



Visit Estes Park  
The Destination  
Marketing Organization  
VisitEstesPark.com

# Board of Directors Minutes September 22, 2015

**Board Members Attending:** Bill Almond, Karen Ericson, Steve Kruger, Lindsay Lamson, Jon Nicholas, Scott Webermeier

**Also Attending:** Town Trustee Ron Norris  
Rocky Mountain National Park PIO Kyle Patterson

Elizabeth Fogarty, President & CEO  
Visit Estes Park Staff Suzy Blackhurst

**Public Comment.** None

**Board Comments.** None

## A. Discussion Items and Reports

### 1. Ron Norris, Estes Park Town Board Liaison

Trustee Norris noted that the upcoming Town Board study session would include a discussion on dangerous building codes. During the regular meeting of the board, Mayor Bill Pinkham is scheduled to proclaim this as Conflict Resolution Month. Following that, staff and others will celebrate Mayor Pinkham's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday with a cake. President & CEO Elizabeth Fogarty will speak about Visit Estes Park (Part 2 of the 2-part series); the town board is scheduled to vote on a resolution supporting the ballot issues for construction of a community center; an ordinance establishing a standing audit committee will be considered. Norris said that the Town will be seeking assistance from federal and state officials in their efforts to have Central Federal Lands approve the inclusion of a parking garage for the NEPA grant.

### 2. Rocky Mountain National Park report – Kyle Patterson

Patterson thanked all who attended the re-dedication ceremony at Rocky Mountain National Park. The ceremony had 1,600 attend, Fox and Channel 2 aired their morning shows from the park; all Denver television stations were at the ceremony. In addition Fox created a 30-minute program on preserving the park that aired twice over the Labor Day weekend. Norris asked Patterson to send a link to that story to Town Administrator Frank Lancaster for distribution to all trustees. In other news coverage, Patterson noted that Good Housekeeping's September issue features advice on hiking in Rocky Mountain National Park.

Through the weekend of September 19, the National Park had more than 500,000 riders use the hiker shuttle; the busiest day was September 6. Sunday, September 20, there were 9,107 riders; trailhead parking lots are filling early. Patterson noted that entrance fees increase on October 1.

She said the park does keep statistics to differentiate between weekday and weekend travel. She said people are taking long weekends instead of a week.

In preparation for the fee-free entrance to the National Park on September 26, Patterson said the park would use variable messaging signage to let people know to expect high use and congestion between 10 am and 3 pm.

She also noted that the park is considering using variable signage at the Deer Ridge junction to help direct people to use the Highway 34 entrance on their way out of the park.

Chair Almond expressed thanks for everything Patterson and the National Park staff did to make the Centennial successful and asked Patterson to share that message with her team.

### 3. Financial Report

Fogarty presented the financial report and said it provided all good news. July receipts were 30% higher in 2015 than in July 2014, which is an indication that lodgers are yielding rates. While vacation home rental tax receipts are being added, Fogarty said they do not account for the overall major increase in receipts. Year-to-date through July, receipts have increased 23%. She said accounts receivable are down to about \$5,000, thanks to the work of staff members Michael Bodman and Suzy Blackhurst.

### 4. Key Indicators Report

Fogarty said the key indicators contained no surprises. Media impressions are up, partially due to the number of "best of" lists that Visit Estes Park and partners have generated. In highlighting other areas of the report Fogarty said the website continues to perform very well. Based on information from a webinar she attended in the morning, Fogarty said Millennials are going to DMO websites to be inspired, but generally move on to brand sites for booking. VEP is unusual in this regard, in a very successful way, because the VEP site gets both inspirational and lodging conversion traffic. Consequently very specific content, such as telling the reader to visit the marina to paddleboard, shop at the Grey House downtown, and dine at the View Restaurant for a scratch meal, is needed, as opposed to "we have fun activities, cool shopping and unique restaurants." Guests won't visit if the information is "vanilla." In the coming year, she said website work would be split from social media, due to the amount of investment we need to make with each, but that entails personnel resources, which have been budgeted to support this transition. She said the average session duration down, but people are finding what they want faster. This is further proven by the fact that Visit Estes Park is the #1 lodging referral site of 273 clients around the country with Jackrabbit. Webermeier asked that the report further clarify the town's additional 1% sales tax and separate that out.

### 5. CEO Report

Fogarty stated she would keep the CEO Report short, to allow more time for Operation Plan discussion and approval. Fogarty said she continues to be in touch with the vacation home rental group that has more vacation home owners signing up for business licenses, paying taxes and joining EALA each month. In comparing Estes Park regulations to others, Fogarty said a fairly good comparison community is South Lake Tahoe. The homeowners have asked for an extra meeting with the town board to discuss the similarities and to introduce them to South Lake Tahoe officials, who are willing to visit Estes Park and share their best practices.

The Arts group appears to be on track with working on seeking arts district designation from the state. Fogarty may be handing off her participation with the group to staff member Becky Gruhl fairly soon. The group has asked for Visit Estes Park support for a request to change the name of Performance Park to Dick Orleans Performance Park. Norris said the board has no criteria to use when renaming parks, but they plan on addressing this soon. There was also discussion about naming right sponsorships for town buildings. It was decided to discuss the request in October.

Fogarty attended the Colorado Tourism Office annual Governor's Conference. She reported that among those who attended were Fiona Arnold, representing CO Office of Economic Development & International Trade, CADMO (Colorado Association of Destination Marketing Organizations) lobbyists and Governor Hickenlooper. The governor provided a 45-minute presentation celebrating tourism and its massive positive impact on the state; CADMO met with Fiona, and CADMO will be included in conversations about who will be hired as the new CTO director, including being part of the selection committee. Estes Park's video submission saying farewell to CTO Director Al White brought the house down. Both Al White and Jon Ricks, who have resigned their positions at CTO, spoke to the audience. Ricks will be joining the staff at Miles Media.

Fogarty said the first presentation to the Town Board, highlighting “Where we are now” went well, and the information was well-received. During her second presentation on Sept. 22, she will talk about “where Visit Estes Park is headed.” She will provide specific data and reveal of a couple new photo shots that have just been received.

6. Quarterly Committee Reports

Chair Bill Almond announced that the Advocacy Committee report would be heard during the first meeting in November. Webermeier asked that future board meeting dates be listed on agendas.

Executive Committee: During the last meeting, the committee discussed board recommendations on the Operating Plan. All Board input regarding the Operating Plan was discussed with Elizabeth, some of which was included. Other suggestions were not, as they were better served via an advocacy role, not the Operating Plan.

Finance Committee: Webermeier said Lindsay Lamson brought forward several points about the budget in the Operating Plan. One recommendation was to specifically list requested marketing investments from the Town (\$100,000) and the County (\$25,000), and offset the town’s contribution with an expense line specifically for Events Marketing. Board liaison Norris said the Town would not favor putting its contribution in the general fund and prefers it be ear-marked for events only. It was noted that Visit Estes Park and the Town have a window of opportunity to work toward a common purpose, and that VEP cannot be the only source for events marketing investments without limiting other marketing efforts. Norris noted that Trustee Bob Holcomb will want to know how VEP plans to spend the investment. In response to Fogarty asking what number Town Board would be comfortable with, Norris said \$100,000 is in the ball park, but he suggested requesting \$95,000. Fogarty noted that a media plan for events marketing is being developed and would be included as an addendum to the Operating Plan for the amount requested of the Town investment. She said that part of destination marketing is events, but VEP’s event marketing is a broader conversation, so it is necessary for the Town to invest in specific event marketing to support their efforts and the Event Complex. An example of that direction is that although VEP markets ElkFest, most of the marketing efforts support “Elktober.” VEP can’t get PR attention for ElkFest because the event hasn’t evolved with new amenities enough, however VEP is getting PR leverage with Elktober. Norris noted that there is some support on the board for providing a financial investment, but that the plan for using any such funding would need to be specific for events. He also said Town Board would want Visit Estes Park to work with the Town to help search for grant money as a way of partnering, which Fogarty stated we have and will continue to. Norris noted that Town Board is holding budget meetings in October. VEP board members agreed that the Operating Plan budget should be adjusted to include a town investment request of \$95,000.

Also discussed by the Finance Committee surrounded the point that the ending fund balance includes both the reserve amount and Tabor funds. A footnote would be added to explain this.

Board members discussed future funding needs, and asked how soon the board wants to seek other revenues. Fogarty noted that VEP needs to have a sense of what the community is comfortable with. Jon Nicholas said the other question is how the additional funds will be spent. It was decided that the Revenue Task Force of Webermeier, Nicholas and Fogarty would meet soon and address some of the questions during the October 6, 2015 meeting of the board.

Board Development & Governance – No report.

Discussion about potential board nominees: It was noted that Chris Carey, General Manager of Estes Park Resort indicated he might reapply. Dave Delucca at the YMCA was noted as a possible candidate. Fogarty will send a document on a board member profile to the board.

**B. Action Items:****1. Approval of Minutes from September 1, 2015 Regular Meeting**

Lamson moved that minutes from the September 1, 2015 regular meeting be approved. Webermeier seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

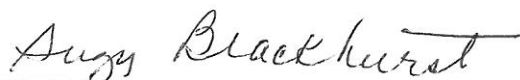
**2. Approval of 2016 Operating Plan per Town IGA**

Fogarty noted that few changes to the plan had been made since it was first introduced. Some content was added to information about retail and Kyle Patterson helped make improvements to the Rocky Mountain National Park section.

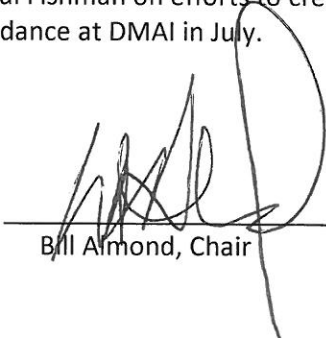
Webermeier moved that the plan be approved with amendments to the budget as discussed earlier in the meeting and adding a clarification that restricted funds are included in the ending fund balance. Nicholas seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**C. Other Business**

Almond announced that the October 6 meeting would include a discussion of increasing revenues, a presentation on the Community Center ballot issue from David Batey and discussion of the Arts District request for support to rename Performance Park to Dick Orleans Performance Park. The agenda on October 20 includes a report from Kyle Patterson, a presentation from Paul Fishman on efforts to create an urban renewal authority, and staff member Brooke Burnham's report on attendance at DMAI in July.



Suzy Blackhurst, Recording Secretary

  
Bill Almond, Chair