

 **ACRA** DEFY ORDINARY  
.....  
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT | SPECIAL EVENTS | VISITOR SERVICES | MEMBER SERVICES

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
MINUTES  
August 25, 2020**

**Call to order:** Cristal Logan called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

**Attendance:** Present: Cristal Logan, Debbie Braun, Charlie Bantis, Donnie Lee, Charlie Bantis, Jeff Bay, Rose Abello, Sam Barney, Dave Ressler, Nina Eisenstat, Torre, and Bill Tomcich, Heather Steenge-Hart, John Rigney, Patti Clapper, Andrew Ernemann, Alan Fletcher, Cari Kuhlman, Heather Kemp, Riley Tippet  
**Absent:** Alinio Azevedo, Donnie Lee, Lisa LeMay, Maria Morrow, Jeanette Darnauer **Staff Present:** Kristen Anderson, Eliza Voss, Kathryn Dziedzic, Sarah Reynolds Lasser & Liz Cluley

Motion to approve July 28<sup>th</sup> minutes. Minutes approved.

Disclose interest of conflicts: None

**Presenter / Guest Speaker**

**Mitch Osur – City of Aspen**

**Topics of presentation** – Current happenings with the City, Summer and Winter plans.

**City News** The city offered a rent relief program in May, June & July, one million dollars went to companies. This worked well, a lot of positive feedback and people were able to stay afloat and pay rent. In June they had their \$25 gift card program to generate business, these gift cards went to a 1500 people in Aspen. An additional 500 gift cards went to police department and places of worship. Recently the city rolled out a small business revolving loan, \$200K total and \$30K max to individual businesses. We hope this is a successful program and revolving program. Mitch hopes to do 10 loans, in the next 30 days, and more in the coming year. There are no rules, people can use the money at their discretion, they do have to pay the money back to the city. The city has hired two health protraction officers, one has already started and another in September. They report to environmental health team. The officer that has already started has had great success working with the local restaurants and understand the mask law and 6ft of distance applies to back of chair to back of chair. A lot of enforcement of mask law in recent weeks. 98% mask compliance, which is helping keep cases down.

**Summer:** Summer business better than expected. We have done a great job getting people here. Slowdown in the last week with school in session.

- Outside dining and retail - restaurants and retail were able to activate on the street. They occupied a total of 48 parking spots; 18 spots went to restaurants and 10 spots went to retailers. Which is lower than we anticipated. A lot of people only want to eat outside. A few restaurants on the sidewalks.
- Saturday Market – We opened the Saturday Market to agriculture vendors only. Average 2500 people going thru each week. We had positive feedback from everyone including vendors. 50 people on each street, which is difficult to control.

**Winter:** Regarding winter, conversations have just started. The city has put together a cross function team to plan on what we can do. Winter will be harder to plan and operate than summer, due to snow and weather which are all topics and hurdles to overcome. We plan to host a town hall meeting in September to discuss with the business community on what they would like to see and their concerns. Looking to ACRA to assist with hosting and hopefully have a moderator.

**Parking:** Currently high season rates in core. In October will offer our typical slow season rates. Parking garage is usually full daily. \$2 per hour and \$6 punch pass, a lot of tourists and employees use those. Residential zone is free. Sara and Mitch continue to discuss and feel there is a need for free parking with all other transportation restrictions and employees being discouraged to carpool.

**Questions:**

**Heather Steenge-Hart:** Heather asked what the plans for the ice rinks this fall, and winter are. Sara said we are looking to open. The city is working with Pitkin County to see what their guidelines are for indoor sports and the limit of people. In October, Aspen Junior Hockey has their biggest fundraiser of the year, fall face off – hotels can manage the occupancy. If only one rink is open, makes it difficult. Anything we can do to reopen the ice rink safely. Aspen Junior Hockey board has put together a detailed plan to reopen and have kids back on the ice safely.

**Rose Abello:** Snowmass also starting to plan for winter. Any thoughts on increasing limit of people on transportation and inner mountain transportation. Sara Ott answered and said there is no current plan but will continue to work with RFTA. Huge hurdle to overcome.

**Charlie Bantis:** Charlie had the question, if there is any consideration for allowing hotel shuttles or cars use the Bus lane – any thought on letting people drive in the lane, maybe during certain hours? With the limit of busses. Sara answered and said CDOT has been very accommodating and if we bring it to the table, they may say yes.

**Chair's Comments:** We are making great progress as a community. COVID levels are relatively low with a busy summer. Our Aspen Institute virtual programming went well. Great traction and appreciation from our viewers around the country and expanded our audience. Applaud Debbie and the ACRA team for all the great work. Once again ACRA has pivoted from our normal COVID stance to covering the local wildfires and assisting with current updates on road closures and other necessary information related to the wildfires.

**President's Comments:** Thank you everyone joining us today. There are a lot of important meetings over the next few weeks. ACRA Finance committee is meeting Wednesday the 26<sup>th</sup> to review Q2 and forecast end of year. Membership is down and people are waiting for ski pass information. ACRA started assisting with the pandemic with making calls to all our members and we are ending the summer with making the next set of calls to check back in. I attended few meetings last week; Pitkin County health outreach, public affairs committee meeting and Valley Health alliance – which is launching a competitive health care plan from Aspen to Parachute – individual and group. These plans will be offered with United Healthcare and Rocky Mountain HMO. More info to come on pricing and product.

**Ambassador / Street team:** The street team continues to provide visitors with health information. The team took many questions about wildfires along with public health questions. The program ends Monday, of Labor Day weekend.

**Occupancy:** Occupancy pacing forecast is 44% down for the winter, summer (May – October) is currently pacing 47% down. Hotel occupancy being down is an important piece of the puzzle. We need to keep our messaging of “busy” in mind when occupancy is down in hotels and flights. Wastewater flow, keeping an eye: currently 10% down from 2019. The busyness we see in town is in relation to the booming real estate market. The October Board of Directors meeting, October 27<sup>th</sup> will be a tourism town hall. We will cover recap of summer and plan for winter.

**ACRA Strategic plan:** Our team is reviewing the plan and beginning work on the annual report. We are taking a new look at program and services to streamline our operations during the pandemic. Will work with the executive committee to identify financial and programming goals for 2021.

**Cristal Logan:** Gave a Public Affairs Committee update: Conversation about a business survey after summer. What do the local businesses need for winter and their thoughts and concerns on winter. How to support local businesses when we have the convenience of ordering online. Support local businesses, curb side pick-up and ordering online. Census has been moved up to September 30<sup>th</sup>. Gallagher amendment on the November ballot – we will have Matt Gianneschi at the next BOD meeting.

**DIRECTORS COMMENTS:**

**Mayor Torre:** Torre spent the last week outreach for off season and winter input. He asked the board, if they have any comments to send straight to Torre. We need some planning going into the next few seasons. Trying to prepare for what winter looks like. Torre is asking for help and suggestions.

**Heather Steenge-Hart** – With being a part of Marriott, we are lucky to get a larger picture of hotel occupancy around the country. Marriott NA overall occupancy is 32% and mountain cluster properties is averaging 62%. People are wanting the mountains and to escape the crowded cities. The protocols that have been put in place here have really helped. In the past week, bookings have decreased due to wildfires. Happy to see I-70 reopen. We will see what happens in the fall with schools opening to in person learning or virtual learning. Winter booking pace has moved shorter and shorter window of booking. Bookings within the week has never been higher. People want to know it's safe to come to Aspen.

**Mayor Torre:** Torre is in full support of ice rinks to reopen and increase capacity. Lodging sector making me think about the off-season drive traffic people wanting to see the colors. Eliza – we are planning to market fall colors. Predicting high demand during the week to look at colors due to remote working and learning. Increased spread of people during the week. Outside on the trails for fall colors. Hopefully the colors will be later like last year, in return support the businesses throughout October.

**Alan Fletcher:** – Aspen Music Festival just ended their 8-week virtual season, with 50 events. 5,000 people coming on demographic visits and engaged visitors. We had viewers from every continent and in marketing efforts this is huge. Marketing efforts were targeting internationally and where we normally wouldn't do. Even have a successful virtual summer season, we will restrict our planning to live music and live education in 2021. Hopeful for a full season. Allan and his team will look at the universities and how they do by spring and that will tell us how we operate student housing such as Marlott seasonal housing. The Arts sector had live music – jazz academy 20 students, events in the tent virtual. Theatre aspen big success, limited presentations. Wagner and Paepcke park are hopeful future locations.

**Bill Tomcich:** Hotel occupancy and last-minute bookings are a clear trend and reflective in the airline industry. Within the month bookings are at a record high of 89%. American is continuing to add last minute flights. May June and July pacing ahead. Nationally air service is down 74% and ASE is down 68%. Bozeman and Jackson hole are the other two popular destinations. Private jet traffic is up. Decrease in commercial traffic relates to private jet traffic. American is added two daily flights from Dallas Fort Worth. Monday September 14<sup>th</sup> to Friday the 18<sup>th</sup>, runway closure. United 4 daily flights from Denver, suspend SFO after September 7<sup>th</sup>. Continue fine tune their schedules.

**Winter:** American and United full schedules as planned. Delta suspended Salt Lake City connection on September 7<sup>th</sup>, original plan was to still offer Atlanta and Los Angeles. Now Delta will discontinue those as well. Also, Steamboat and Montrose. American is keeping Eagle and Jackson hole and Bozeman over Salt Lake City. Uncertainly of CRJ700 fleet. What next for Delta? They would like to return in December 2021, must have an aircraft that is able to fly the

route. Maybe keep a few CRJ700 planes but looking at other options. Sky West plane D 175 aircraft. Operate out of Aspen but more weight penalties and not able to sell all the seats. This aircraft does not align with ASE vision plan from passenger admissions and noise by 2030. Long term plan is to offer aircraft A220, 109 SEATS, ideal aircraft. It's incredibly quiet and in alignment with Aspen community goals.

Southwest to Steamboat – 3 flights a day 737 Boeing. Offering promo fares of \$49 Denver and \$59 Dallas. Interesting to see how it works this winter. Chased delta out of the market. Connectivity not a traditional hub like most others. Southwest will have to look to locals from Denver to keep the service going.

**Cari Kuhlman:** Vectra Bank has had a lot of clients say July was their best on record. A lot of friends from Texas and they are feeling all the different messages. We are based on tourism and we appreciate them. Schools are such an important part of community, effect population and real-estate prices. Cari encourages everyone to be involved in the schools and what they are going through this year. What happens at the schools' effect everyone in our community.

**Charlie Bantis:** Observations to new people in the area. Common theme, they want to stay and become a part of the community. This is a real change and Charlie believes half of these people will be here for 3 or more years. Let's try to be nice to our visitors, there is a lot of negative messages. We do rely on visitors to support the community.

**Dave Ressler:** Dave thanked Debbie for her support and leadership in the VHA. Next month, we will know a lot more of what the plans will look like and prices. Activity levels, AVH busy. June 118% of budget, due to being able to offer more services. August 78% budget. Increase in activity in the community. We are seeing the same at the hospital. We continue to see traumas at the hospital. Bikers wear your helmet! Appreciate our community leadership, mask zone. Clearly made a significant difference and positive cases are down. Hopeful for a good winter season. The AVH staff, provided extraordinary health care. The hospital was recently awarded the Guardian of Excellence award in the health care industry. For the past year, AVH has been in the top 5% hospital experience in the country. Also, one of 4 hospitals in the state to receive 5-star rating by Medicare.

Eagle and Garfield county COVID levels – Pitkin county has done a great job throughout this process. Great relationship with Eagle & Garfield County. Eagle and Garfield are also are down. Vail, rifle, Glenwood and AVH, are working together in case of a surge. Valley wide decrease in cases. The hospital will continue to test everyone who has symptoms.

Average turnaround – 48 to 72 hours. Looking forward to over counter rapid testing.

**Heather Kemp:** There is a slowdown in town due to the fires. Love to see the city extended dining outside next summer, with or without COVID. ACRA and board need to educate our community on the Gallagher amendment.

**Andrew E** – Real estate market was strong this summer. 130 properties under contract in Aspen. Many contracts came together over the last 8 weeks. The rental market is also strong. We've seen a lot of people renting homes for the next year. They want to get out of the city and work remote in Aspen. Looking forward, inventory is down, and price point is 10% higher, that may start to cool the market a little. Winter market will rely on the convenience to get to Aspen and what skiing options are.

**Jeff Bay:** Occupancy is down 27%. August started strong, a little decrease due to road closures and fires. Thank you to the firefighters, maybe something we can do as a community to thank them. August will end softer than anticipated, difficulty in getting here. Labor Day looks very good. Sept and Oct are a moving target. Pacing significantly lower to last year. Appearance of increase of business is likely due to people dining outside, people parking in residential areas. ACRA gift cards are a huge hit. Strong feelings in the community with 2<sup>nd</sup> homeowners and traffic into town. They are in town for the same reason we are here. We need to welcome them.

**John Rigney:** Summer has been good. Bike business super strong. Buttermilk drive up movies, going well. Continue until weather and occupancy tell us otherwise. Working on operating plans for winter. Determine our product offering.

**Nina:** Jeff made a great point of perception on business levels. Are there any companies doing UV lights in a way to fight COVID? The hospital is implementing them.

**Patti Clapper:** Airport news – BOCC 1<sup>st</sup> work session, recommendations and public comments that have been brought to us. Two more meetings to come. Hopeful for more direction. Hopefully there is an end in sight. Census, everyone must fill theirs out. Very important to our future. Looking at childcare issues with Northwest Cog. How are we going to get people back to work and they can't due to childcare limits and virtual schooling? Restrictions and guidelines before COVID and now it's very expensive and difficult for people to get licensed to operate out of their homes.

**Jeff Bay:** We are experiencing a lot of challenges due to employees having to be home with their kids and online learning. We need to continue to find childcare resources for people.

**Debbie Braun:** AEF reached out asking about business needs that are affecting childcare and schools. Will keep everyone up to date if we learn more.

**Rose Abello:** Mixed message with businesses. July – 29% down occupancy. More people living year-round in Snowmass. Moving forward ice cream social distancing went well 4<sup>th</sup> of July and will do the same over Labor Day weekend. Balloon festival will happen and be drive through. Night glow on Friday night, broadcasted. Love the local \$25 gift cards. Snowmass to woody creek. Second send out. Trails have been busy and trying to educate bikers and hikers. Don't anticipate any international business.

**Sam Barney**–

## General

- Pitkin County, City of Aspen, Town of Snowmass Village, and Basalt portions of Pitkin County construction continues under COVID safety plans, no significant changes since last update.
  - Some occasional losses of labor resources due to COVID and required time off if coming into contact with COVID or contracting COVID
  - Schedules are generally affected by labor resource reductions to meet social distancing requirements
- Supply chain disruption from Grizzly Creek Fire / Closure of I-70 and longer transit routes.
- Upcoming winter construction challenges
  - Keeping handwash stations unfrozen
  - Uptick in seasonal illnesses
  - Sharing more indoor air, fewer open windows & doors
  - Exploring air scrubbers for IAQ
- Lumber prices are up
- Material availability and lead times are a moving target

## City of Aspen

- City of Aspen Community Development has a significant backlog of permits under review. The City and other jurisdictions are managing a significant amount of permit activity and have been since restart.

## Pitkin County

- Growth management
  - Public outreach group completed meetings. Anyone interested in the meetings may find more information here: <https://pitkincounty.com/1293/Growth-Management-Public-Outreach>
  - Topics being addressed were:
    - TDR's
    - GMS
    - Growth & square footage
    - Intensity & impacts
    - Climate change
  - Participating group generally did not include many industry stakeholders. A couple of planners provided feedback addressing this concern.
- Permitting
  - Subcontractor permits appear to be taking longer than previously under the new system/current working situation.
- Construction & Demolition Debris Recovery Program
  - Anticipate substantial deposits for Pitkin County projects
  - Will be labor, management, and paperwork intensive

**Riley Tippet:** People are worried and this message we are giving to visitors' is anxiety driven. Its driven by health-related concerns, no longer just a parking spot taken. Winter - Outlining question is who is coming and are they able to come here. Several plans, challenges – employment and housing. People not co-habiting. Operate in pods and isolate that pod if a

COVID case comes up. Employees working with same employees. Riley ended with optimism and how successful summer was and us as the community leaders need have a positive message and outlook on winter.

**Cristal Logan**– Cristal ended the meeting with knowledge the passing of Gary Hines. He was an important member of the community and development of Highlands base village.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30am