



Town Hall - 551 Hot Sptings Blvd.
Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

MINUTES

Pagosa Springs Area Tourism Board Meeting
February 5, 2025 @ 4:00 PM

A regular meeting of the Pagosa Springs Area Tourism Board was called to order on February 5, 2025, at 4:00 PM in the Town Hall - 551 Hot Sptings Blvd. .

BOARD PRESENT: Board Member Johnson, Board Member Lucero, Board Member Maez, Board Member Dufour, Council Member Williams, Shane Prince, and Sarah Mashue

BOARD ABSENT: Lance Thornton

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

II. PUBLIC COMMENT – *Please sign in to make public comment*

1. There was no public comment.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of the December 17th Meeting Minutes.

IV. REPORTS TO BOARD

1. Director Report

Director provided an update. For Town collections, 2024 has seen increases compared to 2023. YTD 2024 (through November) shows a 11.79% increase over 2023, or \$86,456. November was up 27.45% over 2023. Director will work with the finance team to have the amounts applied to the months they were due, versus when they were paid. However, given the number of payments, we are going to wait to review all of 2024 for a more accurate end of year report.

Director asked if anyone had any questions about anything in the Director Report. Board Member Lucero thanked Director for the Blue Room Research Workshop earlier in the day and other members agreed it was a good workshop. Board Member DuFour asked for Director's thoughts on the Blue Room Research presentation regarding International Tourism knowing that the Director spends a fair amount of time on that endeavor. Director explained she had a conversation with Steve from Blue Room Research after the workshop. He explained unless you're working with receptives we're not going to see any of that market. The dollars we're spending for International is covered by the grant through the Colorado Tourism office. We have spent quite a few years focused on international. We did take a break during the pandemic. In December Director got an email from the CEO of Rocky Mountain holiday tours, which is a receptive tour operator. They hold the inventory for the tour operators to book through. International travelers are unlikely to book directly through a property. We did not have any properties with inventory and now we have 4. We are on itineraries that are being sold to consumers in Europe specifically. Now that we have inventory that is bookable that will make a big difference. Anecdotally, most of the international visitors do come in through the Visitor Center. It's never going to be huge numbers, but we're also not spending much actual dollar amount on international. The Go West Summit is meeting with international and domestic tour operators and building relationships. The tour operators

do a lot of the marketing. Director also explained that an advantage to international tourists is they do not cancel their trips for fires, snowfall, etc. Director will have some marketing campaign results to review at the next meeting and this will include international.

2. Destination Blueprint - Dave Santucci

Dave Santucci was present via zoom to update the Board on Destination Blueprint. He reviewed the presentation in the packet with the Board. The key findings and priorities are promoting value of tourism management (visitor education) and promoting shoulder season. Dave would like the group to discuss and decide if they would like Dave to continue to focus on these priorities with the remaining consulting hours. Council Member Williams suggested Dave hold small group discussions with lodgers and other groups. Dave responded that could be an option or handouts or cards with a QR code to tell the story of what we are working on. For example, potentially interviewing firefighters to talk about the importance of fire safety education. That way the visitors and residents know the expectations and set the example for the visitors. We do want to have a professional online presence and email out to the businesses to engage with these stories. In Dave's experience it creates advocates for tourism. Then we can move forward and continue to grow tourism at a rate that works for the community. Council Member Williams thanked Dave for his efforts.

Director asked if anyone opposed to Director and staff moving forward working with Dave. There were no Board members that opposed.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. 2025 Event Funding Process and Overview

Before starting interviews, Board Chair Lucero explained in the interest of time, if it is an existing event that they have already presented on and received funding in the past we're not going to ask them to present again. Event organizers can come to the table so the Board can ask questions. If it's a new event that hasn't been before the board before then they can present the highlights of the event trying to keep it under 5 min, and then the Board will ask questions.

After interviews and Board discussion Council Member Williams moved to approve a total of \$50,750 in event funding with \$1,500 for Farmers Market, \$10,000 for Reggae in the Park, \$5,000 for Big Picture Classic, \$3,000 for Life at Chimney Rock, \$10,000 for Sunrise Fest, \$10,000 for Sundown Fest, \$1,250 for Pagosa Paddle, \$5,000 for Brews for Rescues, and \$5,000 for Barktoberfest. Board Member Prince seconded. Carried.

2. 2025 Event Funding - Farmer Market

Pauline Benetti with Pagosa Farmers Market was present at the meeting. They are requesting \$3,700 in funding. She explained the Tourism Board has been a supporter of the Farmers Market in the past and thanked them for that. She reported the one big development last year was the move from East Side Market to the Tennyson Sculpture Garden. The vendors were ecstatic with the results which means they made money. Other than that it is pretty much the same as in years past. She is a volunteer but has two employees, a Market Coordinator and a Market Administrator. Board Member Prince asked for clarification on attendance numbers for 2024. Pauline explained they did not take good attendance for 2024. They plan to improve the attendance process for 2025 but clarified attendance was not down, it was up. Board Member Mashue asked if the funds requested are for staffing. Pauline answered yes.

The Board approved funding the Pagosa Farmers Market \$1,500 in 2025. The Board suggested in the future to not request funds for staffing. Quite a few of the new board members commented on that aspect of the request and offered other options to consider. The Community Development Corporation (Pagosa CDC) has a summer intern grant program; they suggested reaching out to the program coordinator Kat McFadden to participate in 2025. (In 2024, employers were reimbursed up to \$4,500 per intern). Since the vendors did well in 2024 and the new location was deemed a success, consider increasing vendor fees.

3. 2025 Event Funding - Reggae in the Park

Jared Omas was present at the meeting. Four Corners Flyers is requesting \$10,000 in funding. He explained this is an existing event. Board Member Lucero asked for clarification on the budget because in the application stated the \$10,000 was 30% of the budget but the total budget showed \$10,280 on what he was reviewing. Jared stated that was not correct, the entire budget is \$30,000. Board Member Lucero also asked if they would be charging for admission this year as suggested by the board in the past. Jared stated yes, they will be charging admission this year. They don't have the rate set until they hire a band and see what the band will cost but they plan to charge under \$20. Jared highlighted that Reggae in the Park is one of the largest if not the largest music event in Pagosa. It brings in a lot of people from out of town and out of state. People come specifically for the music and find out about the town. Board Member Lucero asked how they are tracking attendance. Jared explained they had two counters at the front gate and a counter at the beer line tracking out of state ID's. By selling tickets this year they will be able to better track attendance and out of state numbers.

There was general consensus for full funding of \$10,000 in 2025.

4. 2025 Event Funding - Big Picture Classic

Dave Balina was present at the meeting. They are requesting \$5,000 in funding. This is a repeat event but the Tourism Board did not fund this event in the past. It is a 2 day frisbee golf event. They bring in about 180 players to play at the park in Cloman which is known as Sneak a Peak Frisbee Golf Course. About 80% come from out of town around the 4corners area and some from further out. This is the 8th annual tournament and they have had good success. They ended up completing 90 concrete tee pads in town with funds from Tourism Board as well with the majority of the work completed last summer. Council Member Williams stated it encourages volunteers in town and helps the lodgers. Board Member DuFour asked why this if the first time they have asked for funds for this particular tournament. Dave responded that they are planning to take the event up a notch this year with payments to the participants. He clarified \$400 is for the park rental, \$800 for advertising, and the other \$3,700 will go to the purse of the tournament. It is a rain or shine event now that they have the concrete tee pads. Board Member Mashue asked how they have funded the event in the past. Dave explained it is a non-profit event that was self funded in the past but they did not have cash payouts to the pros. They are hoping to have the event funded themselves with sponsors by 2027.

Board discussed, this event meets all of the criteria. There was general consensus for full funding of \$5,000 in 2025.

5. 2025 Event Funding - Life at Chimney Rock

Rhonda McClure from CRIA was present at the meeting. CRIA is requesting \$2,646 in funding. She explained Life at Chimney Rock is a free 2 day event with cultural and educational workshops to learn how the people of Chimney Rock did things, the tools they used, the natural resources. They bring in Native American Dancers on each day, vendors with Native American crafts. The whole monument is

open and so they continue to do tours. They bring in food trucks. Last year they had 12,080 in attendance that weekend. She explained there are some misconceptions about how they operate at Chimney Rock. They are in a participating agreement with the US Forest Service. One of the things they can't do is have sponsors. They can't advertise any sponsors or business name at the site. They can only advertise on their website, newspaper, and facebook page. The Forest Service tells them what programs they can have, what they can charge, what they can sell in the gift shop. When Chimney Rock became a National Monument they lost \$100,000 in funding per year, the Forest Service took the gate fee. They don't get any money from the Forest Service. In fact this year they will pay three of their employees up front and they reimburse them. They have cut expenses, they don't have an executive director. Rhonda is the bookkeeper and has taken on additional responsibilities. Then they have an office manager and that is all. The volunteers put in over 9,000 hours last year at a value of \$287,000 for the community. Attendance for the 2024 season was 22,308 people which was a 3% increase. Rhonda also mentioned a lot of people use the site year round for recreation. Board Member Lucero asked for clarification on sponsorship. Rhonda explained last year the event was funded by a donation of \$1500 from one individual to cover the cost of the Native American dancers. They have stepped up their marketing and fund raising efforts as much as they can. They have reserves but they don't want to operate off of the reserves. They want to protect the reserves knowing that the future is uncertain. Council Member Williams commented we think cultural tourism is very important and their funding problems may just be starting over the next 4 years.

The Board discussed the importance of cultural tourism and appreciated the conservative ask from CRIA. Council Member Williams suggested rounding up to \$3,000 in funding. The rest of the Board agreed that they should fund them \$3,000 for 2025.

6. 2025 Event Funding - NFA Productions Summer Concert Series

Matt Cottle with NFA Productions was present at the meeting. Director explained she has been talking to Matt about organizing the Halloween Hootenanny as well but they will bring that back to the Board in March. NFA Productions is requesting \$10,000 in funding for Sunrise Fest, \$15,000 for High Noon Fest, and \$10,000 for Sundown Fest. Matt explained he is excited to be back in Pagosa. He has spent the last 3 years managing a non-profit in Boulder producing a concert series for the Cities of Boulder and Broomfield. He has worked with Jennie on the Hootenanny and thanked the board for making the process of putting on an event easier. Matt explained the reason for holding the events on Memorial Day, 4th of July, and Labor Day is because we have lost the Folk Festival and Bluegrass Festival. He has been talking to community members, council member, and going to meetings. These events are an attempt to encourage tourism and support events that are accessible and affordable to locals. He understands that Tourism encourages off season events but when it was brought to his attention that the other festivals were no longer taking place it seemed it was a need that needed to be filled. His goal is for these events to be recurring. He explained his budgets show 15% in talent, 15% in event staff on the day of the show, 20% in infrastructure that includes sound and equipment, licensing, 18% of marketing with marketing partnerships. The goal would be to target some outlying areas and towns, and do that through targeted ads as well as local marketing, 16% for administration cost which covers people that are going to be working on this, and then a small 10% contingency for some tents if needed. This is going to be a rain or shine event. What he's hoping to cover in sponsorships would be covering the hundreds of hours of administration work. The events will be ticketed events Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend with tickets in the \$10 to \$15 range and have under 18 be free. So it's extremely encouraging towards a family event. Board Member Prince asked Matt to clarify the budget he submitted as far as income. Matt explained the income is estimated at \$5,000 in revenue per event. He is asking for \$15,000 for 4th of July because he would like the event to be free. His intention is to support the 4th of July festivities and not to draw people away from the others. There have been some

changes in the location of the Park to Park so his 4th of July event will be at Yamaguchi. Board Member Prince reminded the Board that on December 17th they discussed the funding criteria and agreed to continue to favor new events and new requests which will help during shoulder season specifically, events that were working with lodging partners, and events that attracted out of town audience. Board Member Lucero asked Matt what type of music will they have at these events. Matt explained they are planning to have mixed genres, diverse, folk, bluegrass, funk, Americana, blues, family friendly, danceable. He wants to encourage out of town musicians to give the people here something new and attract new people. Council Member Williams asked if Matt sees these events becoming self-sustaining in the future. Matt answered absolutely, after year 2 or 3 it should be self sufficient. The ticketing model and alcohol model will show that. Doing multiple shows helps attract sponsors, even sponsors outside of Pagosa once you have some data to show them.

The Board discussed each event separately. The general consensus from the Board is to approve \$10,000 in funding for Sunrise Fest and \$10,000 for Sundown Fest for 2025. Board Chair Lucero stated he would like to bring the 4th of July event back in March when we may have more information about construction, the parade, fireworks, etc. The Board agreed to table the 4th of July event until March.

7. 2025 Event Funding - Pagosa Paddle

Lindsey Kurt-Mason was present at the meeting. They are requesting \$3,400 in funding. The Pagosa Paddle is an existing event. He has been running it for 3 years but it has been going for 7 or 8 years. This year the only changes is that it will be a 2 day event with sprint races and a white water rodeo event. The idea is to spread out the event in case of lightning and it encourages people to spend the night. Council Member Williams asked if Lindsey could please get his report in on time if they fund the event again. Lindsey agreed. Board Member Mashue asked how the event went last year with the new timing equipment. Lindsey answered they hired a professional timer. They had teams from other cities and towns as well as Pagosa. Board Member Lucero asked how many spectators came to the event. Lindsey answered about 450 with his own headcount. Council Member Williams commented it is a great event for defining Pagosa with the river and rugged outdoor activity.

The Board approved funding Pagosa Paddle \$1,250 for 2025. The Board noted that the event had received \$16,700 over the past 5 years, with 2025 being the 3rd year with the new event organizers. They indicated that they would not consider a funding request in 2026.

8. 2025 Event Funding - Brews for Rescues

Amy Wilson with Rugby's Rescue House was present at the meeting. They are requesting \$5,000 in event funding. Brews for Rescues is an existing event. They are asking for funding for lodging for brewers and bands. Council Member Williams commented these events are fun to attend.

Board Member Lucero recused himself from the vote. The Board feels this is a successful shoulder season event that is always well attended. The general consensus was for full funding of \$5,000 for 2025.

9. 2025 Event Funding - Barktoberfest (formerly Oktoberfest)

Amy Wilson with Rugby's Rescue House was present at the meeting. They are requesting \$5,000 in event funding for this event. This is an existing event that they are rebranding from Oktoberfest to

Barktoberfest. They are asking for funding for lodging for brewers and bands.

Board Member Lucero recused himself from the vote. The general consensus was for full funding of \$5,000 for 2025.

10. AI Solution for Website

This item was tabled until the March meeting. Director explained she is trying to figure out if this tool could integrate with our booking engine on our website and needs to take the information she just got right before this meeting from book direct back to Guide geek matador network and see if they can work with that. If there is an option she thinks that makes it more compelling. The Board agreed they are interested in this item and would like to discuss it more in March.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

1. Update on Multipurpose Pavilion - Brian Collabolletta

This item was tabled until March meeting. Director will meet with Brian before the March meeting to get more details.

2. Discussion on Reusable Cups for Events

Following discussion during the December Tourism Board meeting, staff has investigated reusable cup options. Aluminum cups seem cost prohibitive as a test effort. A quantity of 5000, for the least expensive aluminum option is \$1.62/ cup. Whereas, a BPA free reusable hard plastic (with color changing effects) is \$0.77 each. Director looked at the estimated attendance in the event funding applications received for the February meeting and 5000 seems like a reasonable number to see if this program will be embraced by event organizers. The reusable hard plastic will allow printing of logo on one side and QR code on the other side. The color changing (when cold liquid is added) will make it more appealing for event attendees to keep the cup. Board had discussion about reusable cups and whether or not attendees would actually take the cups with them. Board Member Lucero commented the sustainability message is important. Board Member Mashue mentioned the cups may give us an opportunity to promote tourism. Board Member DuFour mentioned she would like to see a trackable QR Code.

Board Member Lucero moved For Staff to move forward with ordering 5,000 reusable cups. Council Member Williams seconded.

Carried.

3. Visit Pagosa Springs Magnets for Vacation Rental Properties

Director presented a sample of the magnets staff has designed for Vacation Rental Properties with a trackable QR code to a Welcome landing page for visitors. The landing page will have information about construction, fire restrictions, and other updated and current information for visitors. Staff printed a small quantity as a test. Director consulted with Stuart Scull and Lance Thornton and they liked the idea. The biggest challenge will be figuring out how to contact Vacation Rental owners to get the magnets to them. Director is working on getting contact information from the Town and County so we can email them. Board Member DuFour suggested contacting the housekeeping services. Director will order 1,000 to start. Board Member Mashue commented she loved the idea and thinks the lodging businesses would also like the magnets.

VII. NEXT TOURISM BOARD MEETING MARCH 5TH AT 4:00 PM

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

