, and concerts. He comments on April looking promising for business, anticipating a surge from Mexican visitors, and hints at good news regarding the ski season. John shares his excitement for the World Cup event, describing it as a big community celebration, and encourages everyone to participate and support the event.

Dave Ressler discusses two topics. First, he acknowledges the recent hoax incident at the schools and praises the community's response, highlighting the quick actions of law enforcement, EMTs, paramedics, and the hospital staff. He expresses gratitude that the situation turned out to be a hoax and commends the community for coming together during the tense situation. Second, Dave talks about the successful partnership with the Steadman Clinic and the development of a destination program that supports local businesses and hospitality services. He mentions a significant growth in orthopedic volumes since 2019 and emphasizes the importance of providing top-quality orthopedic care to the community.



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Bill Tomcich discusses several topics related to air travel and the World Cup event. He praises the recent efforts of Palisade Tahoe in hosting the races despite challenging weather conditions and mentions that Aspen's forecast looks promising for the upcoming event. He shares that airlines have expanded flights into April, including the first-ever nonstop Chicago flight through April, which will improve connections to East Coast markets. He also mentions that United has added an extra Denver flight to Eagle during Aspen's airport closure. Bill highlights the increase in air capacity, noting that it is not as high as it has been in previous years due to intentional efforts to de-peak schedules, which helps constrained airports like Aspen. He explains that the current peak capacity is around 32 to 33 flights daily through the end of March, a response to the airline industry's trend towards de-peaking day-of-week demand. Finally, he expresses his enthusiasm for the recognition of Bob Beattie at the upcoming event, mentioning his personal connection to him through their shared involvement with the Colorado Snow Sports Museum.

Heather Kemp shares that December 2022 sales tax saw a 13% increase, leading to a total of \$1.2 billion in taxable sales for the year, which is a 19% jump from the previous year. She mentions that 84% of December's spend was from local dollars, which is encouraging for small businesses. Heather also discusses upcoming summer events, including the Aspen Community Foundation and the Chris Klug Foundation fundraising events. She encourages people to reach out if they need community help. Lastly, she highlights Jazz Aspen's June Fest, which recently started ticket sales, and praises their interactive calendar and plans to sponsor them as well.

Nina Eisenstat commends the team for the election forum, mentioning that it provided a good glimpse into all the candidates despite expectations of contention. She expresses excitement for the upcoming World Cup and the positive energy it will bring to the town. Nina also discusses the ongoing challenges in the service sector, including finding and retaining employees, offering competitive compensation, benefits, and affordable housing. Lastly, she praises emergency responders, hospital and school leadership, and law enforcement for their response to the recent school threat, expressing relief that it ended well and hope that the perpetrator will be caught.

Kathleen Wanatowicz announces that Habitat for Humanity Roaring Fork is hosting a regional housing summit on March 22 at the Aspen Meadows. The summit will focus on housing challenges and explore scalable solutions implemented in housing projects throughout the valley. It will bring together officials, housing developers, and nonprofits to identify workable solutions. Kathleen is seeking business community members to join a panel discussing the connection between employment and housing. Additionally, she reports that the construction industry is experiencing less intense demand compared to the previous year, but it remains busy and economically stable.

Alan Fletcher shares that the Aspen Music Festival season was announced last week and received a strong response. Ticket sales will begin in the first week of April. He also mentions a desire to debrief with Torre and Cristal about the arts executive meetings.

Maria Morrow appreciates the presentation and data shared but feels it went by quickly. She suggests using the data as an educational tool for policymakers and ensuring that people like the press are well-informed about the current situation. She proposes that Eliza and Alycin coordinate to gather more data for other purposes. Maria also notes that the professional sector continues to move forward with periods of activity and quietness, and the outlook for 2023 remains uncertain.



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Charlie Bantis appreciates the data presented and hopes it will be a sustained effort to inform future decisions. He is excited about the World Cup and highlights the importance of the private sector and nonprofits coming together to find solutions for issues like housing and traffic. Charlie mentions possibly losing a highly paid professional due to traffic issues and expresses concern about the city's response to individual vehicle traffic. He also brings up a potential issue with using TikTok for marketing due to privacy concerns raised by various governments.

Justin Nyberg shares his positive feedback on the candidate forum. Despite some disagreements, the discussion remained civilized and informative. He also emphasizes the need for more education and data on the entrance to Aspen and believes ACRA could be a resource for consolidating relevant information. Lastly, he gives a special thanks to Alycin for her hard work and dedication in organizing the forum.

Steve Skadron shares updates from CMC, highlighting the progress on the local campus, including a commercial kitchen for student training and community events. He thanks the Chamber and their involvement in Food and Wine, which will allow CMC to participate and showcase their faculty and students. He also mentions a local survey project for the hospitality community and efforts to bring ski area operations training to Aspen. Lastly, he talks about the development of a soft goods manufacturing program focused on sustainability and repairing outdoor gear, with plans to launch in the fall.

Justin Todd discusses the positive impact of events like the recent Palm Tree Music Festival and the return of the World Cup on the hospitality industry. He also addresses the current demand for service professionals in the community and shares an experience where 10 of their employees were quickly hired by other businesses in the area. He emphasizes the importance of supporting people in the community and the need to find housing solutions for employees as more businesses come back online.

Matt Cook addresses Torre's question about the recent weekend's transportation situation, stating that the city accommodated their needs and allowed them to use the alley behind the armory. He believes that the lack of complaints is a sign that things went smoothly. He also notes a steady uptick in airport passengers and a more stabilized flow on weekends. Finally, he mentions that they are seeing more people seeking employment and hopes other businesses are experiencing the same.

Cari Kuhlman shares that the finance industry is facing similar issues as other businesses regarding housing and finding employees. Banks are discussing salaries and housing benefits to maintain consistency. She expresses interest in the salary survey Steve mentioned. The entrance to Aspen is another concern, as new hires have quit due to difficulties with the commute. Cari highlights the Jazz Aspen Snowmass event, noting the June and Labor Day lineups. She also commends the school district, the hospital, and the police for their response to the recent incident at the school, praising Dave Baugh for his leadership and engagement with parents and the community.

Rose Abello shares that Snowmass has released its summer event schedule and is excited about hosting the World Cup opening. They're also introducing a new program called "yarn bombing," where fiber artists create sweaters for objects like trees or park benches. There has been an enthusiastic response to the call for knitters. Rose also mentions that they're hiring for two event positions since one of their staff moved to the Chamber. They are looking for candidates to help with their extensive event schedule.

Adjournment:

Cristal Logan adjourned the meeting at 10:10 AM