

**ASPEN CHAMBER RESORT ASSOCIATION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES  
September 25th, 2018**

**Call to order:** Donnie Lee called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m.

**Attendance:** Present: Debbie Braun, Donnie Lee, Cristal Lee, Charlie Bantis, Dave Ressler, Riley Tippet, John Rigney, Warren Klug, Rose Abello, Jeff Bay, Simon Chen, Patti Clapper, Linda Crocket, Jeanette Darnauer, Nina Eisenstat, Andrew Ernemann, Rob Ittner, Lisa LeMay, John Maloy, Maria Morrow, Laura Smith, and Ann Mullins (on behalf of Steve Skadron). Absent: Heather Steenge-Hart, Heather Kemp, Tim Perry, Steve Skadron, and Bill Tomcich.  
Staff: Eliza Voss, John Davies, Susan Bantis and Sarah Reynolds.

**Approval of prior meeting minutes:** Approved

**Disclosure of Conflict of Interest:** Jeanette Darnauer is a part of the RFTA Issue Committee (On Board with RFTA).

**Presentation:**

**RFTA Ballot Measure – Dan Blankenship and George Newman**

**George Newman:** I'm here today to discuss the RFTA Ballot Initiative 7A. I spoke to your Board almost a year ago at the Wintersköl™ Luncheon where you acknowledged RFTA as the Non-Profit of the Year. The RFTA Board is made up of every mayor from here to New Castle. Aspen is the greatest beneficiary of RFTA's service, as most of the workforce comes in and visitors get around town and between the mountains on RFTA. We are at a critical point of understanding and relying on the needs of RFTA as the population grows. RFTA can't solve the entrance to Aspen issue, but can increase the mobility, reduce the congestion and greenhouse gasses. The question is how do we continue to meet the demand of the growing population?

**Dan Blankenship:** George has served on the RFTA Board for around eleven years now and has been the Chair for the last two. He uses RFTA's services every day. The 2015 Board retreat is what kicked off the ideas that morphed into Destination 2040 and where we discussed the four major expansions we've had since 1994. RFTA operates from Aspen to Rifle, and is the second largest transit system in Colorado. We are the largest rural transit system in the country. Last year during the Grand Avenue bridge project in Glenwood Springs, we transported 5.5 million passengers. We have 350 employees during peak winter season, and our 2017 budget was \$44.5 million. We provide the bus service to Maroon Bells in a partnership with the Forest Service. We also have a contract with Aspen Skiing Company to ramp up the bus service in the winter and to support special events such as the X Games. We are hoping to launch battery electric buses by next summer or fall, as we think is the way of the future. These buses are expensive and cost around \$1 million versus \$500k-\$750k for standard diesel buses. Our ridership is trending upwards and we've helped achieve the City of Aspen's goal of keeping the Castle Creek bridge traffic down. Our current debate is the ideas of enhance vs expand, and our biggest challenge is the bus replacements. It's an enormous challenge to keep up with the replacement schedules of every 14 years. If we continue doing what we're doing, our funds will be trending down by 2021. It's better to find the resources now to replace the buses and avoid a crisis. Transportation is allowed up to a 1% sales tax, and Glenwood Springs is already maxed at that 1%. Our Board has suggested not only bus replacements, but the Destination 2040 program for our future needs. What we've been hearing is that people want more bus services, but our challenges are having such a large fleet and a large service area. We need funding for employee housing, bus stations, bus replacements, and maintenance. Our operating cost per mile is the lowest among our peers, which include the LA Metro, TransFort in Fort Collins, and the Lane Transit District in Eugene, Oregon. Our ridership is also forecasted to go up by 36%. We took our 3.65 mill levy and slimmed it down to our most important and vital needs and have arrived at a 2.65 mill levy. For property owners with a \$500k property, this results in \$6.75 per month. Commercial property at \$1 million comes out to \$64.04 per month. 80% of this program would be paid for by Pitkin County owners due to the home values in these areas. If this doesn't pass and the revenue isn't identified, we will have to cut back on our services. We've seen with polling around 51-53% support. As more people learn more about the plan and the needs, this level of support goes up. It will take 50% plus one on the ballot for this measure to pass. Even if it fails in some areas, but passes overall it is a region wide measure that would take effect. More information is available at [onboardwithrfta.org](http://onboardwithrfta.org).

**Chair's comments:** RFTA has been such an amazing service over the years. I do think a metric to look at is that ridership levels have increased faster than the population has grown in the Roaring Fork Valley. We're not building any more roads and this is a vital solution to reduce the congestion that exists. Thank you for coming in to present for our Board. It is election season for the Chamber Board, and a quick update is the Nominating Committee has been constituted. There are 6 seats up for election this year. More information to come, but the process is underway.

**President's comments:** Thank you to John Rigney for a great Afternoon Blend event and for getting the Aspen Skiing Company / ACRA agreement in record time. Thank you to Dave Ressler, who was supposed to present on behalf of the Aspen Valley Hospital today, but moved his presentation to October so that RFTA could speak today. Finally, thank you Jeff Bay for letting me visit your property in Sun Valley. It was a great trip. I was in Boise for the DMA West Educational Summit. We won the "Best New Idea" award for our "How To" videos, and I think we will start seeing a lot more videos from others as a result. Julia is doing great. We met up while there. The ACRA staff has a retreat next week with Candra Canning, to make sure everyone feels good with all of the changes we've had and for the last year of our strategic plan. Thank you to both Eliza Voss and Sarah Reynolds for stepping into Julia's role. Eliza just wrapped a successful photoshoot and Sarah has been hosting a lot of media and FAM's. Last month was a big convening month. I met with CMC and hopefully we can have them present in the coming year. Cristal and I met with SHIFT, and got a lot of information on what the City has planned with the experiment next year. They will be releasing information in the next week. Public Affairs Committee will be meeting in the next few weeks to go over that information. I presented at the Citizen's Academy, and the City is doing a great job with outreach and teaching the public about what goes on in local government. Fly Aspen Snowmass will be meeting next week. I think everyone should like the Facebook page for RFTA and take in all the information they're sharing. I will be going to Italy next month for the Adventure Travel World Summit and will be out for a few weeks. October is going to be a very busy month with the 2019 budgets and the Board election.

**Finance Committee Update:** The 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter numbers are doing fine. Membership has had some issues through June that have probably improved since then. More to come on final numbers. Moving forward with Fred regarding the RFP for banking services. ACRA has a few million between multiple banks. We are targeting early October to get that RFP issued with a January 2<sup>nd</sup> date for establishing those banking services.

**Old Business:** none.

**New Business:** none.

### **Director's Comments**

**Warren Klug:** First of all, I'm thrilled to be retired. This time of year it's great to be around town and see all of the colors. Summer at The Aspen Square was good. Last minute business has been substantial. I'm on the committee to pass the Healthy Community Fund 1A. This is a property tax that provides critical financial support to 70 health and human service nonprofits organizations and county agencies. Without the approval of voters, this fund will end at the end of this year.

**Laura Smith:** It was a great summer at the Aspen Music Festival. I just want to follow up on an issue we previously discussed, the Downtowner service. They showed up all summer at the Music Tent and did a great job. We also greatly appreciated the moving of the Castle Creek construction schedule since it was originally during our peak season.

**Nina Eisenstat:** Leaf peeping has been amazing! I hiked American Lake two days ago and it was so crowded. I'm looking forward to the Public Affairs meeting. There are so many election issues locally, county, and statewide. Would love to be a part of the dialogue.

**Simon Chen:** We had a strong summer and are getting ready for winter. We've seen a bit of a hangover effect from last year's poor snow. Christmas looks good so far. Thank you to Andrew and Sotheby's for a great event. We raised \$8k.

**John Rigney:** This weekend is our last weekend at Snowmass for the season. The Lost Forest gave us a great boost this summer. It's a very cool experience. We are open an additional weekend at Aspen Mountain. We got through the first pass deadline, and the next deadline is November 16<sup>th</sup>. The Limelight Snowmass is coming along very well. Taking reservations for after January 4<sup>th</sup>, but we will be open in December.

**Rose Abello:** Friday is your chance to experience some of the Lost Forest if you haven't already. The Upload For The Download event is taking place at Snowmass from 1:30-5 p.m. Uploading starts at 12:30 with presentations starting around 1:30. Please RSVP to [rsvp@aspensnowmass.com](mailto:rsvp@aspensnowmass.com). The new downhill trails are unbelievable. Our summer was a record breaking one. We are sold out this week. We went up 22% in occupancy in August. We are getting feedback from the community regarding the events we held this summer so please share any feedback you have. We are looking forward to a great ski season. Look for the November issue of 5280 magazine, as there will be an article about Snowmass.

**Dave Ressler:** To build on the talk about Snowmass, my son is in competitive downhill mountain biking, and I've been going to different resorts for those events. Compared to other resorts, Snowmass has such a great vibe. There are so many activities and offerings. The hospital is constructing the Snowmass Clinic and hoping to reopen in about a year. We are evaluating keeping it open during the summer as well. To comment on Warren's support of 1A, the Healthy Community Fund is very important. It serves so many people in the Valley. There has been construction going on at the hospital, we are redoing the Health and Human Services parking lot in order to help transit services and so that there is parking for the new ambulance building. I'll be presenting at the next Board meeting and will share more information then.

**Jeff Bay:** I'm currently teaching my daughter about gratitude and last week we had the opportunity to go to the Maroon Bells. We forget how special that place is and it's such a testament to all those that manage the area. Great things are going on in Snowmass. A lot of great trails. Very grateful for all we have. I'm a big RFTA fan, and this initiative is so important, we need to make sure misinformation isn't getting out there. RFTA needs to be sure that the information is easy to understand and access. Gave an update on Lift 1A.

**Jeanette Darnauer:** Thank you Jeff and everyone for your suggestions and input for RFTA. If you have employees or anyone asking questions be sure to get them to me. Some of you have asked where SHIFT is, and we completed all of our interviews in August. Bike outreach will be coming next week. We had a great Public Affairs meeting and have a very detailed report and feedback for the City including verbatim quotes. We are at the staff level right now and aren't sure exactly when City Council will be discussing.

**Lisa LeMay:** Super strong finish for retail. September has been a great month. Summer hasn't ended to say to the least. Our shoulder seasons are shrinking and we have employees year round, but don't have housing for them. One of the biggest complaints of J1 employers is the lack of housing. With this, RFTA is so important because we are having to bring employees from down valley, and it's a challenge with fare increases. Our starting wages this winter will be around \$15 per hour. How much higher can we go without passing the costs on to our guests and customers? Housing is our biggest issue. It's hard to balance wages and commutes.

**Ann Mullins:** We've been very busy and there are several ballot issues that have an impact on downtown. Any feedback we can get on these programs and initiatives is very important. We are hoping to get all of the information out. The City has gotten an award from the American Planning Association for the Hyman Mall as a successful public space. We have an event planned for October 6<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the mall.

**Linda Crockett:** I appreciated the RFTA presentation as it is essential to college campuses. I'd like to ask everyone for their thoughts on the importance of having a community college. What could we provide? Please share any feedback with us. We have a gallery opening tomorrow September 26<sup>th</sup> from 5-7 p.m. One of our staff photographers is showing several decades of work. Lastly, I had some friends come hike up to Conundrum this summer and the permitting is confusing. I felt very informed with all the information we received at meetings this summer, but we need to be sure the public is getting the same information.

**Patti Clapper:** To Linda, people should call the Forest Service directly with any questions or for information. The new facility for ambulances has been a slow process, but we are excited to break ground. The Healthy Community Fund is a critical program for the community. All of the services it supports are great. State ballot issue 1-10 funding roads will also be giving RFTA money. It's a small statewide sales tax increase of .65%. The Board of County Commissioners will be discussing all of the issues. The ballot is going to be 2 pages front and back. It will take 2 stamps to mail. The ballots are going out October 15<sup>th</sup> to be returned by November 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Andrew Ernemann:** Aspen used to be a winter real estate market, but now it's becoming more of a summer market. Sales are spreading to September and October. We are seeing this in Snowmass Village as well with all of the added offerings. Very few commercial sales in Aspen. Leasing for retail continues to be strong. Aspen residential sales are down, but properties under contracts are up almost 50% for single family homes. Will come out down for the year, but not as drastic as thought. Prices continue to hold steady and inventory levels are higher than last year.

**Maria Morrow:** We are having a Public Affairs meeting this Thursday at 2 p.m. to discuss the ballot issues. It will be a focus on education and possibilities of endorsing measures. Debbie's staff will review to determine ACRA involvement. We will come back to the Board for support. I encourage you to email Debbie if you have any information about any of the measures.

**Cristal Logan:** We are having a reception this Friday to meet our new president, Dan Porterfield, from 3:30-5 p.m. at the recently renovated Albright Pavilion. Please RSVP and I hope to see you all there. Our community programming registration is open for fall. Eliza, Sarah, and I have a non-profit meeting in October.

**Rob Ittner:** We are hosting an event on October 16<sup>th</sup> at the Cooking School to support recovering alcoholics. It's a big issue in the culinary industry and we will get more information out shortly. City of Aspen sales tax numbers are up 6%, but the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest category was miscellaneous. Take that number out and the numbers don't look as good. We need to come up with a better indicator. I was nominated as the "biggest whiner in Aspen", but we need to be realistic with where we are. Whining seems to be how we get things done. The Community Health Fund is very important and supports a lot of people. Wages would be almost double without RFTA so we need to see how important all of these services are for all of the businesses here.

**John Maloy:** Exciting things are happening. The facility master plan 2030 with how to better use our campus, create more opportunities for students and recruit and retain staff. We'll be expanding our property inventory of 44 housing units and we are hoping to squeeze 10-12 more to increase our inventory.

**Charlie Bantis:** nothing to add.

**Debbie Braun:** Save the date for the Tourism Outlook as it replaces our regular Board meeting in November. It takes place on Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup> at the Aspen Meadows Resort.

**Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

