



## Mammoth Lakes Tourism Monthly Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 6, 2016

Call in # (310) 372-7549 - Participant Code 934985 - Host Code 3838

1:00 – 3:00pm MLT Conference Room

### Meeting Minutes

1. **Call Meeting to Order at 1:07pm** – John Morris, Board Chair
2. **Roll Call** – John Morris, Sean Turner, Kirk Schaubmayer, Michael Ledesma, Matthew Lehman, Brent Truax (by phone)
3. **Board Member Comments/Reports/Agenda Additions**

John Morris – Had a presentation by Sandra Moberly, Frank Freivalt and Tom Heller at the last Lodging Association meeting

- Talked about lofts as lodging.
- Talked about maximum occupancy in rentals and homes – the town is currently pretty flexible and has many exemptions for exceeding occupancy (typically two people per room plus two people in living room) but the language written is fairly restrictive and implies that a family renting a condo having people over for dinner could put condo over maximum occupancy – talking through all of these issues.
- Talked about inspections that get delayed and how that takes rentals off the market unnecessarily.
- Any changes in town ordinances are public meetings, so MLT board can get involved if necessary.

4. **Public Comment** – None
5. **Minutes** – Michael Ledesma motions, Kirk Schaubmayer seconds, all in favor, Lehman abstained.
6. **MLT Team Presentation Schedule – 30 minutes including Q&A time**

Chamber of Commerce updates (Craig Schmidt)

- New Chamber has been up and running now for 1.5 years (started October 2014 with no members). When last invoiced in 2013, the old Chamber had 145 members. Current membership count is 143.
- Chamber is proud to offer two key programs funded by USDA rural development grants
  - Peak Performance Program – customer service training
    - The PPP is an online course available to anyone in Mammoth Lakes or thinking about moving to Mammoth Lakes. The goal of the program is to elevate customer service throughout the community. Current/future employees take this 30-40 minute online training course to learn about the Mammoth Lakes area and their specific work area – lodging, dining or retail. Once they've "graduated" from the program, they receive a rewards card that gives them discounts at local businesses. Work is in progress with MMSA to create an incentive program to encourage employers to participate.
    - 75+ people have already completed the program. 500 people is the goal for 2016.
    - Only in English currently, but Spanish translation may come in Phase 2. MLCC encourages businesses with many Spanish-speaking employees to do group sessions with an interpreter.
    - MLCC is looking for feedback on the program. See more/complete it here: <http://mammothlakeschamber.org/peak-performance-program-online-training/>
  - Technical Business Assistance Program – business development

- This program allows local businesses to get consultation on a variety of subjects (social media, writing business plans, branding, HR support, etc.) at no cost to the business – consultants are paid via grant funding. MLCC has a total of \$50,000 in available funds to offer this service to businesses. Five local consultants are available in Mammoth Lakes for in-person consultation year-round. ML businesses can also access 80-85 consultants through the Small Business Development Center at UC Bakersfield for phone/email consultation in the winter months and in-person consultation in the summer months.
- Mission: Mammoth Lakes Tourism brings people to Mammoth Lakes. ML Chamber of Commerce keeps businesses profitable and helps them provide the best service to visitors and locals.
- Helping current businesses through Power Lunch series – goal is to provide one hour of tangible training businesses can take back to the workplace and apply immediately.
  - March Power Lunch: Christie Osborne from MLT – social media for businesses in 10 min. a day
  - April Power Lunch: Todd Skelton from TripAdvisor – reputation management and advice for managing business listings on TripAdvisor
  - May Power Lunch: Jon Regelbrugge from ML USFS – how businesses are affected by forest service land in the area and fire/smoke during forest fire season
- Chamber surveying local businesses to find out what their concerns are. Availability of quality work force is the top issue, availability of housing is second.

## 7. Department Updates – A brief recap of past, current and future efforts of each department

### 1. International – John Urdi on behalf of Michael Vanderhurst

- Michael is at Mountain Travel Symposium in CO
- Many writers and tour operators have come through town – including ESPN Latin America – John Urdi worked with them in CO, would like to have them back in the summer to sell summer travel
- Constant flow of media FAMs – this time of year slows down a bit before picking back up in June/July

### 2. Marketing – Whitney Lennon

- Will present updated visitor profile and ad effectiveness at August board meeting
- MLT does year-round campaign as well as fall-winter and spring-summer specific segments (now starting summer segment earlier in March/April – people are already thinking about summer trips)
- John Urdi – MLT marketing/findings are available on MLT Industry Insider website
- MLT's Media Plan
  - Marketing ML as a year-round vacation destination, making it top-of-mind with awareness campaigns (ads places on YouTube and Hulu), using geo-targeting for advertising
  - Larger budget now allows MLT to use a 3<sup>rd</sup> party to measure increase in awareness
  - Using native advertising in print but now also in digital – showed Thrillist example
    - MLT paying for native advertising but also pitching stories to media with similar themes/content to keep messaging consistent
    - For Thrillist, MLT suggested content, Thrillist added its own look and feel to it, and MLT put rich media units on top and sides of article (roll-over to explore ML activities ad and play 15-second No Small Adventure video) – MLT basically owns this whole page
    - Links to article-specific landing page on VisitMammoth.com
- New team/mission at Welcome Center
  - New staff – partnership between Eastern Sierra Interpretive Association, USFS, MLT, NPS
  - Visit CA team will be onsite in late April to meet with Welcome Center partners about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, etc.
- Starting strategy planning for next year, meeting with agency in late May – Whitney will send calendar invite
- Kirk Schaubmayer – Is there a map of welcome centers? Encourage going from one to the next?
  - Whitney – That's one goal of Visit CA – they have maps/info on their website to go from one to another. ML is working on additional signage to direct guests to Welcome Center.

### 3. Interactive/Website – Christie Osborne

- Website launching on April 12 or April 19 based on final review this week – soft launch
  - Will deploy a communication plan likely a week or two after the soft launch
  - New VisitMammoth.com links to Mammoth Trails website in blog posts, etc.
4. PR/Media – John Urdi on behalf of Lara Kaylor
- Lara is in Texas for a media event with Visit CA
  - Planning/organizing Society of American Travel Writers Midwest chapter visiting in early June
    - 30-40 different freelance/program writers
    - Last year a Nat Geo article from the SATW conference gave ML great coverage
5. Air Service – John Urdi
- Completed winter season air service – SFO and 2<sup>nd</sup> LAX flight ended Sunday, San Diego ended Monday, Denver ended mid-March
  - 410 round trip flights, 68.5 cancellations (16.7%) – 57.5 were weather related
  - Possibility that RNR procedure could be used next year to land planes with less visibility – this could prevent 15-18 of those cancellations
  - Load factors were good this winter
  - Denver service not happening next year
  - Subsidy is currently \$448,000, cap is \$1,500,000 – that leaves add'l funds for air marketing, etc.
  - Data say air market stays a day longer and spends \$1000 more than the drive market
  - Air service now is 4 days per week, switches to daily from June to September, then back to 4 days a week for the fall
  - Thought about adding Phoenix or Seattle for next winter but probably not this year
  - It's easier to sell SFO 7 days a week than explain why it's only 5 days a week
  - Sean Turner – would it be possible to do scheduled charters for some weekends?
  - John Urdi – it's hard to coordinate airlines adding planes because they don't have the inventory.

**8. Financial Reports** – An update regarding the financial health of the organization – John Urdi

1. TOT & TBID – review previous month's results
  - Since June 2015, 9 straight months of TOT records; Jan. highest TOT town has ever had; Feb. is 3<sup>rd</sup> month over \$2 million; March is expected to be high too
  - April this year probably won't beat record (no Easter in April)
  - 32% ahead of budget for the year
  - Matthew Lehman – will Tioga Pass open early this year?
  - John Urdi – we're not part of that discussion, but ideal would be Memorial Day
  - John Morris – if MMSA will be open Memorial Day, we can push do-everything-in-one-weekend in Mammoth Lakes if Tioga Pass is open too
  - Increasing fish stocking budget this year – MLT putting in \$25,000 more for a total of \$100,000 in the area; planning to stock a little later, more often, people will catch more/bigger fish
    - Marketing June as Learn to Fish Month
  - TBID: \$640,000 ahead of projection through February; goal was \$4m, anticipating \$4.75-5m
2. Cash flow – discussion of current bank balances
  - Measure A checking \$798,000, savings \$300,000
  - TBID checking \$1,700,000, savings \$5,000
3. P&L Reports
  - Town owes Q2 true up to MLT roughly \$170,000
  - In good shape financially, will continue building reserves, working with bank to put some money in 6 or 12 month CVs

**9. MMSA Update** – none

**10. New Business**

- TBID Appeal Panel recommendations – John Morris

- Two new startup businesses in town both projected to make less than \$50,000 this year...  
Appeal Panel recommends granting them Tier 3 exemption for the TBID
- Michael Ledesma motions to approve, Matthew Lehman seconds, all in favor.
- Town Council Strategic Priorities review – John Urdi
  - Goals being set out for MLT are in line with where we're headed
  - Meeting April 20<sup>th</sup> to give a presentation to the Town Council, send feedback to John before that meeting
- Upcoming June Board Elections
  - Seats up: Matthew Lehman (At-Large), Sean Turner (Retail), Kirk Schaubmayer (Lodging), Michael Ledesma (Restaurant)
  - Lodging Association can submit letters of interest before April 30 meeting, Kirk interested in continuing
  - No formal associations for Restaurant/Retail categories, so a nominating committee will be made up of board members whose seats aren't up (Brent Truax, John Morris and TBD)
  - Michael Raimondo is not running for Town Council, so his seat will be filled in July after Town Council elections are over
  - Timeline: hold interviews in late April/early May, make decision by June board meeting, new members take seats in July

### **11. Key Takeaways**

1. Three straight months of \$2.2m TOT collections (January record of \$2,340,520)
2. Air Subsidy down, Load Factors up – cancellations at 17% for the year (83% completion rate)
3. TOT is +32.4% budget YTD and we have exceeded the \$11.3m YE Budget by \$82,000 at \$13.82m

### **Future Meeting Dates**

Next scheduled Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> 1-3pm @ MLT Conference Room