Present: Kathleen Bertoncelj, Brad Jackson, Brady Hammond, Rebecca Walsh, Page Malmstrom, Mike McShane (present via phone), Pat Gabriel - Laramie City Council Liaison, Scott Larson-Executive Director, Mike Gray-Assistant Director, Lyndee Johnston-Office Assistant
Absent: Mark Pearce, Terri Jones
Guests: Michael Hickerson and Shawn Faxon from the Laramie Jubilee Days Board

1. Regular Board Meeting called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Vice Chair Mr. Brady Hammond
   a) Confirmation of a Quorum-YES

2. Additions and/or Corrections to agenda
   a) Ms. Page Malmstrom asked to talk about the 307 Film Festival. Mr. Scott Larson informed that this would be discussed at the next meeting.

3. Consent Agenda
   a) August 2019 Minutes
   b) Profits and Loss Budget vs. Actual
   c) Advertising and Grants
   d) Administrative Transaction Detail Report

   MOTION BY Mr. Jackson seconded by Ms. Bertoncelj that the August 2019 Minutes be approved and that each specific action on the July 2019 Minutes be approved as indicated. Motion was passed unanimously.

4. Financial Reports
   a) Lodging Tax Collections 2019-20 – Mr. Larson reported that during the month of August Albany County was down. This could have been correlated to the first UW football game and UW student move-in day falling on the last weekend of the month. Consequently, the people staying in the hotels checked out on the 1st of Sept. so the taxes haven’t been collected yet. Mr. Hammond chimed in stating that the university started two weeks later than usual and we should start to see gains in the upcoming month. Mr. Jackson agreed. Ms. Malmstrom stated that the university plans the academic schedule three years in advance and will find this information helpful so they can plan their events accordingly.

5. Old Business
   a) Pilot Hill Project (Community Day) – Mr. Larson reported that he attended the first community day (the second will be on Oct. 5th) where he set up a tent to hand out information and placed a sign-up sheet for our newsletter. Mr. Larson said that most people who asked about the business didn’t realize we gave out the information that we did and were very interested in getting more! Mr. Larson hasn’t met with Ms. Sarah Brown Mathews to find out the actual attendance at the event, but he reported that the attendees were mostly people from town. All in all it was a great opportunity to spread some word-of-mouth marketing and to discuss how the project will influence our town and the opportunities it will bring. Mr. Larson also shared that he and Terri Jones had the chance to speak on Wyoming Public Radio at the event to discuss the impacts it will have on tourism, jobs, and our local economy.
   b) State Trap Tournament – Mr. Mike Gray stated that the event was very successful and that the attendees bought food and gas while staying in Laramie. Mr. Mark Mader fulfilled all the requirements and is waiting on the check. It was discussed that the board will be paying Mr. Mader $1,500 and Mr. Gray will follow up to confirm this is the correct amount.
   d) Laramie Jubilee Days – Mr. Hickerson and Mr. Faxon reported on the events stating that there was an increase in attendance but they weren’t able to give exact numbers as they handed out tickets to the hotels for each day of events. The Jubilee Days board launched electronic ticketing this year which did report 540 attendees with visitors coming from Belgium, Great Britain, Ireland, and various other international locations. 2018 event numbers were down compared to 2017 and 2019 – attendance was up during these two years because of the Robert Fuller/Laramie TV Show events and because weather was bad in 2018. $23,000 was spent on ads such as printing schedules of events, regional and national magazine publications, digital marketing efforts, social media campaigns, and state-wide radio shows. The tourism board members asked if they would consider utilizing Snapchat filters for Jubilee Day’s events. Mr. Hickerson and and Mr. Faxon stated that this year they had $146,000 worth in sponsorship from various sponsors so they would consider expanding their marketing efforts next year. The Jubilee Days website also received a lot of attention from 29 different countries from around the world.

6. New Business
a) Mike’s Marketing Report – Social Media, Advertising - Mr. Gray reported that Facebook and blogs are looking good, Mr. Larson has taken over Instagram and Twitter. As far as social media presence, Laramie is still right behind Casper’s audience size. Upcoming events like the Wyoming HS Football Championships will be held at War Memorial Stadium on Nov. 15th and 16th and the Boy’s State Swimming Championships on Feb. 20th through the 22nd are keeping Mr. Gray busy as merchandise, ads, and logos need to be finished. Mr. Gray negotiated a half page ad in The Great American West magazine where the publication is distributed to approximately 272,000 travelers in Europe. It will be translated into four different languages so it will hopefully attract those abroad. The Snowest Magazine will also contain an ad for winter fun in Laramie in three separate issues. Mr. Gray reported that the Big Boy train engine will be rolling back through Laramie on Sept. 27th at 10:30 am and he has made posters to sell to the anticipated 3,000 train-buffs. Mr. Gray also made name tags for the staff using the Laramie logo and that the 100 Steamboat flags are up around town in time for the students and sports games. New banners and stickers are being printed with the new branding as well as the corrected version of the Centennial Tour brochure.

b) Scott’s Marketing Report – Google Analytics (SEO), Email Marketing – Mr. Larson reported that the investment on SEO is paying off. The Visit Laramie site has seen an increase in traffic and he predicts Sept. numbers will be even stronger. By this time next year the PPC/Google Ad Words Campaign expenses should decrease as we continue strong organic efforts. Mr. Larson also reported that so far, we have over 130,000 contacts through MyEmma.com and that he is sending out an e-newsletter approximately every two weeks which have seen a 13-14% open rate. Also, Mr. Larson stated that it typically takes months to work on SEO to see the lift that we have while the third party we have been using has established our SEO within a much shorter time frame. Our online visitor guide requests have doubled since this has been established and SEO has made up for the lost traffic overall.

c) Web Updates – Wireframe – Mr. Larson reported that he has been meeting with Mr. Sam Trautman about the Visit Laramie website wireframe. This includes the ease of navigation, page set up, color selection, etc. Mr. Larson would like to work on making it more efficient and redesign the website over the winter months.

d) Blog Updates - Mr. Brian Harrington and his wife and Ms. Leah Veinbergs and her husband are currently our bloggers. Both have had posts consistently on the number one page on Google which is great! We also purchase photos from Mr. Harrington who is a photographer. In total we spend $1,100 - $1,200 on blogging per month.

e) PR Hosting – Sports Illustrated – Mr. Larson reported that the Wyoming Office of Tourism (WOT) is currently organizing for the 150th celebration of the Women’s Suffrage in 2020 and has Sports Illustrated coming to southeastern Wyoming to do a photoshoot and a few videos in the area for a week. They will be stopping in Laramie to visit the Louisa Swain Foundation and will be based at the Brush Creek Ranch. Mr. Larson and Mr. Gray are working on the logistics of their stay as this will be a great opportunity for Laramie to be in the spotlight. Last years’ Sports Illustrated edition was featured in Kenya so this will be great for our little town and our exposure.

f) Groups and Conferences Update – WACO, APPA – Mr. Larson will be attending WACO in Casper on Wed. the 26th and 27th to pitch for the 2021 and 2022 conferences to be held in Laramie. He believes it will be tough because of the cost of our most popular and largest conference center, the Gateway Center. Mr. Larson will be focusing on the package deal: Trails, Rails, and Ales. The APPA conference will be held at the university in 2021 and approximately 350 – 400 people will be attending. Visit Laramie will provide its services for this conference and will put together packets.

g) Summit Update – The Summit Rest Center report shows the August numbers are down 10% from 2018. Throughout the entire year the numbers have been lower than in the past. Mr. Larson reported that Oct. 14th will be the tentative closing date for the Summit Rest Center.

h) New Building Discussion – Mr. Larson told the board that we are currently not under a lease and we are searching for a new location with more room for staff members and better facilities for travelers. As a new Marketing hire will be joining the staff on the 1st of Oct., a new location is becoming more important. Mr. Larson asked the Tourism board members to send him options for a new rental location (as the bylaws prohibit us from purchasing a building) or if any board member would like to be a part of a steering committee in charge of finding a new location. Ideally, the best location is off of one of the interstate exits like the Territorial Prison Historical Site. Mr. Jackson expressed to the board members to be open-minded about the selection process – downtown may be ok but search throughout the entire town. Ms. Malmstrom asked about a budget, Mr. Larson said right now we pay $950/month. Mr. Hammond and Mrs. Walsh suggested talking with Mrs. Trey Sherwood at the Main Street Alliance for more downtown options. Mr. Hammond also suggested that the new office should be close to a Pilot Hill Access point or the university for travelers visiting those attractions. The board members agreed to email selections to Mr. Larson.
i) **Board & Staff Retreat** – Mr. Larson stated that we have still not decided on a date that everyone can make, but he would still like to schedule the retreat before Christmas so he will send another poll. Mr. Mike McShane attended the meeting over the phone and wondered about the cost of the retreats. Mr. Larson reported that with going through a third party organizer who he knew from Steamboat, CO the cost of each retreat would be about $4,500. Mr. McShane asked the other board members if they thought the board retreat would be worth the time and money spent. Mr. McShane stated that he believes the staff retreat will be useful and productive but the board members rotate every two years and the members will either approve or disapprove of the decisions the staff makes on their retreat so it doesn’t seem as valuable. Mr. Larson stated that the board will be able to direct the staff on their retreat better if they meet to discuss future plans for Visit Laramie and the board will become more unified as well as the staff. Ms. Bertonecji stated that the city and county are re-evaluating boards and board members so this productive activity would prove this board matters to the city. Ms. Malmstrom pointed out that there wasn’t much information about what would be discussed at this board retreat and would like to request more information. Mr. McShane would also like to see more information on the benefits this retreat would have. Mr. Hammond asked if the board retreat packet could be bought without the disc assessment with team exercises so as to make the package cheaper. Mr. Hammond also pointed out that the board doesn’t meet or work regularly enough to spend that much money on the retreat. Mr. Larson said the packet doesn’t come with a disc assessment. Mrs. Walsh stated that she knows a local company that could potentially lower the price of the retreat packages and would send that information to Mr. Larson. All members agreed that having a third party facilitate the retreats would be a great idea. Mr. McShane stated that he needed more information or he would vote no on the board retreat.

7. **Grant Reports**
   a) **Wyoming Tennis Association** – The Wyoming Tennis Association is requesting a $2,000 grant for their invitational. They are estimating 180 room nights for 120 persons coming from MT, NV, UT, ID, and WY. In the past when it was held in Laramie the association received a grant of $750. Mr. Hammond asked for a discussion but a motion was made.

   *Mr. Jackson moved to give $1,000 to the association and Mrs. Walsh seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

8. **Review of the Board/Staff Activities**
   a) **August Office Stats** – Ms. Johnston reported that the leads accumulated to 5880 over the month compared to 2850 in August 2018 and that we are continuing to get inquiries for packets. Mr. Hammond pointed out that the walk-in, telephone, and email inquiries are half as much as they were in 2017, but the online leads are making up for it. Mr. Jackson stated that a new location might not be as important as we think because of the lower foot traffic into the brick-and-mortar location and that an online presence is more important.
   b) **Weekend Staff Update** – Ms. Taylor Thomas has been doing great but there is still no reoccurring trend as far as when visitors stop in or if there is a local event taking place. Her hours have been dialed back to 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. as travelers haven’t needed to stop in so late in the evenings. Mr. Hammond asked what the numbers were without the abnormal weekend count. Ms. Johnston stated that each weekend varied from approximately 20 – 40 people stopping in over the two days.
   c) **Football and Swimming Prep.** – Mr. Gray is currently organizing how to feed the players, get hotel rooms, and order memorabilia – in the past we have provided QDOBA to the athletes, press, and radio personalities.
   d) **Gray**
      1) **Office work, football and swimming, Wyoming House for Historic Women, Poke Pride** – Mr. Gray stated that Mr. Fred Ockers left his list of things to do for most of these events and what should be done differently. He also mentioned that the banners that will be used at these events which advertise for Visit Laramie have been ordered through Modern Printing who gave us a great deal. On Sept. 6th Mr. Gray met with the Wyoming House for Historic Women to celebrate Louisa Swain day. This year the Librarian of Congress, Ms. Carla Hayden, was invited to play the role of Louisa in the reenactment. Mr. Gray told the board that even the Library of Congress didn’t know that Louisa Swain was the first woman voter under equal laws and they changed their records to put Laramie and Louisa as the first. Mr. Larson thanked Mr. Gray and Ms. Johnston for the work in the office from cleaning to clearing out an office space for the new marketing hire.

   e) **Larson**
      1) **4th Economy – Town and Gown, Tourism** – Mr. Larson has been working as the Co-Chair of the Tourism group with Brian Harrington and attended the Town and Gown Session that Mr. Hammond Co-Chaired. These groups will contribute to the city’s 10-year economic development plan. Mr. Hammond is also a part of the Town and Gown group.
Mr. Larson reported that Laramie is rated one of the top 50 places to visit next year because of the 150th anniversary of the Women’s Suffrage.

2) **International Event Development** – Mr. Larson has also reported that he is working with the university and Mrs. Trey Sherwood at the Main Street Alliance to organize an international education event and market. The idea originally stemmed from an international food festival but it would help make the international students at the university feel more connected to the town of Laramie if the event was broader than just food. They are working on organizing this event for next year and one smaller event this fall for international education week in November.

3) **Wayfinding Signs** – Mr. Larson reported that he attended a meeting with Main Street and the City on the update of the Wayfinding Signs project. He reported that there has been a lot of turnover in staff since the project began and it was a regroup to reassess where things are. He included some notes provided to him by Mr. Pierce from Darren Rudloff in Cheyenne. He shared that there is a follow up meeting in a few weeks to reconvene.

4) **Networking** – **Madden Media, Pilot Hill Community Day, Sunrise Rotary, Ivinson CHNA** – Mr. Larson is keeping busy with meeting with lead providers, community outreach, and upcoming events in town.

f) **Hiring & Staffing Update – Marketing Manager** – Mr. Larson had expressed interest in expanding the staff and adding a Marketing Manager. Interviews were held with both Mr. Larson and Mr. Gray screening the four top contenders. We received 30 applications and Mr. Larson offered the job to Mrs. Sara Haugen who previously worked with the Boomerang as the Advertising Director and has a great background in PR, marketing, and copywriting. She has accepted the position and will be coming in this week for some one-on-one training with Mr. Gray and Mr. Larson.

9. Public Comments

10. Adjournment

*Motion was made by Mr. Jackson seconded by Ms. Bertoncelj to adjourn. The motion was passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.*

The next ACTB board meeting will be at the ACTB Office at 4 p.m. on Monday, October 22, 2019

Minutes respectfully submitted by Director Larson and Lyndee Johnston, Office Assistant