

Alta Town Council

Staff Report



To: Town Council

From: Chris Cawley, Assistant Town Administrator

Re: ACVB Board of Directors Presentation to Alta Town Council on October 14th

Date: October 7, 2020

Attachments: Alta Chamber and Visitors Bureau Proposed Strategic Plan-October 2020

Background:

Alta Chamber and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) has served the Alta business community as a destination marketing organization, visitor information provider, and business league since 2011. The ACVB Board of Directors has reported to the Town of Alta throughout the year 2020 about the status of ACVB operations, and the following points summarize recent events that led to our current position:

- ACVB's most recent coordinator left the position in March of 2020, as the COVID-19 Pandemic was beginning to influence local business operations in Alta
- In the wake of our employee's departure, the Board began a conversation about ACVB's mission and whether the program of services it has offered in recent years provides adequate return on the investment made by the Town of Alta and ACVB members
- Given indications that various ACVB marketing programs have not been as successful as intended, the Executive Committee of the ACVB Board has discussed an alternative model for ACVB in weekly or biweekly meetings throughout Summer 2020

Updated ACVB Strategic Plan:

In my staff report to the council last month, I outlined key elements of a strategic plan for ACVB that includes the following program areas, administrative components, and other features:

- Retention of a destination marketing program focused on cooperative marketing opportunities
- Public art and events program that seeks to improve Alta as a destination and "enhance the economy through the arts"

- Member services program including online member business listings, social media and newsletter content highlighting members, special events for members and other services
- The position of ACVB Coordinator would be indefinitely suspended, while the ACVB Board would remain in place and collaborate to write grants, administer board proceedings, manage finances, and maintain relationships with the Town of Alta and Alta Community Enrichment
- ACVB Board would develop an agreement with ACE, whereby ACE would provide many of the services described above

ACVB Presentation to the Alta Town Council on October 13, 2020

The purpose of ACVB's presentation to the Town Council will be to discuss the strategic plan attached to this report in more detail, hear feedback from the council, and ask for the Town's support. 2020 Board president Rosie O'Grady will lead the presentation and we will be joined by board members Brandon Ott, Connie Marshall, Sara Gibbs, and myself. Pending an indication of support from the Town of Alta for the programs outlined in the updated Strategic Plan, the ACVB Board will seek to enter into an agreement for funding of ACVB activities with the Town of Alta.

**Alta Chamber & Visitors Bureau (ACVB)
Draft Strategic Plan
October 7, 2020**

Introduction

The Alta Chamber and Visitors Bureau Board of Directors has been actively discussing ACVB's mission, its role in the Alta community, and the success of its current model as a destination marketing organization throughout 2020. Following the departure of the most recent ACVB Coordinator, which occurred as the COVID-19 pandemic was beginning to impact everyday life, the economy, and our understanding of the future, the ACVB Board of Directors conducted a facilitated discussion at its annual retreat. The ACVB Board confronted some of ACVB's ongoing issues during the discussion, including inconsistent member engagement, disappointing performance of key ACVB marketing initiatives, and difficulties in board member and employee recruitment.

As a result of the discussion, the ACVB Board agreed to explore a new model for the organization, under which ACVB would no longer focus solely on destination marketing, due to the high costs of competing for visibility in the ski industry destination market, ACVB's relatively limited budget, and the substantial destination marketing investments being made by ACVB members and other organizations including Ski Utah and Visit Salt Lake. The Board determined that ACVB should explore ways to enhance the destination experience for Alta visitors through events programming, visitor information services, and a program of public art and placemaking.

The Executive Committee of the ACVB Board of Directors, composed of Rosie O'Grady, Brandon Ott, Chris Cawley, and Connie Marshall, met on Friday, July 10th to discuss a future direction for ACVB. The following represents the outcome of this discussion and has been updated weekly during ACVB Executive Committee meetings. This document is intended to facilitate further discussion by the full ACVB Board, Alta Community Enrichment (ACE), and the Town of Alta and may become a more formal strategic plan or prospectus for the future model of ACVB.

Mission

This is a conceptual, updated mission statement for ACVB that has not been adopted by the ACVB Board.

The Alta Chamber & Visitors Bureau (ACVB) promotes Alta and Little Cottonwood Canyon as a world-class, year-round, mountain resort destination, and seeks to enhance the Alta experience for local and destination visitors. ACVB functions as a partnership between the public entity of the Town of Alta and the Alta business community.

Structure

- ACVB Advisory Board
 - ACVB continues to exist as an advisory body, members of which collaborate to fulfill various administrative and programmatic functions

- ACVB Board may outsource certain administrative tasks such as bookkeeping
 - Position of ACVB Coordinator would be suspended indefinitely
 - Board structure changes to include expertise in destination marketing and community art, and representation from ACE
- Funded by annual appropriation from the Town of Alta; ACVB membership dues
- Relationship with Alta Community Enrichment (ACE)
 - Develop agreement with ACE to fulfill various initiatives described below
 - ACVB acts as pass-through organization between Town of Alta, ACVB membership, and ACE

Budget

In recent years, the ACVB budget has included roughly \$100,000 in revenues and expenses. The Town of Alta has provided the bulk of ACVB revenues in the form of monthly payments of \$7,000, for a total of \$84,000. ACVB has budgeted to receive roughly \$22,000 in member dues each year.

Throughout the process of developing this plan, the ACVB Board has envisioned the organization operating with similar revenues to what it has previously had at its disposal. However, the 2021 Town of Alta budget assumes substantially lower sales tax revenues this year due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the Town has budgeted contributions to ACVB half the amount of previous years. The Board also anticipates that ACVB members may be cutting their own expenses and might opt out of paying member dues this year. Thus, a working budget for ACVB in 2020-2021 assumes total revenues of **\$64,000**, and lays out a program of activities totaling the same amount of expenses.

Initiatives & Programs

The ACVB Advisory Board will partner with ACE and other contractors and outside organizations to provide the following services to ACVB membership, the Alta business community, and visitors to Alta.

Destination Marketing

- ACVB will maintain a destination marketing program focused on cooperative marketing opportunities. Partner with organizations including Utah Office of Tourism, Visit Salt Lake, and Ski Utah.
- Target \$20-\$50k in annual grant-matching expenses and other marketing-related costs
 - Develop annual Co-op marketing plan and participation. Co-op programs and spending to focus on winter activation.
 - Apply for and manage all grant activity
 - Write annual grant applications to the Utah Office of Tourism (UOT)
 - Oversee, collect, and maintain information required by grant or UOT cafeteria program

- Manage grant marketing budget and deadlines
- Pursue potential new sources for funding
- Monitor return on investment

Community-Guided, Visitor Information

- Provide resources to visitors on the Alta experience
- Transition applicable content and information from discoveralta.com to altacommunity.org. Content to highlight business membership, community, visitor information, public arts and events.
 - Member business listings on ACE website
 - Social media, eNewsletters, and blog
 - Manage editorial calendar in partnership with ACVB advisory board via quarterly meetings.
 - Blog - Monthly blog during winter months (Oct - April) and bi-monthly in shoulder/summer months (May - September). Local character exploration to provide readers a deeper connection to Alta.
 - eNewsletter - Manage current eNewsletter list. Cadence similar to blog. eNewsletter can be 50% inspiration / 50% transactional. Explore possible email list segmentation.
 - Social Media - Current ACE channel is highly engaged, needs further growth for greater reach. Organic growth through free partnership opportunities with local Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs). As events and arts grow in the community find a balanced voice between inspiration and transactional* *ACE has control over transactional voice but the opportunity to drive ROI for the town.
 - Photos/Video - Manage photo and video assets. Options exist. Shorter, more frequent video projects. Don't need to be overproduced. Continued photography curation and distribution.

Public Arts & Events

- *“Enhance the economy through the arts”*
- Created and executed by ACE, in partnership with ACVB Board and member businesses
- Sharing the Alta experience and building community with visitors and locals
 - Year around events
 - Partner with member businesses
 - Placemaking/Sense of Place and town beautification
 - Aesthetic theme through town
 - Seasonal beautification efforts
 - Installation of works of art in public spaces in Alta
 - Demonstrate return on investment

Membership Services

- Provide services to support member community and manage ACVB business functions

- Partner with ACE for member events
 - Networking
 - Education
 - Opportunity to provide feedback to ACVB, Town of Alta

Administration

- Functions to be performed by ACVB Advisory Board members or contractors and consultants
 - Bookkeeping
 - Accounting
 - Strategic planning and development
 - Board administration
 - Grant writing
 - Record keeping
 - Legal counsel

Notes

- Several prominent components of the most recent iteration of ACVB are proposed to be discontinued:
 - Coordinator position
 - Stand-alone ACVB website—discoveralta.com
 - ACVB Social Media Channels
 - Booking engine (pending more analysis)
- The ACVB Board recognizes that Alta's economic outlook is uncertain given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and that it is likely ACVB resources will be curtailed in the near-term due to revenue shortfalls at the Town of Alta and member businesses
- The ACVB Board intends to work with the Town of Alta, ACVB members, and ACE to foster and develop the program areas described above over the following 2-5 years and seeks to retain similar amounts of funding to what ACVB had been provided prior to the economic downturn associated with COVID-19

Next Steps

- Discuss and refine current draft strategic plan document with full ACVB Board
- Engage with ACVB membership to take feedback on recommended new direction for ACVB
- Present final strategic planning documents to Alta Town Council, seek new agreement for ongoing Town of Alta funding
- Develop agreement between ACVB and ACE to define program new ACVB-ACE program areas
- Amend ACVB bylaws
 - Update mission statement
 - Update ACVB Board of Directors provisions