

# Colorado Tourism Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday September 16, 2020

12:00pm-2:00pm

## Attendance

**Board Members:** Courtney Frazier, Chair; Doug Price, Vice Chair; Members: Bob Stinchcomb, Wanda James, Kieran Cain, Lucy Kay, Sonia Riggs, Senator Dennis Hisey, Sean Demeule, Representative Matt Soper, Tammie Thompson-Booker, Laura Valdez

**CTO:** Cathy Ritter, Director; Andrea Blankenship, Director of International Tourism; Taren Mulch, Director of Visitor Services; Andrew Grossmann, Director of Destination Development; Elizabeth O'Rear, Senior Manager of Grant Programs; Jill Corbin; Deputy Director Emily Haddaway, Manager of Industry Partnerships; David Fishman, Senior Manager of Operations; Abby Leeper, Communications Manager; Natazshya Rodriguez, Marketing & Public Relations Coordinator; Jackson Feld, Board Liaison & Executive Assistant

**CTO Contractors:** Dave Fluegge, Social Strategist; Caitie Johnson, PR Strategist; Katie Payer, CRAFT Coordination; Shelley Cooper, US Marketing Contractor; Deb Brannon, Events Specialist, Carly Holbrook, PR Strategist; Liz Birdsall, International Specialist; Barb Bowman, Destination Stewardship Contractor

**MMGY Global:** Jessica Hollenbach, Kim Lenox, Clayton Reid, Carrie Gill, Alyssa Wahrman

**Karsh Hagan:** Colin Langham, Tracy Broderick, Lauren Corna

**Destination Think:** William Bakker, Shannon Landreth

**Miles:** Laura Libby, Hannah Brown, Chris Adams

**Other Attendees:** Betsey Markey, Leslie Hylton, Katy Schneider, Tracy Broderick, John Lambeth, Jennie Green

**Meeting convened at 12:00pm**

**Welcome and Introductions, Courtney Frazier, Chair**

### Approval of Minutes

- Motioned by Doug Price
- Seconded by Senator Hisey
- Approved by Acclamation

**Fiscal Report, David Fishman, Senior Manager of Fiscal & Operations**

- Fishman: Every area of the tourism budget faces a cut. More of our budget in this fiscal year comes from the general funds than the gaming funds. We were able to offset the impact of the budget cut through reserves and by hitting the brakes on spending last spring when coronavirus broke out.



- Fishman: List of FY21 contracts is smaller than in FY20 and hasn't changed since last board meeting.

**Director's Report:** *Cathy Ritter, CTO Director*

- Ritter: Welcomed back Jill Corbin from maternity leave and urged board members to join GovCon the next day
- Ritter: Announced a new Inclusivity in Travel Advisory Group, co-chaired by Laura Valdez and Wanda James. This group will identify barriers to travel and recommend ways for CTO and the Colorado tourism industry to break these barriers down
- Ritter: While many mountain destinations had a busy summer and even record revenues, most Front Range destinations have been deeply impacted by the inability to host meetings and events.

**Engagement:** *Board Member Updates*

Frazier: Large majority of guest ranches are able to open: 20 ranches opened a little bit later and opened with a lower capacity. Dude ranches have the luxury of being many industries in one destination, this means lots of protocols to update. Fire danger is now a double header and is impacting some ranches.

Price: Down 22 occupancy points from last summer and finished august at about 66% y/y. Lodging tax collections are down 50%. Colorado Springs was listed as having the highest hotel occupancy rate of 150 U.S. destinations. Labor Day was record setting for the Springs but there is still concern about restaurants and retail.

Cain: Summer was a great time to train and see how operations could work. We got an opportunity to get people on the mountains in a safe way ahead of the ski season. There is a focus on safety on and off the mountain. There is positive momentum of pass purchases ahead of the season.

James: The cannabis world has been erratic. There have been record sales months, and stores had more tourist revenue these past months than in past Marchs/ Aprils. We are very thankful to be considered an essential business.

Riggs: Full service traditional neighborhood gems have been hit the hardest. 95% of restaurants have lower sales than last year. Most places are down more than 50%. Restaurants need cash and capacity increases or there will be a lot of permanent closures. The Restaurant Association is look for all ways to increase outdoor seating ahead of the colder months.

Valdez: The museum world is struggling. Most museums opened mid-summer, but the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery saw 18% of the attendance we saw last year. All business models rely on people coming through the door. This may change the relationships that schools have with museums.

Stinchcomb: Ski experience is going to be very different this year. It takes hundreds of employees to run a mountain, and we want to keep our employees safe as well. So much of skiing is the social aspect off the mountain, figuring out ways to not put the ski season in jeopardy with after skiing socializing.



Thompson-Booker: Rural Colorado is doing fine but overall region of state and state as a whole is down. There is only one hotel in her group doing better than last year. Going to be a multiyear impact with more storms coming down the line. CHLA conference on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Hoping to see change for next year, but going to be a while to get to 2019 levels.

Senator Hisey: Rafting has had had a good season, but restaurants are struggling. Outdoor activities are doing well but there are many concerns with winter coming.

Representative Soper: Sales taxes are at all-time highs, which is interesting. Construction boom going on- construction industry is going wild with people building and remodeling. 50% of restaurants are closed permanently in Delta, but Colorado National Monument flooded with people.

**Education: Outlook for Colorado Recovery, Betsy Markey, Executive Director, Office of Economic Development and International Trade**

- Markey: The economy will thrive if we get this virus under control, but we need to stay consistent at the state level.
- The budget for 2022 is very much in limbo and it is too soon to have any predictions, but it will certainly be a tight and difficult year
- There were over 150,000 business who were able to get federal money
- The new DIAL gives counties in Colorado more control over their levels of openness during the pandemic

**Education/Engagement: Funding Futures Study: John Lambeth, Civitas; Chris Adams, Miles Partnership**

- Chris Adams and John Lambeth outlined a presentation on how to ensure tourism agencies solidify funding for the future. They recommended: exhausting every funding option, strengthen predictability and mitigate risks in revenue streams, prove your role and relevance as an organization.
- Representative Soper: Sales tax increment financing is interesting, but we have to make sure this option is available under Colorado law
- Thompson-Booker: Craig has a tax of 13.51% which is a lot of tax for a small community thus you need to consider where this would work based on taxes

**Meeting adjourned at 2:00pm**

