



ACRA DEFY ORDINARY

ASPEN CHAMBER RESORT ASSOCIATION

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT | MEMBER SERVICES | SPECIAL EVENTS | VISITOR SERVICES

Board of Directors Meeting

Date: May 28, 2024

Aspen Meadows Resort

Present: Cristal Logan, Jeff Bay, John Rigney, Donnie Lee, Dan Bartholomew, Debbie Braun, Patti Clapper, Matt Cook, Nina Eisenstat, Michael Goldberg, Heather Kemp, Lisa LeMay, Justin Nyberg, Dave Ressler, Dwayne Romero, Steve Skadron, Maria Ticsay, Justin Todd, Bill Tomcich, Torre, Brenda Wild, and Pete Yang.

Absent: Cari Kuhlman, Julia Theisen, David Baugh, Alan Fletcher, Henning Rahm, and Heather Steenge-Hart.

Staff: Jennifer Albright Carney, Alycin Bektesh, John Clay Davies, Julie Hardman, Nichole Hellinger, Jessica Hite, Savannah Grant, Casey Graves, Sarah Reynolds Lasser, and Eliza Voss

Guests: Quayla Allen and Sara Ott

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

Approval of the March 26th Minutes: Approved

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest: None

CTO DEIA Audit: Quayla Allen explains that the audit, supported by a grant from the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) in collaboration with Snowmass Tourism and Challenge Aspen, aimed to establish a baseline understanding of DEIA sentiments and opportunities in Aspen Snowmass. The audit involved designing surveys, conducting interviews, and uncovering storytelling opportunities for marketing, along with recommending tools and education. Key findings indicate that many organizations focus on compliance, such as anti-discrimination policies and ADA compliance. However, the goal is to shift from compliance to values, emphasizing equity and support based on personal circumstances. Sentiments gathered reveal that Aspen is perceived as a leader in inclusion, with initiatives like Gay Ski Week and Pride events. However, there is a need for better communication about the diverse offerings in Aspen Snowmass to ensure all visitors feel welcome and represented. Best practices highlighted include inclusive leadership by organizations like Wheeler Opera House and Blazing Adventures. These organizations exemplify efforts to diversify leadership roles and provide accessible experiences. For instance, Blazing Adventures has increased female participation in outdoor activities, while Wheeler Opera House focuses on programming for Spanish-speaking populations and individuals with neurological disabilities. There is a call for more support in bridging gaps between English speakers and the ESL population, addressing socio-economic disparities, and improving communication about accessibility. Collaboration among organizations and prioritizing racial diversity in promotional materials are also emphasized. In conclusion, Quayla stresses the importance of connecting local efforts with broader state initiatives and invites further discussion and questions from the board.

Master Services Agreement & History of ACRA's Location: Eliza Voss presents a high-level overview of ACRA's 2023 master services agreement with the city of Aspen, which commenced on January 1, 2023, and spans five years with an automatic renewal. Key points of the agreement include maintaining tax fund receipts in a separate interest-bearing account, holding a \$300,000 reserve account replenished post-COVID, and ACRA independently holding an additional \$200,000 reserve for economic downturns. An independent third-party audit is required by June 30, 2025, and every three years thereafter. ACRA contributes 1.5% of tax collections towards the city's auditor, not exceeding \$100,000 annually, and is responsible for the destination marketing plan and operating visitor centers, while the city maintains the facilities. The agreement also includes event production for Wintersköl and the Food & Wine Classic in Aspen and outlines the city's and ACRA's efforts to establish a partnership with the US Forest Service for a shared visitor center space. Jennifer Albright Carney then presented the history of ACRA's locations from 1990 to 2024, detailing the moves and partnerships over the years. From 1990 to 2017, ACRA was housed in the Rio Grande parking garage facility, before moving to the old powerhouse in 2017, where they are currently located. A temporary move to the armory is planned for fall 2024, with the future permanent location still under discussion. Jennifer explained that ACRA's move to the Rio Grande facility originated from a bond initiative requiring transportation-related services, which ACRA complemented. The initial lease in 1990 was for five years and was renewed, with space adjustments made over time to accommodate staff and partner organizations like Aspen Central Reservations and Stay Aspen Snowmass. In 2017, ACRA moved to the old powerhouse on a five-year lease, which has extended to seven years. During the pandemic, ACRA gave some space back to the city, and the current move to the armory is due to the city's prioritization of other construction projects. The future redeveloped armory is expected to provide ACRA with 2500 square feet of administrative office space and 1000 square feet for visitor services, including public restrooms. Jennifer highlighted ongoing



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discussions since 2000 about the best location for ACRA, involving various plans and public votes, with the goal of creating a 21st-century visitor center that is welcoming and equipped with modern technology. She shared examples of successful combined visitor centers and community spaces from Park City, Utah, and Queenstown. Debbie Braun emphasizes the strong partnership between ACRA and the city, highlighting the mutual benefits of collaboration in promoting economic vitality, enriching the cultural landscape, and enhancing visitor experiences. She stresses the importance of open communication and community engagement to ensure a vibrant and inclusive Aspen.

Debbie invites initial thoughts and feedback on the relationship between ACRA and the city, their Master Agreement, and the long-standing partnership over the past 30 years. Sara Ott from the city provides insights into the community sentiment, which differs from the agreement terms. She highlights the city council's consideration of a master lease for five food stalls and two bars in the armory, noting that including ACRA would mean losing other community-demanded amenities. Sara also mentions the significant funding gap for the armory renovation, suggesting the possibility of seeking voter support to bridge this gap. Jeff Bay asks about the historical lease rates for ACRA's spaces to make informed decisions about future options. Debbie confirms that this information is available and suggests forming a task force to review these details. A board member expresses concerns about the food court concept, emphasizing the need for community-focused spaces rather than just food and bars. Sara clarifies that a master lease would involve one owner managing multiple food stalls and bars, and the council's decision-making will prioritize revenue generation to cover renovation costs. There are concerns about the feasibility and community impact of the proposed food court and bars. Debbie acknowledges the complexity of the situation and highlights the importance of finding solutions that balance community needs and financial viability. The discussion includes the temporary use of the armory for ACRA's office and visitor center, with Sara indicating that council support is split on this matter. Sara emphasizes the importance of financing for the armory project and the need for a clear plan to generate revenue. The board discusses potential alternatives for ACRA's temporary and long-term spaces, considering options like the Wheeler Opera House or other core locations. Debbie proposes forming a task force with members who have expertise in real estate and finance to explore these options and work closely with the city. The group also discusses the potential for community engagement and public input on the project, with Mayor Torre indicating that the evening's work session will focus on broader discussions without additional public comment. The board moves on to the next agenda item, reflecting on the "Wouldn't it be great" exercise conducted during their retreat. They brainstorm ideas for activating the armory space, including universal restrooms, digital experiences, historical displays, and community partnerships. Debbie highlights the importance of ongoing community engagement, sustainability initiatives, and innovative visitor services as key goals for ACRA. The discussion concludes with a focus on forming a task force to address ACRA's facilities needs and exploring potential funding and partnership opportunities with the city. The board expresses confidence in their ability to achieve these goals and positively impact the community.

Board Retreat Recap: Debbie Braun begins by expressing gratitude for the board's participation in the recent retreat, highlighting its value to both staff and her. She emphasizes the board's support, which boosts the staff's confidence as they approach the final year of the strategic plan. Debbie outlines two main areas of focus from the retreat. The first involves an exercise called "Wouldn't it be great if," where board members brainstormed ideas for enhancing the visitor center at the armory. They imagined features like a US Forest Service window and universal bathrooms, aiming to make the space exceptional. The second focus was on reviewing the pillars of the strategic plan. With one year left, they assessed progress and prioritized remaining goals. The board also self-assessed their performance, rating themselves at about 7.9, equivalent to a C+ to A- grade. They discussed enhancing board meetings to foster more conversation and provide richer information. This meeting marks the start of those changes, aiming to benefit both new and seasoned board members.

Chair's Comments: Cristal Logan thanks everyone for attending the airport meeting and the BOCC meeting, noting the interesting perspectives shared. She emphasizes the importance of the airport's modernization, which aligns with community values such as reducing noise and pollution, enhancing accessibility, and minimizing car traffic into the community. Cristal appreciates Maria Ticsay for leading the PA Committee and expresses confidence in her leadership. She announces the Aspen Institute's summer lineup of free lectures, encouraging everyone to register. Cristal also highlights the Institute's pursuit of affordable, deed-restricted housing for the Aspen Institute, the Aspen Music Festival and School, and the Physics Center. Additionally, Cristal shares that the Meadows Café has opened to the public, operating daily from 7 AM to 3 PM. She invites everyone to visit, host meetings, and enjoy the offerings. She mentions that Michael Goldberg and others in the restaurant community have experienced a very slow off-season in April and early May, despite a successful winter season. Lastly, Cristal announces the Community Pride Celebration, which will be



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held at the Aspen Music Festival on June 27 from 4 to 6 PM. This free event, hosted in collaboration with the City, Aspen Skiing Company, ACRA, and the National Endowment for the Arts, will take place outside on the lawn.

President's Comments: Debbie Braun reminds everyone that Food & Wine is just a couple of weeks away and thanks the board members for their service. She informs them that they receive two Food & Wine passes as a token of appreciation, which will be available starting June 13, right after the luncheon. She encourages everyone to get their luncheon tickets quickly as they are nearly sold out. After the luncheon, there will be a small party at the Wheeler where board members can pick up their passes under their names. Debbie assures that she will send an email with all the necessary details. She also mentions that Julie Hardman noted some programming at the ISIS Theater that is open to the public and not just pass holders, and she will provide additional information about this. Debbie humorously points out that her 25th anniversary with ACRA is on Saturday and looks forward to celebrating many more years. In response to Lisa LeMay's remarks about noticing the closed pavilion visitor center, Debbie clarifies that the closure of the pavilion over the past weekend was not due to staffing issues but because of the ongoing construction on the mall. The decision was made due to the dust and noise from the construction, which made it unsuitable for employees to work there. Debbie explains that the pavilion is closed until June 1, but they will continue to monitor the situation as the construction involves heavy machinery and jackhammers close to the building. She mentions sending a memo to the city and receiving approval from Sara Ott to close the pavilion for the month to ensure the safety and well-being of the employees. Debbie acknowledges that while it is unfortunate, the closure was necessary for health and safety reasons.

Public Affairs Committee Update: Maria Ticsay provides an update, noting that the meeting minutes offer a comprehensive explanation of their discussions on transportation, the airport, and workforce issues. She encourages everyone to share any upcoming concerns or suggestions from their constituents with her, Debbie, or Alycin, even if they cannot attend the meetings. The next meeting is in July and will likely cover topics like the Castle Creek Bridge and other pertinent issues. Maria emphasizes the importance of hearing ideas about affordable housing and workforce issues and invites everyone to contribute their thoughts and ideas to the committee.

Directors Comments:

Torre comments on the recent off-season, noting that it was short but quiet. He mentions the recent community celebrations at the Wheeler Opera House, describing them as fantastic. With the weather improving, he expresses his anticipation for the arrival of summer.

Dan Bartholomew comments on the record passenger numbers at the Aspen airport in April, linking it to United Airlines extending their full schedules by 10 days and increased local usage. He notes that flights are more affordable with year-round service from all three airlines, reducing the need for locals to drive to Denver. Dan shares his experience of struggling to find parking at the airport, indicating high demand and strong local usage. He emphasizes that most passenger growth is during the shoulder seasons, benefiting locals and sustaining airline services. Dan also mentions the need to prepare for the upcoming runway reconstruction, projected for 2026, which could require an eight-month shutdown. He warns that emergency repairs might lead to sudden week-long closures due to current runway conditions, stressing the importance of considering these potential disruptions from a business standpoint.

Steve Skadron congratulates Debbie on her 25 years with the organization. He shares exciting news about the new kitchen at CMC, which has its first four classes scheduled as part of a slow rollout. The classes include Tapas Spain, Farm to Table, Thai Night, and Italian Pizza Night, held on Thursdays, July 16th, 23rd, 30th, and August 6th, from 5:30 to 8:30 PM. Each class seats 12 people and costs \$79. Steve mentions that they've already had a corporate retreat group purchase all 12 spots, highlighting the kitchen as a valuable community space that supports the local hospitality and culinary sector. Additionally, Steve announces that CMC has bought an entire table at Food & Wine for the first time, ensuring strong representation. CMC will have a presence inside the tent with a table and will involve students and faculty behind the scenes, prepping for renowned chefs and the Best New Chefs event. He expresses enthusiasm for the integration of CMC into Food & Wine, noting that GE Monogram will use their kitchen for the entire Food & Wine week, further solidifying this new partnership.

Adjournment: Cristal Logan adjourned the meeting at 10:25 AM