

**Board of Directors Meeting**

**Date: November 26, 2024**

**Zoom**

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

**Absent:** Alan Fletcher, Tharyn Mulberry, Justin Nyberg, Henning Rahm, and Heather Steenge-Hart

**Staff:** Jennifer Albright Carney, Bridget Crosby, John Davies, Savannah Grant, Casey Graves, Julie Hardman, Nichole Hellinger, Jessica Hite, Taylor Smith, Eliza Voss, and Liz Watson

**Guests:** John Adams, Eliza Burlingame, Lou Eppelsheimer, Mallory Kaufman, Callie Lardas, Cory Lowe, Jami McMannes, Virginia McNellis, Molly Meek, Jessica Moore, Sara Ott, Monique Rodrigues, Carolyn Sackariason, Sarah Shaw, and Laura Smith.

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

**Approval of the October 29th Minutes:** Approved

**Disclosure of Conflict of Interest:** None

**Nominating Committee Update:** Donnie Lee provided an update, noting that six board positions are up for re-election this year, each serving two-year terms. Five of these positions are running unopposed, including Donnie Lee in the lodging seat, Maria Ticsay in professional, Michael Goldberg in restaurant, Heather Kemp in retail, and Nina Eisenstat in the service seat. The nonprofit seat, however, has attracted strong interest, with Andrea Beard (Jazz Aspen Snowmass), Carrie Williams (The Aspen Institute), and Peter Waanders (Anderson Ranch) vying for the position. The election for this seat is currently underway and will conclude in December. The newly elected board will be seated at the January meeting, as there is no meeting scheduled for December.

**Destination Management Year-End Update:** The update highlighted the Aspen Chamber's accomplishments and initiatives in 2024, emphasizing gratitude for partnerships and community collaboration. The Aspen Destination Management Plan (ADMP), established in 2022 with pillars to address visitor pressure, enhance the Aspen experience, and preserve small-town character, continues to guide efforts. Key achievements include increased sustainability initiatives, significant marketing and PR campaigns that generated millions of impressions, and the successful management of events like Wintersköl and the Food & Wine Classic. Infrastructure improvements such as visitor center upgrades and the upcoming relocation to the Armory further support the chamber's mission. The focus on community connection, sustainable tourism, and innovative marketing ensures Aspen remains a leader in destination management. Plans include a resident sentiment survey, website redesign, and expanded efforts to promote community engagement and environmental stewardship.

**Finance Committee Update & 2025 Budget Approval:** The Finance Committee and Board of Directors approved the 2025 budgets for both the Chamber and Destination Marketing. For Destination Marketing, the 2025 budget is flat compared to actuals, reflecting slightly lower marketing and event service expenses due to fewer major events, such as only one Wintersköl instead of two, and no World Cup. However, costs for producing high-impact events have risen. The budget includes increased expenditures for trade shows, a return of the meeting planner and wedding planner familiarization trips, and a continued focus on partnerships like Charleston Food & Wine. For the Chamber, member dues are projected to increase by 5%, reaching \$855,000, as part of an ongoing effort to strengthen financial capacity while maintaining competitive compensation. The total expenses for 2025 are expected to rise by 5.8% over 2024, primarily due to payroll adjustments and operational needs. The board discussed the possibility of adding credit card processing fees to generate additional revenue, though no decision was finalized. Both budgets were approved unanimously, with commendations for the staff's thorough preparation and fiscal responsibility.

**Chair's Comments:** Cristal Logan expressed her gratitude to the Marketing Advisory Committee and arts and culture representatives for their participation in the meeting. She noted her delight in passing the nonprofit board seat to a new representative and commended the strong slate of candidates, including Andrea, Peter, and Carrie. Cristal highlighted the Aspen Institute's preparations for its 75th anniversary and acknowledged the successes of local arts and culture organizations, specifically congratulating the Wheeler Opera House on its exciting winter lineup. She reflected positively on the community's cohesion and shared her enjoyment of watching the election night coverage on Grassroots TV while attending the Aspen Institute's board meeting and gala in Manhattan.

**President's Comments:** Debbie Braun thanked everyone for their support and acknowledged the hard work of both the Destination Marketing and Chamber teams. She highlighted the Chamber's ongoing efforts in areas such as ski passes, business directories, public affairs, and airport initiatives, crediting Savannah Grant for managing memberships and Sarah Lasser for her work on programming and sponsorships. Debbie noted that while the office may appear quiet, the team is actively engaging with the community to better serve its needs. She expressed gratitude for Cristal Logan's contributions as she transitions to Chair Emeritus and welcomed Donnie Lee as the incoming Chair for 2025. Debbie concluded by wishing everyone a happy Thanksgiving and looking forward to the new year.

**Director's Comments:**

**Torre** expressed gratitude for the presentation and emphasized the importance of sustainability across the environment, economics, and community. He encouraged participation in the "Entrance to Aspen" survey, noting its role in gathering community feedback on goals and values for potential solutions. Torre congratulated Michael Goldberg on the successful and efficient construction project at Belly Up, highlighting it as a significant improvement. He wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving, expressed his appreciation for ACRA, the board, and the Aspen community, and concluded by emphasizing the importance of maintaining Aspen's unique character.

**Patti Clapper** wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving and expressed gratitude for the community's support of ballot question 1C. She highlighted the swift approval of the Airport Layout Plan (ALP), which was signed by the Board of Commissioners, sent to Washington, D.C., approved within 24 hours, and returned to Pitkin County. This rapid turnaround allows the county to move forward with community input on designing a new terminal, runway, and intermodal transportation system while pursuing funding through congressional representatives. Patti also acknowledged the approval of ballot question 1A and its potential for creating housing opportunities, particularly through partnerships. She noted ongoing efforts to improve parking management at Buttermilk Airport, the Brush Creek Park and Ride, and the airport itself, addressing issues such as commuters using airport parking for non-travel purposes.

**Dan Bartholomew** added to Patti Clapper's remarks by noting that, following the approval of the Airport Layout Plan (ALP) and subsequent planning steps, the projected shutdown of the airport for approximately 8–9 months to shift and reconstruct the runway is anticipated to occur in 2027.

**Bill Tomcich** echoed gratitude for the support and success of ballot question 1C, emphasizing its importance in enabling the swift progress of airport improvements. He highlighted a dramatic 35% year-over-year increase in local passenger use of the Aspen airport in October, which has exacerbated parking challenges for both passengers and employees. Bill urged consideration of short-term solutions to encourage greater use of local transit, such as RFTA buses, while acknowledging their limitations for travelers with luggage. He specifically suggested allowing overnight parking at RFTA bus stations, like Brush Creek, which typically have ample unused parking. Bill emphasized the need to optimize existing resources to alleviate parking pressures while anticipating long-term transit solutions tied to the new terminal project.

**John Rigney** expressed excitement about the early opening of two mountains, which eases pressure on the Thanksgiving weekend. He praised the snow-making teams for their efforts and acknowledged the favorable contributions of Mother Nature. He reminded everyone that Friday is the final early pass deadline, encouraging businesses and individuals to take advantage of discounts before prices increase. Rigney noted that strong snow messaging could help address occupancy gaps and set the stage for a successful season.

**Adjournment:** Cristal Logan adjourned the meeting at 10:18 AM