



ACRA DEFY ORDINARY

ASPEN CHAMBER RESORT ASSOCIATION

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT | MEMBER SERVICES | SPECIAL EVENTS | VISITOR SERVICES

Board of Directors Meeting

Date: March 28, 2023

Aspen Meadows Resort

Present: Cristal Logan, Charlie Bantis, Cari Kuhlman, John Rigney, Donnie Lee, Dan Bartholomew, Debbie Braun, Nina Eisenstat, Andrew Ernemann, Alan Fletcher, Michael Goldberg, Lisa LeMay, Maria Morrow, Justin Nyberg, Steve Skadron, Justin Todd, Bill Tomcich, Torre, and Kathleen Wanatowicz

Absent: Jeff Bay, Rose Abello, David Baugh, Patti Clapper, Matt Cook, Heather Kemp, Henning Rahm, Dave Ressler, and Heather Steenge-Hart

Staff: Susan Bantis, Alycin Bektesh, John Davies, Julie Hardman, Nichole Hellinger, Jessica Hite, Sarah Reynolds Lasser, and Liz Watson

Guests: Carol Breen and Matthew Gillen

Call to order:

Cristal Logan called the meeting to order at 8:33 AM

Approval of the February 28th Minutes:

Approved

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest:

Alan Fletcher: AMFS currently has an action in front of APCHA

Presentation: Aspen Pitkin County Housing Authority – Matthew Gillen

Matthew Gillen presents on his experience and current role at the Aspen Pitkin County Housing Authority (APCHA), which oversees about 1,600 ownership units and 1,300 rental units. APCHA focuses on workforce housing for full-time workers in Pitkin County. APCHA plans to hire a new compliance manager and conduct random audits, in an effort to increase or encourage compliance with restrictions. Gillen discusses potential future initiatives, such as a "right-sizing" pilot program and a maintenance grant program for emergency capital improvements for homeowners. He also addresses the importance of developing relationships with HOAs and improving communication. He clarifies the work hour requirements for housing and the use of the Hometrack database for compliance and qualifications. Gillen talks about the balance between workforce and community housing and the challenges of monitoring people's financial situations. Gillen also discusses the wage pressures in the valley and the potential need to adjust income levels in workforce housing categories. Donnie Lee raises concerns about the valley-wide housing issue and the possibility of a multi-jurisdictional approach. Gillen points to the West Mountain Regional Housing Coalition as one way these conversations are happening. Kathleen Wanatowicz inquires about the City of Aspen's strategic housing plan and maintaining existing housing units with expiring deed restrictions. Gillen explains that they are working to get new deed restrictions in place and preserve the current housing stock.

Housing Summit Update – Charlie Bantis and Kathleen Wanatowicz:

Charlie and Kathleen discuss highlights from the recent housing summit, organized by Gail Schwartz of Habitat for Humanity. The summit aimed to generate solutions to the housing crisis in the Roaring Fork Valley, focusing on new approaches such as land banking, charitable trusts, donor-advised funds for housing, public-private partnerships, and policy changes. The West Mountain Regional Housing Coalition, a key player in addressing the housing crisis, was mentioned as one of the organizations working on these issues. The summit attendees discussed the importance of partnerships, added density, and creating housing opportunities near where people



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work. Kathleen explains that the housing issue is complex, with no single solution. Instead, a variety of partners and approaches at all levels need to be involved to address the crisis. Charlie shares his experience with the coalition and highlights the importance of scale, emphasizing that large-scale projects are necessary to make a difference. The summit attendees recognized the need for a mixture of housing types, including long-term rental communities. They discussed various financial tools, such as low-income housing tax credits and housing trust models, which could help fuel affordable housing projects. Both Charlie and Kathleen emphasize the importance of private sector involvement, as private capital will play a significant role in addressing the housing crisis over the next one to two decades. The summit provided an opportunity for connections to be made, fostering optimism and collaboration among participants.

Chair's Comments – Cristal Logan:

Cristal expresses gratitude for the abundant snowfall and congratulates John Rigney on the World Cup and the successful ski season. She also congratulates Mayor Torre on the election win and appreciates the efforts of Charlie, Kathleen, Gail Schwartz, and their teams for organizing the housing summit. Cristal welcomes Julie Hardman back to ACRA and mentions that Aspen Ideas Festival passes are selling well. She shares that they recently hosted the Aspen Ideas Climate Summit in Miami, which was successful.

President's Comments – Debbie Braun:

Debbie thanks everyone for attending the meeting and reports that the Aspen Chamber's destination contract and lease are on the city council's Consent Agenda. She welcomes Julie Hardman back to the team and expresses gratitude for the fully staffed team, which allows them to resume programming like the Aspen Atlas, a printed business directory, and the Aspen Business Forum in April. Debbie mentions that this year is the 40th anniversary of Food and Wine and they are discussing ways to celebrate it. Volunteer registration for the event opens on Monday. She shares that staff members are currently attending various industry events and they will have an all-staff retreat on April 7th, focusing on redefining the organization's culture and aligning with their strategic plan. Finally, Debbie reports that they are on track to move to the Armory in October 2023, although the timeline may be subject to change.

Marketing Advisory Committee Update:

See [attached](#).

Public Affairs Committee Update – Donnie Lee:

Donnie highlights that the reconstituted public affairs is focused on facilitating good conversation and distilling information on hot topics in the community, such as the entrance to Aspen and employee housing. The aim is to be a resource for bringing people together, sharing information, and fostering communication. Although these issues are not easy to solve, facilitating communication can help serve the community better. Alycin Bektesh confirms that the ACRA website has resources related to housing studies and other reports, which can be found under the Public Affairs section.

Directors' Remarks:

Donnie Lee remarks that things have been consistent, with a great winter reminiscent of the 80s, featuring snow from October to potentially the end of April. The season has been good, and while summer bookings are trailing slightly in pace, they are building up. Despite some contraction in booking windows and demand due to world events, he anticipates a strong summer season.



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Torre starts by thanking Cristal and the Institute for their contributions and involvement in the community. He then addresses the armory renovation and offers his support for the project. Speaking about housing, Torre notes the shift in conversation from individuals to the community and businesses. He highlights the challenges and complexities of regional housing planning, including down-valley communities that resist growth. He also praises Matthew Gillen for his role in housing and acknowledges the imperfections in the current housing system. Torre emphasizes the importance of input from ACRA and its membership to help guide policy changes, using the example of prioritizing housing for those working within the urban growth boundary. He invites feedback and suggests that the city should contact ACRA for input on such matters.

Cari Kuhlman discusses how the conversation today has prompted more questions, particularly about housing funding and how it affects eligibility. She then shares her perspective on the global banking industry and its challenges, mentioning the recent stabilization of issues. Locally, she reports that her bank is fully staffed, having increased starting salaries and working with other financial institutions to stay competitive in hiring. Cari also raises a question about the number of employees working in Aspen and the county, in relation to the 3,200 housing units mentioned. She wonders about the actual housing needs of the community and recalls a study suggesting the need for more units in the coming years.

John Rigney thanks everyone for their support during the World Cup and acknowledges that it was a successful upper valley effort. He is unsure when the event will return but believes it won't be a six-year wait. He mentions Jeff Hanle's upcoming transition and notes that the ski season has been amazing so far. John also announces extended closing dates for two mountains and shares information about closing celebrations. He concludes by mentioning the company's tradition of honoring employees who have worked for over 20 years, which he believes is a testament to the company's culture and ownership.

Nina Eisenstat appreciates Matthew speaking this morning and hopes it's the beginning of a series of conversations. She suggests having other mechanisms for the board to convene, such as the Public Affairs Committee or membership survey. Aspen has had a great winter season, and people are looking forward to spring. There is some talk about where things are going with speculation about a possible recession, but people are generally upbeat and optimistic.

Andrew Ernemann reports that the local real estate market is more inconsistent than in previous years, with uneven patterns across the board. While the market is not depressed, it is also not as strong as in other parts of the country. Short-term rental activity has tapered a little compared to last year, but it is still generally strong. There are reactions from the industry regarding Aspen's limitations on demolition permits and restrictions for short-term rentals, which have caused uncertainty in the market. Ernemann's company sponsored the recent housing summit, and several brokers and staff attended. They came back with ideas on how the real estate broker industry can be more involved through education to clients about tax incentives and opportunities. He believes that continued dialogue is essential to finding meaningful solutions to the local housing market.

Maria Morrow expresses her excitement about the recent housing summit and the dialogue it generated. She believes that looking at successful models and opportunities outside of Aspen can benefit the community by generating education and ideas. Morrow cites Andrew's discussion as an example of how the summit impacted his office. She hopes that the business community can identify areas or players that are doing scalable projects outside of APCHA. While businesses may not be able to do large-scale projects, there may be ways to connect them with public-private partnerships. Morrow hopes that the community can identify players who are willing to do more scalable projects that can provide housing for employees and help businesses recruit people. She notes



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that the community has learned through outreach and policy work that providing housing for employees is crucial for businesses. Morrow encourages the community to identify players who can help them advance this objective for businesses.

Alan Fletcher announces that the Aspen Music Festival and School will be going on sale for the summer next week. He highlights some of the events, such as the John Williams evening and performances by Audra McDonald and Renee Fleming. Fletcher believes that the collaboration with Theater Aspen will be excellent. He also attended the housing summit and echoes the sentiment that housing is the number one issue for everyone. Employers need urgent solutions, and Fletcher is standing in line with them.

Dan Bartholomew reports that there will be a runway closure at the airport from May 10 to May 24 due to air traffic control's dissatisfaction with back taxiing on the runway. During the closure, they will be conducting non-destructive heavyweight deflectometer testing to investigate subsurface failures. The FBO fixed-based operator contract is set to end on September 30, and they are currently shortlisted to three operators, with interviews scheduled for Monday. The fleet mix and forecast for the airport layout plan will be discussed at the April Advisory Board meeting. The FAA will also hold a public meeting to respond to frequently asked questions about aircraft restrictions at the airport. The airport planned to put in a viewing area, but the FAA nixed the idea due to concerns about future expansion. The airport is working on a microgrid project to provide electrical needs and harden the airport against forest fires. They are experiencing extra snowfall and will hopefully narrow down the FBO shortlist by the end of April, but contracting could be messy, and the county may have to take over if they cannot come to an agreement. This would involve hiring around 80 to 100 employees, which comes with its own set of challenges.

Bill Tomcich is grateful for the abundance of snow at ski resorts, but notes that too much snow can cause operational issues, as seen at Mammoth Mountain in California. Despite this, Mammoth Mountain plans to keep their ski area open through July. Tomcich also discusses airline schedules and fare prices, noting that United's hub-to-hub flights are heavily constricted and causing high fare prices. He suggests looking for nonstop routes and considering connecting flights through Austin to bypass these choke points. Tomcich keeps a log of fare structures but notes that availability and variables impact pricing. Finally, Tomcich mentions that airline costs have gone up, and strong fares in and out of Aspen are necessary to maintain strong service.

Justin Nyberg echoes the sentiment that there is a coordination of expertise happening at the Housing Summit, and hopes to see a similar effort on the entrance to Aspen issue. He notes that there is more political will and community engagement on these issues than there has been in a long time, and hopes that action will be taken soon. From a legal perspective, Nyberg sees that the lawyers and professional community are busy but not frantic, and the real estate market is stable. However, there is instability in the regulatory framework locally due to seismic changes coming out of COVID, such as SB-23-213, which shifts control away from local communities for housing goals and transportation. Nyberg also echoes Maria Morrow's comment on scalable solutions being needed for the housing crisis outside of the APCHA framework.

Charlie Bantis starts by congratulating John Rigney on the success of the World Cup and mentions that they were a proud sponsor of the event. He then shifts the conversation to housing and recommends reading a book by Thomas Sowell, an economist who writes about land planning and how it affects housing availability and prices. He encourages everyone to attend the outreach meetings on Castle Creek and expresses his belief that the current planning does not address traffic congestion and the challenges faced today. He suggests that they need to step back and look forward 20 years to determine what they really need to address these issues. Charlie highlights that



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traffic congestion is also connected to housing and it is increasingly difficult and expensive to recruit employees to Aspen due to congestion and traffic issues.

Michael Goldberg reports a rosy outlook for the restaurant industry, with a slowdown being seen just last weekend, but still experiencing a banner year overall. The only complaint is the high cost of certain ingredients, which is a nationwide issue. Fewer restaurants are staying open this time of year, but the industry is still alive and well. In terms of music, there is still strong demand for shows during the offseason, and they are taking a different approach by doing fewer but more impactful shows with high name recognition artists.

Steve Skadron talks about the value of the credit hour at Colorado Mountain College, congratulates Torre for again stepping up as a council member, and thanks Charlie and Kathleen for their work at the housing summit. He mentions CMC's contribution to the Western Mountain Regional Housing Coalition and their involvement in exploring the possibility of housing on the Forest Service parcel. Skadron also updates on CMC's efforts to address the childcare and workforce issues by providing an infant care room and investing in a kitchen to train workers for the culinary industry. He concludes by mentioning the upcoming launch of a soft goods manufacturing program connected to the outdoor recreation economy.

Justin Todd remarks that the Aspen Meadows hotel is expecting a busy summer with pacing at or above historical levels, thanks to the Institute and their programs. However, he expresses concerns about airfares and the potential for cancellations. He mentions being supportive of CMC programs to minimize the need to bring in people from other countries and provide high-paying jobs for locals. He thanks Steve for his efforts in this regard.

Kathleen Wanatowicz notes that the availability of quality skilled labor is still a concern, and it is essential for employers to have a workforce to serve their customers. She mentions that this issue goes back to the availability of housing and transportation, but that there are many complex issues to address. She expresses her satisfaction in serving on the board with other professionals to address these issues in a meaningful way.

Adjournment:

Cristal Logan adjourned the meeting at 10:30 AM