

VISIT BIG SKY

March 26, 2020 *Visit Big Sky Board of Directors Meeting Minutes*

VIRTUAL MEETING Due to COVID-19 via GoToMeeting

Present:

Call-In: Tim Drain, Justin Bain, Dan Martin, Krista Traxler, Kirsten King, Josh Treasure, Ryan Hamilton, Julie Grimm-Lisk

Absent: Ryan Kunz

Staff Present: Candace Carr Strauss, Emily Lessard, Paige Desatoff, and Lori Wetzel

Public: Erik Morrison – Love Street Media and Town Center Owners Association, Chris Dunkerson – Yellowstone Club, Justa Adams – Big Sky Skijoring and Sotherby’s International Realty, Stacie Mesuda and Liv Grubaugh – Big Sky Resort, Melanie West – The Trove

Call to Order: 8:36 am

PUBLIC COMMENT

All public attendees introduced themselves to the VBS Board. The following Public Comment was then made:

- Stacie Mesuda provided some background on and an apology for the abrupt closure of BSR on March 16. Boyne Resorts in response to Vail Resorts’ and Alterra’s announcement to close their ski resorts, coupled with the Governor of Colorado’s executive order on Saturday, March 14 to close all Colorado ski resorts felt it prudent to follow suit for all its resorts. The notice of suspension of operations as of Monday, March 16 was made at 8am on Sunday, March 15. The last guests at BSR departed on Saturday, March 21 with a very limited potential for reopening prior to the end of the season. Currently BSR is evaluating recompense for Season Passholders, watching with a close eye the forthcoming announcement by Vail Resorts’ by month-end April. There will be limited potential to re-open BSR for the 2020 summer season.

ACTION ITEMS

Approval of Minutes

- A motion to approve the November and January minutes was made by Krista Traxler, with a second by Kirsten King. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Financials

- A motion to approve the February financials was made by Krista Traxler, with a second by Justin Bain. Discussion followed about the VBS Budget Sub-committee’s meeting to discuss FY20-FY21 budgets with an eye on revising figures due to the impacts of COVID-19 on Resort Tax and MT Lodging Facility Use Tax collections. With no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

VBS Board Operations & Administration

BSRAD EMERGENCY Board Meeting (Fri, Mar 20th) Recap | Big Sky Relief Fund

- On Monday, March 23 following the BSRAD emergency board meeting, Candace Strauss along with Tim Drain-Chair, VBS Board along with Scott Johnson-Chair and Kevin Hinkle with the Big Sky Chamber Board, met with members of the Resort Tax Board including Kevin Germain-Chair and Sarah Blechta to discuss potential relief efforts for Big Sky small businesses including microgrants and/or loans. The Big Sky Chamber is offering \$110,000, and VBS \$90,000 from their FY20 Resort Tax allocations to the relief fund efforts. This committee is working on a process by which to make funds available for distribution to help with operations and/or payroll due to the negative impact of COVID-19. This group will meet weekly on Mondays to continue the conversation.

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- Trying not to duplicate business relief efforts provided by the federal government including the CARES Act which was passed by the Senate and is now headed to the House before going to the President to be signed into law. All current business resources can be found at www.bigskychamber.com/communityupdates.
- Both Visit Big Sky and the Big Sky Chamber are participating in the Big Sky Relief Operational Partners bi-weekly calls (Tues/Fri) with a dozen other community leaders and funders listening in on the call.

Big Sky Chamber | VBS Operations Update

- Due to the Governor's Stay at Home directive effective Tuesday, March 17, Visit Big Sky and the Big Sky Chamber staff have moved to working remotely. The Visitor Information Center is currently closed with signage posted on the doors of the building stating this.

VBS Marketing Outlook Luncheon & Annual Members' Meeting – Thurs, May 7

- Correction the meeting is Thursday, May 7 not May 8
- The meeting was to be held once again at Horn & Cattle | Lone Mountain Ranch, however, due to COVID-19, LMR announced its closure making that impossible. The 3rd Annual VBS Marketing Outlook Luncheon and Annual Members' Meeting however has not been cancelled. Other arrangements are being considered at this time. Now more than ever, it is vital to convene Big Sky's tourism stakeholders in the wake of COVID-19 as we work to forge the path to recovery. The meeting will be streamed online should in person not be an option.
- VBS Board and Officer Election announcements are also slated to occur at the VBS Board which takes place at 8:30am just prior to the event. Board Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer/Secretary Officers and 3 Board seats will be voted upon. Strauss will email everyone after looking into term expirations and vacancies however Tim Drain-President/Chair, Dan Martin-Vice President and Ryan Kunz-Treasurer/Secretary voiced interest in continuing in their respective offices. Public notice of the vacancies is required. Elections will be run electronically. Strauss made mention that the Executive/Nominating Committee and full VBS Board with the upcoming fiscal year should take the opportunity to review current Board composition to ensure all tourism stakeholders that fall within the VBS destination that the organization is charged to represent have a voice. A Board matrix similar to the one done for the Big Sky Chamber Board will be done for the VBS Board. A Nominating Committee meeting will be set up to discuss a matrix and the potential candidates seeking to serve.
- Strauss shared that she spoke with Ryan Kunz who is currently running for a seat on the Resort Tax Board. Should he be voted into the position, he may need to step back from the VBS Board due to the time commitment required. We shall deal with that following the May Special District Elections.
- Krista Traxler shared with the VBS Board that she has accepted a new position as Vice President of Marketing at Lone Mountain Land Company and will be transitioning from Yellowstone Club. It was discussed that Krista would step down from her seat at Yellowstone Club and seek appointment to the LMLCo seat left vacant with Andy Wirth's resignation.
- A newly created award - The Lee Poole Peak Performer Award – was to be celebrated this year with the winner to be announced at the VBS Marketing Outlook and Annual Members' Meeting. Nominations are now being accepted so be sure to put forth stellar examples of hospitality from our frontline workers. Lee Poole was the visionary behind Moonlight Basin and admired by many for his dedication to stellar customer service. He passed away suddenly in the Spring of 2015.

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PROMOTE the Destination

COVID-19 IMPACTS: VBS Spring/Summer '20 Marketing

- Currently, the only paid marketing being done by VBS is a Pay-Per-Click campaign with Metric PPC which began March 1. A budget of \$40,000 for March-May with extension through June was allotted. The first full month report will be out shortly. This campaign specifically targets people actively searching for lodging in and around Big Sky and Yellowstone National Park. Paige Desatoff gave an overview of the campaign including keywords and retargeting strategies. The “lodging in Big Sky” and “lodging in West Yellowstone” keywords are currently top performers. Metric reported that there has not been a decrease in searches so far, even with COVID-19. Conversion rates are also strong for click throughs from Visitbigsky.com to lodging partners’ websites.
- Strauss commented on the closure of both Yellowstone and Teton National Parks on March 30 for the foreseeable future. International group travel and subsequently transportation and lodging to support this tourism segment have been negatively impacted.
- Strauss shared a presentation illustrating the sensitivity of messaging being put forth by both YNP and VBS in the wake of the pandemic. VBS messaging is inspirational and includes “Come Live the Dream...Later” and “Keep the Dream Alive” as well as Plan Today for #TravelTomorrow following the World Tourism Organization’s messaging. It is critical to keep the Big Sky destination top of mind so that when consumers are able to travel again, Big Sky is one of their choices. VBS also worked with a vendor to produce T-shirts and stickers stating “#StayStrongBigSky” with profits directed to the micro-grant and/or loan relief fund that is being developed with the Big Sky Chamber and Resort Tax.
 - a. **OVG:** The 2020 Big Sky Official Visitor Guide will be updated for the coming summer season. The VBS team has reviewed it to ensure all necessary updates were made including the addition of a new regional and town map. Once nearly completed, the OVG will be distributed to the Board for their review. Please provide comments promptly. This year, advertising typically reserved for lodging partners only was opened up to additional attractions outside of the BSRAD that the VIC is frequently sending guests to visit such as the Museum of the Rockies, Grizzley and Wolf Discovery Center and IMEX Theater as a way to grow our private support. In an effort to conserve funds during this time of uncertainty, VBS will not print the 60,000 hard copies of the OVG for distribution. This conserves \$24,000. Expanded distribution was being explored pre-COVID, but has since been put on hold. However, the digital OVG will be updated and placed on the website for digital download.

Recovery Marketing Efforts – MOTBD, Yellowstone Country Region/CVBs

- Strauss shared slides of MT Facility Use Tax Collections for 2017-2019 by Tourism Region and by CVBs highlighting VBS specifically. VBS is working with the State to create funding scenarios for FY21 budgeting purposes. FY21 Marketing Plans are due to the Tourism Advisory Council on May 1, 2020. Resort Tax collections were also presented, excluding February and March collections which have not yet been shared publicly. VBS is supporting the trade during this time by promoting #FrontlineWorkerFriday, #ShopLocal with the Big Sky Chamber, by providing updated listing of restaurants open for takeout or delivery and a list of resources on the visitbigsky.com website.

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OLD BUSINESS

VBS Board Operations & Administration

The Corner Property Lease Discussion

- This discussion was deferred to Executive Session due to the presentation of a new opportunity which included confidential information as to location, rent and terms.

LEAD the Destination

Coordinating Council of Big Sky with Dan Clark (Wed, Jan 22) – *Our Big Sky Plan*

- Strauss discussed that the Coordinating Council of Big Sky originated out of the G9 group which included the 9 largest organizations to receive Resort Tax funding. It has morphed into a larger group who encompasses specific interests identified in the *Our Big Sky Community Strategic Plan*. The mission of this group is to ensure the implementation of the *Our Big Sky Community Plan*. The group has met twice with facilitation by Dan Clark of the MSU Local Government Center. The next meeting is scheduled for the end of June. Strauss represents the interest of Economic Development and helps coordinate among other organizations that also serve that interest.

STAFF REPORTS

CEO/Staff Report

- All topics had been discussed during the meeting, no additional CEO or staff reports were necessary.

OTHER NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- All topics had been discussed during the meeting, and no there were no non-agenda items.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- At 9:33 am, Tim Drain made a motion to go into Executive Session, with a second by Krista Traxler.
- At 9:57 am, Dan Martin made a motion to come out of Executive Session, with a second by Krista Traxler.

ADJORN

- Krista Traxler made a motion to adjourn, with a second by Dan Martin. The motion was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 10:01 am.