MINUTES

Zoom Meeting
Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

Pagosa Springs Area Tourism Board Meeting
March 24, 2025 @ 3:00 PM

A regular meeting of the Pagosa Springs Area Tourism Board was called to order on March 24, 2025, at 3:00 PM in the Zoom Meeting.

BOARD PRESENT: Board Member Johnson, Board Member Lucero, Board Member Dufour, Board Member Thornton, Shane Prince, Sarah Mashue, Board Member Marchand, and Board Member Ranson

BOARD ABSENT: Council Member Williams

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER – Meeting called to order at 4:02pm

II. PUBLIC COMMENT – There was no public comment.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of the March 5th Meeting Minutes

Board Member Johnson moved to approve the consent agenda, Shane Prince seconded.

Carried.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. 2025 Events & Funding Budget

Board Chair Lucero explained the board should have reviewed all of the eight applications in the meeting packet. We will go through each application and if there are questions for the event organizers and they are on the meeting, we can allow 5 minutes for questions and answers. Once we get through all eight applications the Board will discuss, make recommendations, and vote at the end. He also reminded the Board to pay attention to our funding criteria as we go through each application. Board Member Thornton asked for those criteria to be reviewed again now. Director explained that events during shoulder season (Spring, Fall, Winter, Non-holiday), events that attract out of town visitors, and events who are working with lodgers should be weighted more heavily. The Board has moved away from limiting applicants to 3 years of funding and has also moved away from a twice yearly Spring/Fall event funding application process. These changes were made several years ago.

Director gave an update on the Event Funding discussion with Town Council on March 18th. She provided the information in the Agenda Brief in the packet as well. Town Council authorized the Tourism board to approve the 4th of July event and to allocate funds for Hootenanny and Old Fashioned Christmas, the recycling / trash services, and honor the funding approved in the February meeting. We also have up to $40,000 in addition to the $100,000 that we had originally had budgeted that we're going to pull likely out of our personnel budget for 2025. So the funding requests the Board has before them today are a total of $38,500. To date with what has been approved, the Board has spent $98,220 and we have up to $140,000. Director explained she sends out the Event Funding Applications to event organizers in December and applications are considered on a first come, first serve basis until funds are fully extended. The first board meetings of the year are when the majority of the applications come through. We do have one application to consider for the April meeting that was not submitted before the March 5th meeting.

After interviews and Board Discussion, the Board voted for the recommended funding for the events that had no direct conflict of interest for Board members. The other decisions were handled separately, to allow Board members to recuse themselves.

Board Member Johnson moved to approve $2,000 for Pickle in Pagosa, $2,000 for Spanish Fiesta, $2,500 for Pints, Pools, & Paddles, $2,000 for Hot Springs Fest, $3,500 for Museum Reopening, and $5,000 for Skis & Saddles Skijoring as recommended for a total of $17,000, Sarah Mashue seconded.

Carried.

2. Event Funding Application - Pagosa Springs Artists Studio Tour

Kathie Disner with the Pagosa Springs Arts Council was in attendance. They are requesting $3,000 in funding. Board Member Prince stated they weren't able to recap how much additional lodging the event brought in for 2024, they have not sought out any other sponsorships aside from the Tourism Board's funding, and the event falls during peak season. Board Member Marchand asked how they gathered their data for out of town vs local attendance. Board Member DuFour mentioned she is no longer involved in organizing this event but still has access to their Meta and website analytics. Board Chair Lucero stated that information needs to come from the applicant. Board Member DuFour explained she has stepped away from organizing this event but will still recuse herself from the vote. Kathie answered that in the past they had a sign in sheet at each studio to track the visitors and where they are coming from. She also clarified they have had several sponsors the last couple of years, Bootlegger, Two Old Crows, and several others as well as some of the participating artists. When she completed the application they had not set up sponsors for this year but now they do have Two Old Crows and the Arts Council as sponsors for 2025 so far. Board Member Prince asked Kathie to clarify the lodging partnerships for this year. Kathie stated they have a room block with The Springs Resort as well as RV space block with one of the RV Parks. Board Member DuFour explained the Springs Resort reported more bookings than they anticipated during the event last year and that is why they are willing to do a room block this year. Board Member Prince said he would like to see more specific data presented on bookings in the future. County Commissioner John Ranson asked if their request is 40% of their budget. Kathie answered that is correct.

Board Member Thornton recommends funding the event $1,500 since it is not in the shoulder season. There was agreement from the Board to fund that amount. Rosanna Dufour recused herself as she has been involved in this event in the past.

Shane Prince moved to approve $1,500 for the Studio Tour, Board Member Johnson seconded.

Carried.

3. Event Funding Application - Pickle in Pagosa

Pagosa Pickleball Club is requesting $2,000 in event funding for Pickle in Pagosa Pickleball Tournament. There were no representatives from the Pickleball Club in attendance.

Board Member Johnson commented Pickleball tournaments attract out of town audience so it does fit with some of the Board's criteria. Board Member Mashue made a recommendation to fund the full $2,000. There was general consensus for full funding.

4. Event Funding Application - Spanish Fiesta

Toni Gallegos with Spanish Fiesta was not able to attend the meeting. They are requesting $2,000 in funding for the Spanish Fiesta. Board Member Marchand stated his only issue with this event is that is on the same day as the Car Show and he does not believe it will attract many tourists. Board Chair Lucero pointed out this event is not during shoulder season.

Board Member Prince stated he understands other Board members concerns with the event being on the car show weekend but he feels this event is a culturally meaningful event and recommends full funding of $2,000. There was general consensus for full funding.

5. Event Funding Application - Chamber Grillin and Distillin

Director explained this is a new Chamber of Commerce event. They originally asked for $5,000 but once Mary Jo reached out to the Fairgrounds she increased the ask to $8,000 based on additional costs for using the Fairgrounds property. Board Member Prince stated when he reviewed the application he found it was pretty open ended and he is wondering if they have any confirmed vendors. Chamber of Commerce Rep and Board Member Marchand stated he is not sure who is confirmed but they did have interest in distillers from Denver as well as NM. Board Member Lucero agreed the application seems open ended and is also during summer season. Board Member Mashue pointed out the event falls during the same weekend as the artist studio tour. Director stated Mary Jo felt the events would compliment one another. Ava Carter with the Chamber of Commerce joined the meeting to answer questions. Ava explained tickets are not on sale yet, they emailed distillers last week and already have four interested distillers, one of which is Stranahan's. They have two confirmed commercial BBQ-ers and a ton of interest. They are excited to have a BBQ event in the 4 corners region. Board Member Prince asked about how the funds will be used. Ava explained the funds will be used for lodging for distillers. They travel here for the event and pour their own liquor which is a big expense for them so covering their lodging allows for them to pull from a wider area than just Pagosa. County Commissioner Rep John Ranson asked if the Chamber of Commerce is the beneficiary of the funding. Ava explained that yes, events are the primary funding source for the Chamber. They increased their request from $5,000 to $8,000 because they are now expecting a bigger turn out that they originally thought.

Board Member Prince explained that Mary Jo and the Chamber of Commerce are a known entity in the community with other successful events. This events seems like it has potential to kick off something new and would recommend the full $8,000. Board Chair Lucero stated he felt differently because it seems open ended and Mary Jo will not be here to do the event in future years and he knows how hard she works on events. For him, even the $5,000 is too much. Board Member Prince stated if they do it well he believes the Chamber would still continue to do their events and he sees this as a continuation and expansion of their role in events as we shed some other community events. Board Member Johnson stated she likes that it is a new event and feels there is potential to draw a crowd with BBQ and distilleries. There are many people who look for those kinds of events in Colorado mountain towns but she is also hearing from the event production side that they are uncertain how much they are going to need to make the event happen. County Commissioner John Ranson suggested $5,000 in funding. There was general consensus for $5,000 in funding.

Board Member DuFour and Board Member Marchand recused themselves from this Grillin' and Distillin' vote. Board Member DuFour's business has a business relationship with Stranahan's and Board Member Marchand is on the Chamber of Commerce Board.

Board Member Ranson moved to approve $5,000 in Event Funding for Grillin' & Distillin', Sarah Mashue seconded.

Carried.

6. Event Funding Application - Pints, Pools & Paddles

Mary Cocke with The Springs Resort was in attendance. They are requesting $5,000 for Pints, Pools, & Paddles. Board Member Prince asked to confirm that the request is 30% of their budget. Mary confirmed that is correct. He also asked which lodging properties they are working with besides Motel SOCO. Mary stated they are also working with Riverwalk Inn and have their brewer's lodging secured. Board Member Prince asked Mary to clarify if this is a Springs event and what is the funding going toward. Mary answered it is a Springs Resort event and they just happen to do it at the same weekend as Pagosa Paddle which is separate but people can soak and watch the races happening in the river. They are requesting $4,000 for lodging and $1,000 for music. The lodging funds would be distributed to all three lodgers. Board Chair Lucero stated when Pagosa Paddle requested funds last month they made it seem like it was a collaborative event and the board funded them some money for their event. Mary clarified they are two separate events because the Springs is not involved in their planning but it is a collaboration in that The Springs donates soaking passes to everyone who enters into the races, give them a banner to hang, they do their awards ceremony at the beer festival. They are separate as far as expenses and the revenue collected. Board Member Mashue pointed out on the budget it shows the Springs is not making a profit on the event and asked if that is correct. Mary stated that is correct.

Board Member Johnson pointed out this is a ticketed event, a for-profit entity, we already funded the non-profit portion of that with Pagosa Paddle so unsure how our funding is going to help them. Board Member DuFour stated she felt like it was a double dipper. Board Member Johnson added it is put on by The Springs and they obviously have lodging so this request feels out of our realm in her opinion. County Commissioner Rep John Ranson asked if some of the funding goes to the other two hotels. Board Member Prince stated that Mary eluded to dispersing the lodging funds for the brewer's lodging at the three hotels. Board Member Lucero clarified that the other properties are not getting any of the revenue from the event. Board Member Prince stated he feels this event is for the Springs on behalf of the Springs and benefitting the Springs. John Ranson agreed but stated the Springs has done a lot for the community and he would support this event. He feels the other smaller hotels will get a little benefit out of this event. Board Chair Lucero pointed out this is the 10th year for this event. Board Member Prince stated they have not reached out to the Wyndham for lodging partnerships or sponsorships so how much are they helping everyone else? However he feels like they do a lot for the community and he would be willing to recommend half of the funding for the event. There was general consensus for $2,500 in funding.

7. Event Funding Application - Hot Springs Fest

Mary Cocke with The Springs Resort was in attendance. They are requesting $5,000 for Hot Springs Fest. Board member Thornton asked how funding an influencer affects their event. Mary stated they have to go heavy on marketing and advertising for this event. Board Member Thornton asked if the influencer is just for the event or if they are hired on for the year. Mary clarified the influencer is just for the event and to get a good influencer it can be up to $1,500 or so and the remainder for the deliverables for the influencer. The goal is to use the content for advertising and promoting for future events. They will also be promoting the event as they are there too. Board Member Prince asked how attendees access the event. Mary explained it is a ticketed, collaborative event with The Springs Resort, Healing Waters, and the Overlook. With one ticket you get access to soak in all of the pools. Board Member Thornton asked if the influencer will be shared with the other two properties. Mary confirmed that is correct. Board Member Marchand commented the influencer won't benefit the event for this year. Mary explained she is not involved in the influencers but it helps while they are here at the event because they are posting. But then they also have footage and deliverables to use for future events. Board Member Prince asked if the marketing material would be shared with the Tourism Board. Mary stated she couldn't speak for the team but it makes sense to her that it would be. Mary came back later in the meeting and explained she reached out to her team and they are willing to share the media from the influencer.

Board Member Marchand stated he doesn't feel that $3,000 for an influencer is beneficial for the community or the board. Board Member DuFour agreed and recommended $2,000 in funding. Board Member Mashue asked Director if it would be helpful for Visit Pagosa Springs to use their content. Director stated it would really depend on the influencer. The impact of influencers is more in the current situation and not so much for future promotion. Board Member Marchand agreed that by the time the content was released the event would be over. There was general agreement for $2,000 in funding.

8. Event Funding Application - Pagosa History Museum

Shari Pierce was not available to attend the meeting. They are requesting $3,500 in funding. Director explained the museum is planning to reopen this summer after being closed for the last two summers. We do get a lot of visitors asking about the museum. The funds are to help them promote the reopening of the museum. The visitor center still has museum rack cards that will be reused this year.

County Commissioner Rep John Ranson stated he would be in favor of full funding of $3,500. Board Member Marchand agreed. Board Member Johnson agreed the museum is important to Pagosa and helping them get their feet back on the ground is a good thing to do. The group agreed with recommendation for full funding.

9. Event Funding Application - Skis & Saddles Skijoring

Becky Deitemeyer had a schedule conflict and was unable to attend the meeting today. They are requesting $10,000 for 2026 Skis and Saddles Skijoring. Board Member Prince asked why we are being asked to approve a 2026 event in 2025. Director explained since we are on a calendar year budget year when funding opens up we can't actually dispense funds until the beginning of the calendar year. That cuts very close with this event in January. So they have always applied in the year prior.

Board Member Prince stated he is a fan of skijoring and he is excited to see it back. He is concerned we have other funding requests for this year. He asked Director if it was possible to fund half of it and they can come back next year to fund the other half. Director explained that they can't commit to a future budget so it would have to be contingent upon budget allocation. Board Member Marchand asked if there is a guarantee the event will happen since it was cancelled in 2023. Board Member DuFour pointed out that it is different event organizers than it was in 2023. Board Member Mashue made a recommendation to fund the full amount because it is a shoulder season event and they bring in a lot of lodging. Board Chair Lucero stated he supports skijoring but is hesitant to fund events when the money is going just for the prize purse. He also pointed out we have funded them $40,000 in the last 5 years. Board Member Johnson clarified according to their application the funds are for track building, snow removal, fees and event costs. She also stated it brings in a lot of people who follow those circuits, participants and spectators. Building the track is a lot of work especially with such little snow. She recommends we fund half now and they can apply again for more. Board Chair Lucero agreed with half funding of $5,000. Board Member Marchand pointed out they had over $7,000 left over in their expense report from this year. He is comfortable with $5,000. There was general consensus for $5,000 in funding.

V. OLD BUSINESS

VI. NEXT TOURISM BOARD MEETING APRIL 2ND AT 4:00 PM

VII. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting was adjourned at 4:05pm.