



Mammoth Lakes Tourism Monthly Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 7, 2016

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

NEW TIME 12:30 – 3:00pm MLT Conference Room

Meeting Minutes

1. **Call Meeting to Order at 12:33 p.m.** – John Morris, Board Chair
2. **Roll Call** – Present: Erik Forsell (phone), Scott McGuire, John Morris, Colin Fernie, Sean Turner, Brent Traux, Paul Rudder, Kirk Schaubmayer, Michael Ledesma
3. **Board Member Comments/Reports/Agenda Additions**
 - Sean Turner – in fall, Lakes Basin can close any moment, campgrounds close early, need to work with government agencies/concessionaires to delay fall closures as visitation increases
 - John Urdi – we can't sell it if it's not open/available
4. **Public Comment** – Please limit to three minutes or less
 - Rich Boccia, Mammoth Lakes Recreation
 - Exploring outdoor performing arts venue centers, group getting together in a few weeks, many other towns in similar situations seeking venues
 - Outside on the Eastside launched – focus on arts, culture and recreation activities in the fall
 - MLT is spending 25% of placement budget on fall
 - John Morris – September looks like a record, October pacing better than normal
 - Whitney Lennon – Outside on the Eastside getting play on MLT social channels
 - Colin – MLT did restaurant closure survey, how will that info be distributed?
 - Whitney Lennon – sent out via Chamber channels, to lodging association, and to welcome center
5. **Minutes** – Approval of past meeting minutes
 - Motion to approve minutes from August 1 meeting – Brent Truax motions, Colin Fernie seconds, passes unanimously
6. **MLT Team Presentation Schedule** – 30 minutes including Q&A time

ROI Advertising Effectiveness Study – Whitney Lennon, SMARI Market Research Experts on the phone

- SMARI – 2015-2016 Visitor Volume study – determining visitor volume for a small destination is difficult
 - Several different ways to assess, same numbers each time
 - Seasonal volume: 37% winter, 21% spring, 29% summer, 13% fall
 - This is the first time MLT has looked at visitor volume
 - Origin of markets from CA and NV – LA, San Diego, San Francisco, Sacramento, Santa Barbara and Fresno – LA market penetration remains at 25%
 - Winter visitors spend more, have larger groups; summer visitors stay longest; half of groups to Mammoth Lakes include children; spring visitor most likely to have kids
 - Net Promoter Score – how likely people are to recommend ML to others
 - Has increased from 2014 to 2016
 - ML scores are high compared to other SMARI clients – good for repeat visitation
 - John Urdi – NPS allows MLT to track whether efforts locally improve the visitor experience
 - ML visitors overall are more educated, likely to be married, more affluent, more likely to have kids in the household

- Familiarity with comparative set
 - What motivates visitation to competitors? Other destinations are viewed as more scenic, have more shopping/entertainment options, gambling (Tahoe area); ML does well in skiing, fishing and snowboarding comparisons
- Developing events/programs around fishing, festivals and golf are key to growing summer market
- Shoulder seasons – activities based on weather, good to capitalize on national park visitation, sporting events, skiing and fishing
- Advertising Effectiveness and ROI
 - Increased spending associated with 19% increase in awareness – efficient media buy
 - Visitors who are aware of the ads: have bigger groups, more likely to bring kids, stayed longer, spent more, more likely to stay in hotels/motels
 - ROI was \$306 for summer 2015, \$181 for winter 2015-2016, \$262 total for 2015-2016
 - Winter has lower awareness but still generated 35,247 incremental trips
 - Year-over-year ROI comparison (14-15 compared to 15-16)
 - 62% increase in influenced trips to ML, 25% increase in visitor spending, double the economic impact and local tax impact, 25% increase in ROI, 23% increase in tax ROI
 - Colin Fernie – Is there a discrepancy in seasons/numbers?
 - John Urdi – Old SMG study broke down by season, but spring months have winter activities
 - Erik Forsell – MMSA “winter” is November to July 4
 - Some winter visitation is not ski traffic
- Whole report is in MLT board Dropbox

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

1. International – Michael Vanderhurst

- Six full weeks of media FAMs in town – China, Germany, France, Italy, UK, Australia
 - Colin Fernie – where do summer FAM trips go?
 - MV – Goal is to encourage multiple nights in market – Lakes Basin, trolley, hike, Devils Postpile, base to explore Yosemite/Mono Lake/Bodie
- Michael and Nico are going to South Korea and China in October to firm up representation for MMSA and MLT in that market – LA contact is helping vet agencies
- Opportunity to bring a rep from Visit CA to do a China Ready seminar in coordination with the Chamber and Mono County – businesses and public would be invited to learn about the Chinese market; date TBD

2. Marketing – Whitney Lennon

- Adding board members to MLT newsletters in Sept. – fall colors, fishing, weekly, monthly
- Contacting each board member soon to get 150 word bio; headshots will be taken at Oct. board meeting
- Meghan Miranda starting Sept. 12 as new content marketing manager – starting with work on listings and an audit of the MLT newsletter program

3. Communications – Lara Kaylor

- Working on FAM trips; journalists and athletes visiting for Gran Fondo
- Going to Visit CA LA media reception and crisis communication workshop
- Working on press release about successful 2015-16 fiscal year and 2016-17 off to a good start
 - July breaking records, TOT in July \$1.7 million (\$1.3 million last year), TBID up

4. Air Service – John Urdi

- Numbers continue to be somewhat flat in summer, trying to figure it out
- Whitney Lennon – just finished air quantitative study collection, report coming soon
- John Morris – perception of high cancellation rate – spread the word about actual cancellation rate?

- John Urdi – summer rate is 6%, only 1 cancellation in July (mechanical), none in August
- Still working with Jet Suite X – talking to Hot Creek Aviation about building space, flow, luggage, etc.
 - MMSA working with Surf Air (different kind of service than Jet Suite X) – not subsidized
 - Jet Suite X would be subsidized but falls within MLT budget
- United service starts again on December 15
 - San Diego 4 days a week (7 during holidays), LA 7 days a week, SF 7 days a week
- Discuss air strategy at October board meeting

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

1. TOT & TBID – review previous months results
 - TOT in June over \$1 million = 7th month over \$1 million, fiscal year at \$15,733,000 (34% of previous record, 39% ahead of budget, \$4 million over previous record)
 - July shows there's still potential for double digit growth - \$1.7 million in July
 - For September, \$783k is previous best, looking near \$1 million this year (September would be the 8th month over \$1 million)
2. Cash Flow – discussion of current bank balances
 - \$544,841 in Measure A Checking, \$5,000 in Measure A Savings
 - \$788,000 in TBID Checking, \$5,000 in TBID Savings
 - Summer and fall ad buy check for \$500k has been cut but not cashed
3. P&L Reports – sent via email
4. CDARS
 - First four-week withdrawal of \$250k
 - Town having challenges with accounting system, TBID checks delayed, but still in good shape
 - 15-16 fiscal year: all AP collected, one outstanding, hope to close and ship to audit by end of month

9. **MMSA Update** – Erik Forsell

- Strong summer, 20th anniversary of Unbound park this year
- John Morris – could lodging properties buy something like Costco tickets to promote mid-week stays? Many lodging properties can't use current program since it's too far in advance
 - Erik Forsell – mid-week discounts tend to lose money, walk up ticket sales are high
 - Brent Truax – it would help lodging properties to have lift and lodging prices for early and late season to finish building packages
 - Erik Forsell – rates are not published
 - Colin Fernie – guests don't care as much about price, they just don't want to wait in line for a lift ticket
 - Erik Forsell – Costco tickets now direct to lift, working on ability to re-load passes, looking into kiosks; increasing mid-week traffic turns ML into a destination resort rather than just a regional resort
 - John Urdi – ML community should focus on premiums rather than discounts – incentivize visitation with packages instead of reduced price
 - Scott McGuire – pitch as do something here that you can't do anywhere else – incredible experience
 - Colin Fernie – with MMSA focused on Southern California, stuck getting weekend-only business
 - John Urdi – ML must change perception in town that it's a weekend resort

10. **New Business**

1. Events discussion (Sam's Wood Site and Event Position) – John Urdi
 - Key MLT initiative is to support an events venue and secure something for at least a few years
 - Dirk Winters is buying Sam's Woodsite, MLT wants to work with him to keep it an event site
 - Sam's Woodsite is comprised of two different parcels

- MLT considering contributing \$300,000 to the cause for infrastructure – clean power, facilities, permanent structures, etc. – as long as Woodsite is secure for up to 10 years as an event site – buys time to look for a long-term venue
- Rich Boccia – shortest term alternative solution would be the Bell Shaped Parcel, but still far out
- Brent Truax – MLT should contribute toward this to at least get an event site secured short-term
- Colin Fernie – Dirk Winters’ first event there would be a Christmas market during holidays
- Paul Rudder – if MLT contributes, secure right of non-profits to perform there too
- Scott McGuire – if MLT puts money toward events venue, make sure someone in town is recruiting other events to bring people here from September to November and mid-week

Motion for John Urdi to explore \$300k contribution toward infrastructure at Sam’s Woodsite event venue (physical infrastructure rather than down payment for purchase) – Paul Rudder motions, Scott McGuire seconds, passes unanimously (Colin Fernie abstains, Sean Turner absent)

- Events coordinator position
 - John Morris – support additional funding from MLT to support the position, amount TBD
 - John Urdi – Town Council needs to make sure the hiring process is fair
 - Colin Fernie – applications due September 8, handful of people have applied
 - Scott McGuire – never saw RFQ for an events position
 - Kirk Schaubmayer – synergy between town and MLT is essential – common goal of attracting the right person to do events because it puts money on the table for everyone else

- 2. Town Council workshop and deliverables discussion – November 16th Council meeting? – John Urdi
 - Requested to move meeting to November 16 – will get back to board with the date
 - Goal: get MLT board and Town Council together to talk about scope of work, deliverables, etc.

- 3. TBID Renewal Process – John Urdi
 - 15-20 people attended each steering committee meeting from all different business sectors
 - No rate changes to TBID moving forward, still have appeals process, revisions being made to Management District Plan
 - Goal to renew for 10 years, have caveat to look at rates if needed instead of re-starting whole process
 - MLT surveying business owners in September to see how TBID has affected them
 - Doing study with Tourism Economics on results from first few years of TBID – will have in-house end of September
 - Next steering committee meeting – October 6, 1-3pm in MLT conference room – start talking about marketing after meeting

11. Key Takeaways

1. FYE TOT ended at \$15,733,340 (July 2016 so far is in at \$1.68m which is 19% ahead of last year’s record)
2. FYE TOT finished over budget by \$4,433,340 Million which is 39.2%
3. To achieve \$4.4m in **additional** TOT, that means \$34.1 million was spent in Mammoth Lakes lodging

12. Executive Session – none

Motion adjourned at 3:07 pm

Future Meeting Dates Next scheduled Board Meeting is Wednesday, October 5th 1-3pm @ MLT Conference Room