

Manitou Springs Economic Consolidation Project



Photo credit: Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau

Report of Issues Research and Recommendations

March 30, 2010



Report of Issues Research
and
Recommendations

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Background



The Need

An effort to reduce duplication of services among three organizations dedicated to the health of the Manitou Springs business community culminated in 2009 in an initiative to consolidate some functions of the Business Improvement District (BID), the Chamber of Commerce, and the Economic Development Council (EDC). Talks among representatives of the three organizations, while initially productive, reached a stalemate in the fall of the year. A continuing need to move toward consolidation resulted in the collaborative funding and hiring of Kezziah Watkins to serve as neutral facilitators and mediators in determining issues for resolution and developing recommendations for moving forward.

The Process

In order to identify issues relevant to consolidation, a series of interviews was held with representatives of the BID, the Chamber, the EDC, and the City of Manitou Springs. Candor in discussing issues, both past and future, was encouraged by offering interviews on an individual or small group basis rather than meeting with an entire body at once. Requests for interviews were extended to every member of the Boards of the BID, the Chamber of Commerce, the EDC and the Manitou Springs City Council, and to the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce and the Deputy City Administrator. Every person who responded was included in the interview process.

Sixteen interview sessions with 23 people were ultimately held over a four-week period in February and March, 2010. The following list describes interviews held:

- four members of the Board of the Economic Development Council (EDC);
- four members of the Board of the Business Improvement District (BID);
- seven members of the Board of the Chamber of Commerce;
- Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce;
- six members of the Manitou Springs City Council; and
- Deputy Administrator, City of Manitou Springs.

While a discussion guide for the interviews was developed and generally followed, each interview varied in its content as people discussed issues of greatest priority to them. Each interviewee was assured that his/her responses and comments would be documented, but entirely without attribution. A verbatim report of interviews is attached as an Appendix, organized by responses grouped by topic.

In order to provide an additional and private opportunity for comment, Kezziah Watkins sent a follow-up e-mail to each person interviewed so that he/she could e-mail a response with any additional comments, if desired. Three responses were received and incorporated into the verbatim interview comments found in the Appendix.

Principles of Agreement



As a result of the interviews, several areas of agreement emerged as concepts of importance to the economic health of Manitou Springs. Included in those areas of agreement was strong consensus on a list of needs necessary to maintain and enhance the economic strength of the Manitou Springs community.

- Manitou Springs enjoys a distinct character that is based in part on our geography, in part on our history, and in part on our people. One of us describes our town as, “quirky, zany and weird, and clean, safe, and prosperous”. That’s an enviable combination that’s hard to beat.
- We’re proud of our community and want it to succeed, but to achieve success we have to work together. There are deep divisions within the community that need to be healed if we’re to move forward. To do that, we must focus on the future rather than on the past.
- We draw a distinction between being a resort community and a tourist destination community. We’d like Manitou Springs to remain the latter.
- The business community is an essential part of Manitou Springs. Without it, many services and amenities wouldn’t exist, and we’d hope those contributions are recognized.
- Despite a difficult economy, Manitou Springs is generally doing better than most other communities and we don’t want to lose our forward momentum.
- The time is right to address consolidation of community organizations. Many of us believe the status quo is not acceptable.
- Change is hard.

Needs to Ensure a Strong Manitou Springs Economy

- A comprehensive, cohesive marketing plan and program
- Communication and mutual accountability and trust between the business community and the City organization, within the business community, and between the business and residential constituencies of the community
- A longer-range plan for an expanded economic base
- An emphasis on attracting, supporting, and retaining businesses
- Promotion of Manitou Springs as a visitor destination
- An unmatched experience for visitors
- Special events that define Manitou
- A convenient commercial infrastructure, specifically to include parking
- A completed physical infrastructure that emphasizes beauty, cleanliness, and safety

Relevant Comparisons



A few interviewees requested that KezziahWatkins take a look at comparable communities to determine how each is organized by structure and function with respect to business development and tourism.

There is no other community exactly like Manitou, making comparisons that are truly relevant difficult to come by. Understanding that Manitou Springs considers itself a tourist destination community rather than a resort community, we bypassed comparisons with Vail, Telluride, and other resorts even though the populations are comparable. We looked instead at Durango (population 13,922), Estes Park (5,413), Frisco (2,443), Georgetown (1,088), Grand Junction (41,986), Montrose (12,344), and Morrison (430). All population numbers are data from the 2000 census. This research was solely web-based, producing uneven details among communities scanned. The following communities exemplify three different approaches.

Grand Junction

In some cases, visitor promotion and experience rests entirely within city government. Grand Junction uses this approach. The community also has a separate member-funded Chamber of Commerce whose primary functions are the care and feeding of existing businesses and representing the business point-of-view in discussions of local issues. There is also a Grand Junction Economic Partnership which describes itself as the “official economic development agency of the Grand Junction area”. The Partnership is funded by partner organizations, including Mesa County, municipalities within the County, and by regional business and commercial partners.

Estes Park

Another approach to promoting economic health is found in Estes Park, where a free-standing Convention and Visitors Bureau promotes destination visits and provides information about local experience opportunities. The Estes Park Chamber Resort Association is distinct from the Estes Park Chamber of Commerce and from Enjoy Estes Park, all organizations that seem to be dedicated to promoting tourism and providing visitor information. Economic development for Estes Park is provided by a consortium of communities through the Northeast Colorado Economic Development Corporation (NCEDC). The NCEDC is funded through its investors who pay for services at an annual rate ranging from approximately \$2,500 to more than \$10,000. The cities of Fort Collins and Loveland, the Town of Johnstown, and Colorado State University are public NCEDC investors along with many private corporate investors. A similar collaborative venture, the Pikes Peak Regional Business Partnership, has recently been formed among southern Colorado Front Range communities.

Montrose

The Montrose community encompasses the more traditional organization of a separate Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation, and Visitor and Convention Bureau. Funding for all three seems to be through individual, municipal, and corporate investment and the missions and focus emphasis of each seem to have significant overlap. Montrose has recently been recognized by the Public Technology Institute for its collaborative web Community Portal providing access to information for all three organizations as well as municipal and recreational programs.

Results and Recommendations



Introduction

The following section is organized around the major issues identified through interviews. Verbatim comments were analyzed and grouped according to issue topic. Consistencies among responses are described for each issue, along with a question defining the issue, followed by relevant recommendations. Representative quotes from interview participants are also included.

Options for Consolidation

Consistent Themes

In considering whether creating a new organization is the best course of action or whether the prevailing concerns and desires could be achieved in other ways, KezziahWatkins asked interviewees if they believe some of the functions of the existing organizations, such as marketing or special events coordination, could be consolidated while the organizations remain separate. Most people expressed doubts about the workability of that solution. Their concerns related to the need for integrated communication, efficiency of decision-making, and past working relationships between the two organizations.

“To consolidate marketing you’d have to consolidate the organizations. Otherwise, it would take forever to go back and forth to the three boards to get approval.”

“I would like us to be unified. I’m sure it would help with communication.”

Issue

Should functions be consolidated while the organizations continue to operate independently?

Recommendation

Partial consolidation does not appear to be a viable solution.

Consolidation into a New Organization

Consistent Themes

“We’re too small to have three organizations. I would rather have one mission, one group, and get it done. Why duplicate services?”

There were significant concerns consistently expressed related to City of Manitou Springs’ continued ability to help fund multiple organizations and the lack of efficiency and effectiveness that results from the duplication of efforts among the organizations. There was also a strong desire stated for a more coordinated approach to promoting economic activity and for moving forward with a common goal. The clear majority of those interviewed expressed interest in the formation of a new organization which would consolidate the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce and the EDC.

Issue

Is there a need to create a new organization in Manitou Springs which would be responsible for promoting economic strength and tourism?

Recommendation

A new organization should be created. It should be an umbrella organization responsible for the functions presently performed by the Chamber of Commerce and the EDC and should work closely with the BID, the City's Urban Renewal Authority and Parking Authority. The new organization should build on the momentum of EDC's recent successes and the strengths of Chamber of Commerce's abilities with visitor experience and special events coordination. Additionally, it could establish a contractual relationship for marketing with the BID.

Recognizing the consensus around the community's need for strong promotion of economic elements, the proposed name for the new organization is the Manitou Springs Office of Economic and Visitor Promotion.

Structure for the New Organization

Consistent Themes

In considering the formation of the organization's Board of Directors, people spoke of the need to streamline the size of the Board and of the need for an inclusive process to select a balanced board, made up of both business-oriented members and at-large members representing the broader community.

"We need a structure that stops the distrust."

"...[We need] someone at the top with a wealth of experience in community development and who knows about marketing and about business development and recruitment."

Regarding organizational staffing, interviewees said there is a need for a skilled leader and communicator to manage the organization who is also well versed in marketing, promotion, and economic development. Functionally, the organization should focus on economic enhancement, tourism experience and promotion and on special events, many people said. A number of interviewees expressed confidence in the abilities of Chamber of Commerce staff to perform the visitor experience and special events functions, while also stressing the need for increased professional skill and experience in marketing.

Issue

How should the new organization's governing Board of Directors and staff be structured?

Recommendation

There should be 10 to 12 Board of Directors members comprised of three carry-over members from the Chamber of Commerce Board, three carry-over members from the EDC Board, one representative from the BID, and four at-large, community-based representatives. All Board seats should have specific terms of service.

Issue still to be resolved: How should the at-large, community-based representatives be selected for the Board of Directors?

A proposed organizational chart for the new organization can be found on the following page as Figure 1.

The recommendation assumes that the existing full-time and half-time equivalent staff positions at the Chamber of Commerce would move to the organization and that the Chamber's current contract for services with a marketing firm would continue under the auspices of the new organization. It also assumes a contractual relationship between the new organization and the BID for marketing services.

Funding the New Organization

Consistent Themes

It's evident that the present configuration of funding that exists for the EDC and for the Chamber of Commerce is an untenable one for the future. Members of the Manitou Springs City Council as well as several other interviewees expressed strong agreement that continuing the status quo is an unacceptable alternative. Something needs to change.

There are varying interpretations as to whether the City's lodging tax must automatically be transferred to the Chamber of Commerce for the promotion of Manitou Springs as a visitor destination and of its member businesses, or whether that transfer is at Council's discretion on a year-to-year basis.

Because a central emphasis of this process is to increase efficiencies among economic agencies as well as to reduce the amount of funding required from the City, Kezziah Watkins sought to identify specific savings that could, and likely would, result from the creation of a new organization. Although we received documentation and budgets from each organization, the budgets were not consistent with one another and were not specific enough, in some cases, to be able to identify exact savings. We do expect that the elimination of duplicative operating expenses will result in some level of savings.

"I just don't see the City funding three organizations in this economy. The City's funding mechanisms won't allow it to stay that way."

"It's nice that the City has a financial hand and some guiding power in economic development-type decisions."

The Issue

How should the new organization be funded in order to have the resources necessary to promote the community's economic health effectively while also reducing the need for City tax revenue?

Recommendation

A conversation at the City Council level is needed to clarify whether the funding commitment of the City of Manitou Springs is contractual or discretionary.

Once that decision has been made, the funding question is an issue remaining to be resolved and should be referred to the Working Group identified in Recommended Next Steps found on page 11.

Relationship between the BID and the New Organization

Consistent Themes

“The BID is different as a legal entity but its goals should align with the other organization.”

Recognizing that the interests of members and Board of the BID intersect with those of the new organization, many people expressed the belief that there should be some formal linkage between the two. The creation of a single economic and promotional voice for the Manitou Springs community, including the BID, was often said to be an integral component of any new consolidated structure.

The Issue

How should the relationship between the BID and the new organization be structured?

Recommendations

Since the BID is a separate and legally constituted entity, the concept of fully integrating it into the new organization is not feasible at this juncture. However, there is a continuing need for strong collaboration between the two. The Board of Directors of the consolidated organization should include, on an ongoing basis, a representative designated by the Board of the BID to represent its perspective and interests. That designee should be a full member of the Board with all incumbent privileges and responsibilities.

To address the need for a consistent promotional voice for the community, any marketing needs of the BID should be defined by the BID Board and carried out as part of the new organization’s marketing program through a contract for specific services.

Need for Economic Planning

Consistent Themes

Several interviewees registered a significant degree of frustration regarding the lack of planning by organizations involved in economic activities in the community. Beyond the issue of the need for a comprehensive and effective plan to market and promote the Manitou Springs experience and its business opportunities, some interviewees expressed the need for a strategic and longer-range plan for economic development of the community. Sometimes referred to as a need for an expanded economic identity, people interested in developing such a plan talked about the opportunities to seal Manitou’s identity as the regional center for the arts, for health, for fitness and training, and for recreation. Without sacrificing the promotion of tourism, these advocates would like to see the initiative and responsibility for an economic strategic plan rest with the new organization.

“I believe for the community to be successful we have to define what we want for our economic future. If we don’t it will die.”

The Issue

Is there a need for an economic strategic plan; if so, whose responsibility is its development?

Recommendation

The Board of Directors of the new organization should take responsibility for development of an economic strategic plan that sets a strong course to maintain the economic

momentum that Manitou Springs has enjoyed in recent years. The plan should be developed in concert with the City of Manitou Springs as well as with businesses and residents of the community. The Chief Operating Officer of the new organization should be responsible for implementing the strategic economic plan.

Comprehensive Marketing Approach

Consistent Themes

One of the strongest arguments interviewees made for consolidation was the need for a unified, coordinated, and quality approach to marketing the Manitou Springs community to visitors and to businesses. People see tremendous value in being able to speak with one voice and in the economies of scale made possible through the combination of funds from the Chamber of Commerce and EDC.

"I'm hugely in favor of consolidating marketing—the collective effort would far exceed individual efforts. I've seen it work in other communities."

"We need to ask ourselves 'What is authentic Manitou and what should we be marketing?'"

They expressed the desire for a marketing program that promotes the entire community and that is strategically planned and implemented, based on market analysis and focused on market segments. As part of the new marketing approach, many interviewees want a new, unified web site created that can effectively serve as the Internet gateway to the Manitou Springs community.

Issue

Is an increased emphasis on strategic marketing appropriate for the new organization?

Recommendation

The Chief Operating Officer of the new organization should be responsible for the creation and implementation of a comprehensive, city-wide marketing plan. The plan should include metrics which measure effectiveness and return-on-investment and the results should be included in the organization's reports to City Council.

Expectations and Accountability

Consistent Themes

There was broad agreement among the interviewees that the City's expectations of the existing organizations are not clearly identified or communicated. Many also commented on the lack of accountability to the City for the taxpayer revenue expended by the organizations.

Issue

Is there a need to define and agree on expectations of the new organization and to create new procedures for accountability to the City?

"If the City's going to fund any organization to the tune of thousands of dollars it needs to set out expectations clearly."

Recommendation

As its first responsibility the Board of Directors for the new organization should define the organization's mission, i.e. the reason for its existence. That mission should be presented to the City Council for its review and response.

The City should issue a written, annually-renewable contract for specific services performed by the new organization. Specific standards for measurement and accountability requirements, such as quarterly reporting of services provided and expenditures, should be stated in the contract.

The burden for establishing a system for accountability should rest with the City; the burden for providing information about services and expenditures should rest with the organization receiving City taxpayer dollars.

Communication Systems

Consistent Themes

"Communication is huge. There are so many boards and no one knows what everybody does."

Communication, or the lack of it, arose as an unprompted topic in almost every interview. In talking about their concerns regarding the relationships between City government and the business community, within the business community, and between the business and residential communities, people consistently pointed to communication as an issue. Many cited a pervasive lack of trust and understanding of others' perspectives and a belief that improved communication could help.

Issue

How can communication systems in Manitou Springs be improved?

Recommendation

The lack of effective communication is an issue of significance, in part because it could serve as a barrier to the new organization's ability to succeed. A conscious decision by the board and staff of the new organization, the board of the BID, and City Council to explore and adopt new methods for communication could make a tremendous difference in the community's ability to move forward together in a challenging economic climate.

Membership

Consistent Themes

A number of issues related to the Chamber of Commerce as a membership organization arose during the interviews. Some believe there currently is too much emphasis on members resulting in not enough attention paid to marketing tools and activities. Other interviewees focused on the need to have BID members automatically become Chamber of Commerce members in order to avoid having to choose between the two or having to pay for both. Some of those interviewed expressed strong reservations about whether it's appropriate for the City to use tax revenues to fund an organization that primarily promotes its members, including some non-Manitou Springs businesses.

"The Chamber only makes referrals to its own members, including those who are outside of Manitou and that bothers some people, including me, because they get taxpayer money. I think all businesses should be members because the Chamber's getting tax dollars."

There was also recognition of the fact that memberships generated some \$56,000 in 2009 for the Chamber of Commerce. A reduction of revenue from the City of Manitou Springs coupled with the elimination of membership-generated revenue sources would compound the financial impact.

Issue

Should the new organization be a membership organization?

Recommendation

Issue still to be resolved: This is a complicated issue that needs careful consideration by those who will be responsible for governance of the new organization. The resolution of the issue of memberships should be included in the list of topics to be considered by the working group charged with making decisions about unresolved issues (see following page).

Recommended Next Steps



Recommended Process for Decision-Making

A working group serving as the core of the Board of Directors for the new organization should make decisions about unresolved issues and develop an Action Plan for establishing the new organization and priorities for its first year of operation.

The group should be made up of the three Board members to be appointed by the current Chamber of Commerce Board, the three Board members to be appointed by the current EDC Board, the one Board member to be appointed by the BID Board, the City Council Liaison and the Deputy City Administrator.

The work of the group should include:

- Consideration of the comments received about the consolidation recommendations at the March 30 public Council work session;
- Discussion and resolution of the remaining issues as identified in KezziahWatkins' March 30 report and other issues raised at the March 30 City Council work session;
- Discussion and decision about the name of the organization;
- Development of an Action Plan that outlines:
 1. Budget and funding for the new organization;
 2. Organizational structure;
 3. The procedure for appointment of four at-large members to the organization's Board of Directors;
 4. An implementation schedule to move organizations from their current structures into the new configuration;
 5. Responsibility for carrying out the necessary procedural and legal activities necessary to dissolve the present organizations and create the new; and
 6. A plan for communicating with the Chamber of Commerce's, EDC's, and the BID's constituencies and the broader community about the creation of the new organization.
- Development of written and verbal reports to the Manitou Springs City Council about the decisions of the group.

Once implementation has begun, the group should monitor and evaluate implementation progress and adjust elements as needed on a periodic basis.

Issues Still to be Resolved by the Working Group

The following issue definitions reflect comments heard during the interviews:

1. Issue: Should the new organization should be a membership organization?

If it is a member organization

- Equity: Is it appropriate to use City of Manitou Springs tax revenues to benefit members primarily, including non-Manitou Springs-based businesses?

- Participation: Should businesses who choose not to be members receive referrals and promotion from the new organization? Should all Manitou Springs businesses be given memberships and non-Manitou Springs businesses pay for memberships? Should all BID members be given memberships?
- Membership categories: Should there be a tiered system of memberships with commensurate privileges?

If it is a non-member organization

- Funding: How do you replace the revenue generated through memberships? Should private sponsorships be solicited to replace membership dues?
 - Equity: Is it appropriate to use City of Manitou Springs tax revenues to benefit non-Manitou Springs-based businesses?
2. Issue: Should the new organization ultimately be self-sustaining or should the City continue to have a long-term role in funding?
 3. Issue: Is there a need for a Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce, separate from the new organization? If so, what is its role and how does it interface with the new organization?

Background

There does not appear to be a strong need or desire for a traditional Chamber of Commerce providing customary business support and educational services. Chamber of Commerce interviewees said the current Chamber is non-traditional and operates more as visitor center.

Appendix

Verbatim Interview Comments by Topic

Verbatim Interview Comments by Topic

Background

Past and Present Organizational Roles

Now that all the downtown improvements have been done, what does the EDC do?

Part of the problem is there are three different entities all with their own agendas. The Chamber tries to promote all of the community, the EDC promotes one segment, and the BID promotes one segment.

The BID is a small group of businesses promoting themselves and now we have to share resources. The focus is on the 'me theory'.

Only the Chamber focuses on the visitor experience.

EDC needs to maintain what has been done and look for gaps where needs aren't being met.

EDC has gotten a lot done. We need not to regress.

I'm happy with the Chamber of Commerce. They seem to get it, they're very sensitive to concerns, and they listen. The BID and EDC are not the same. Their attitude seems to be, "People will just have to come around."

We're talking about dissolving EDC and if we do that who takes over those functions?

We need someone who does things like look at the zone overlay. That's not the Chamber's role—whose is it?

The BID focuses on downtown and really just serves itself.

Maybe EDC needs to hire another staff person.

Maybe we need to fill the slot at a scaled down scope and salary.

About 90-95% of what the Chamber does is as a visitors bureau.

Downtown redevelopment was the impetus for the formation of the EDC. A group went to Council and asked for an EDC position. EDC also works to bring in retail.

EDC was started by the Metro District and the City. Their mission was established through an intergovernmental agreement.

The Chamber brings in about 30% of its own budget. EDC tried but didn't bring in much money. EDC's events were too sterile and had too many rules—they weren't Manitou-like. For example, the BID is now the sponsor of the Farmers Market instead of EDC.

The Chamber does tourism promotion.

The BID was started as a beautification effort of downtown but now some people in the BID are critical of the City for not doing it.

I can't really tell you what the EDC was intended to do. I guess they try to bring in more people from an 18-mile radius. They don't have a mission statement.

As the EDC tried to succeed it came at the expense of the Chamber.

With the EDC, if you didn't agree with them you were ostracized. EDC has always been 'clubby.' They wanted to bring in higher caliber businesses and not everyone agreed. The redevelopment has brought in a higher caliber of business without it being a stated public goal and it's offensive to existing businesses.

The City's job is to create an environment where all ideas are welcome and encourage people not to be afraid to fail.

EDC started meddling in marketing to the trade area and I'm not sure we need both that and what the Chamber was doing.

The Chamber of Commerce is very old-fashioned in its approach to marketing.

Everyone's trying to take credit for what has been and is getting done.

The Chamber does a good job on events. All the organizations use events as fundraisers and are asking the City to waive fees for events.

The EDC wants City funding for parking but shouldn't it go directly to the Parking Authority?

EDC specializes in filling business spaces downtown.

De-funding the EDC wouldn't have been good for the community.

You have to have a buddy on City Council to get something done. The EDC board is filled by Metro District appointments and Council appointments.

EDC has a communication role but not marketing.

The Chamber has always been a resident-friendly organization. It was originally set up to be the liaison between businesses and residents.

EDC doesn't really have a relationship with the community—it was created to grow the business climate. The EDC role is to make sure storefronts are full and to work with the Urban Renewal Authority on east side and west side redevelopment.

The BID was set up to keep downtown clean but it got into marketing. The BID does local marketing and the Chamber does regional marketing.

The EDC does not do marketing.

The EDC does fundraisers but not special events. Jack Elder sponsors Carnivale and the Fords do two events.

The street performer program benefits downtown businesses so should the Chamber support it?

Most people know the EDC is dead as an organization.

Do research on events in other communities. We had 10,000 people last year for the Coffin Race. We have events that other communities would wet themselves for and all we do is criticize the two people who carry off those events.

The Chamber does a good job carrying out so many events.

Now that downtown redevelopment is done the EDC doesn't have that much to do.

The need for EDC staff has passed with the completion of the downtown redevelopment but there are other people who can also do a good job.

The Chamber has lots of volunteers who help with events, at the Visitor Center, and with visitor promotion.

Board task forces have replaced committees but overall the Chamber is not well organized and structured.

EDC has been proactive and the Chamber has not.

The Chamber had goals in the past but never paid attention to them. Short-term goals are fine but real life constantly impacts them so they're not that useful.

At some point the City needs to look at why they never have enough money or staff—they're never proactive.

Murphy's lofts would not have gotten done if it hadn't been for the EDC.

Plans for downtown redevelopment has been on the books for 30 years and EDC and got it done.

Council people want to take credit for everything and if they can't they don't like it.

EDC does a lot of the same stuff as the Chamber.

The BID assesses a 30-cent per square foot tax on businesses in the District. It sunsets in 2012 and I don't know if the Board will want to renew it. The statute doesn't tell us how to spend our \$55,000 budget. We've been spending \$25,000 on street maintenance and \$30,000 on marketing and overhead. Construction downtown is almost done but there are maintenance needs that the City can't do. We're feeling pressure to step up and put more money into maintenance.

The City gives about \$200,000 to the Chamber for marketing, and their focus has always been on tourism. They need to use it effectively and show the return-on-investment.

There are big challenges when it comes to the skill level of the Chamber staff.

I was a Chamber Board member for a while and didn't even know there was a reserve fund in the Chamber budget. That money is not to be saved, it's to be spent on marketing the town. Maybe a \$70,000 reserve would be okay but not the size of the reserve they had.

My big fear is going into a phase of community decline like we had 30 years ago. I want the BID reauthorized but the bad economy is making it tough.

Let's not base these decisions on what's happened in the past.

I think the Chamber staff would do great continuing to run the Visitors Center. They do need to get some younger volunteers there.

EDC does advertising but focuses on downtown only. Its main purpose is to bring in businesses and support them.

The BID out-sources accounting services and pays about \$400 a month for that. It may be planning to get some professional support, although it's trying to decide how to move forward without professional staff. EDC paid all of the past director's salary but she also helped the BID.

It's not right that Chamber Board members have to perform tasks that the staff should be doing. The Chamber should be run like a business. We need a leader who's leading.

The Chamber Executive Committee is very protective of staff and has been reluctant to get into these discussions. The Chamber doesn't want to change. They have a little fiefdom and don't want to give it up.

There are six BID Board members currently, with one vacancy. The BID Board is pretty dysfunctional.

I've been involved in both the Chamber and EDC. I think EDC was developed because the Chamber doesn't do a good job. The EDC was created to get businesses to come to the downtown.

I was totally against using the Chamber reserve fund to buy land. The Chamber's purpose is to promote, not buy real estate. Lodging is down anywhere from 10 to 40 percent. If lodging's full everyone wins.

City Council needs to understand the different functions the three organizations serve. The Chamber's focus is on print and the staff doesn't want to learn about anything else. My biggest problem with Chamber staff is they don't follow through on things.

The Chamber Board has been asking what the staff does but we don't get any answers. I don't feel there's adequate supervision and management.

The Chamber's board selection process is very informal and probably not in accordance with the bylaws. They don't follow the selection process in the bylaws because the staff has too much power.

Actually, the City should have been able to perform what the BID is doing.

Council as a whole doesn't understand what those organizations do, based on personal experience. Some have based their support for organizations on personality.

The Chamber has support because they're non-controversial.

The Chamber functions as a visitors bureau. It's a membership organization.

The EDC took credit for things they didn't do. Now they're hanging their hat on urban renewal on the eastern edge of town. I don't think it will work, especially as a Tax Increment Financing project. It's just an odd geographical situation for urban renewal. There are declining activities for EDC.

I think it's critical that the City fund economic development-type activities.

EDC was set up by City Council with money from the City, and most of that for the director's salary. They do some minimal fundraising events. The direction of the remaining Avenue project is now being overseen by the City. The EDC doesn't have membership dues or any taxation.

The BID receives no City money. The people who own property and/or operate businesses fund it with a 3.3% tax. We sold it to voters to maintain the downtown redevelopment. Fifty percent of it's spent on cleaning and maintenance and 50 percent is spent on promotion. It would be okay with me to just focus on cleaning and maintenance. I also think shop owners should take care of the front of their properties, though.

Chamber staff has great hearts but they don't know how to do their jobs too well. There's just a lack of professionalism. They seem to lack the ability to capitalize on what's needed. I'm more interested in the Chamber doing what the EDC does, with a strong marketing of the community instead of promoting only certain businesses or organizations.

It seems like the EDC is done.

The City should play a bigger role in special events and have some presence. There has been some question about whether the Chamber actually puts on events; some people think the Chamber helps but doesn't really "do" the events.

Our Urban Renewal Authority has kind of limped along; it's started slowly because of lack of funding. The next step is to develop a plan but we need to wait to get the funding for it.

I think the Chamber is performing really well on visitor promotion and special events.

Chamber staff does pull off some large events. I've asked that some be two-day events but there's been staff push-back.

Right now you have three kingdoms. The Chamber has one. They get a ton of money from the City and have a ton of money in savings. You could say they've been good stewards of the money but if the City's giving them money for advertising they shouldn't be putting it in a reserve fund. It makes me wonder what they could have done with that money if they hadn't put it in reserves. The BID is different; it's its own legal entity. The EDC was formed to bring money into town.

The Chamber's fund balance is an issue.

The BID is to maintain downtown and do grant writing. Some people wondered at the beginning when it was being set up why the City wasn't doing those things.

The Chamber is not real good with forward, out-of-the-box thinking. For example they didn't consider joining Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPR).

Many people didn't know about the Chamber's reserve fund. I did, and thought it was a building fund. It's about \$300,000.

The Chamber budget blow-up came up when the City was trying to balance the budget and asked for a consolidation of efforts to save money and the organizations came up with \$40,000. This year both the Chamber and EDC allocations got cut by 20%. We need to let them know that next year they will get cut even more.

Discontent was built when the Chamber reserve fund issue came up. Some people didn't think it was appropriate that they had a reserve fund larger than the City's. The City didn't request financial statements, though, and should have. I think the Chamber was almost viewed as an extension of the City. That reserve fund issue hurt the relationship between some businesses and the Chamber, particularly with lodging.

Needs

What's Needed for Economic Vitality

◆ Definition of needs

The elimination of any redundancies between organizations needs to be based on fact, not rumors or opinions. I want to look at what the city needs to be successful and how we fill those needs.

I hope a result of this process is a definition of the roles and responsibilities and then a decision about which organization can best fulfill those most effectively and efficiently.

The City should define the functions it needs.

The best way to eradicate redundancies is to define the needed functions.

The community should define the needs, not City government. The three organizations should define the needs.

◆ Business development, attraction, retention

We need to analyze the types of businesses and fill in the gaps, but not with T-shirt and tomahawk shops. We will lose the diversity of businesses if we lose EDC.

Businesses are doing fine and we have good business diversity.

I don't know that business recruitment is really needed. I do think urban renewal is but I think that function belongs in the City government.

What's not being done now is 'schmoozing' current and potential businesses.

We still need someone very interested in getting businesses here and dealing with economic development issues.

We need an entity that promotes bringing in businesses.

We need an entity that is the main promoter and that encourages businesses to come to town.

I agree that business recruitment is important.

Helping business is important. EDC kept the loft project on Manitou Avenue in Manitou in 2003. Without their stepping forward with confidence and encouragement that project wouldn't have happened.

We need active recruiting of businesses in a strategic manner with a unified message.

The gap we have now is welcoming new businesses to town and doing releases.

There's another huge gap. The Chamber membership gets a newsletter but there's nothing that goes to past or prospective members.

◆ Downtown redevelopment and beautification

We need to do downtown maintenance, downtown capital improvements.

We need to keep downtown strong and attractive.

We need a voice for downtown. The Chamber has done that pretty well.

People need easy access to downtown without a lot of hassles.

Downtown is key.

Most of the downtown redevelopment's been finished but there's still a bit more that needs to be done.

The BID's focus is on trying to get locals here. From a BID perspective, we also need to get businesses to stay open until 9 p.m. in the summer. Tourists go to the mountains for the day, come back and eat dinner, and then they want to walk around downtown and do a little shopping.

The downtown redevelopment has been huge.

Downtown is pretty much done.

Downtown has done wonderfully but the east and west ends of town need help.

We've tried to bring some local flavor to the downtown redevelopment project but some people didn't like that.

It's important to 'Keep Manitou Weird' and zany and unique, but the BID has also added safe, clean, and prosperous to that and that's good.

◆ Marketing and promotion

The BID does marketing but just for downtown.

EDC hasn't been doing marketing.

I still believe it's important to get locals to come to Manitou.

◆ Parking

The community needs a parking solution.

Parking is the #1 issue and we need to decide how that will be handled.

We've made great progress but if people can't park and take advantage of it, what good will it do?

Work on parking.

The EDC paid for a parking study and the City established a Parking Authority. The City said there needed to be more study and we'd just done one. They had public meetings and no one came but when the Parking Authority was established the 'squeaky wheels' came out. People who were unhappy didn't read the parking study report.

We need to hire one person who really understands parking and can professionally lead the issue.

The Parking Authority has been meeting but they have no money and no consensus on what to do.

One of the greatest issues is transportation, having parking and shuttles to parking lots. If there were a shuttle system that worked, more people would go into downtown, particularly people from Colorado Springs. We used to have a shuttle that worked really well but the grant money ran out.

There is a Parking Authority but it has no funding. There has been talk of a "parking czar" to oversee it. The Metro District owns one lot and leases another from the City. The parking ticket money used to go to the City but the City is starting to give parking proceeds to the Authority. They are trying to create a parking lot on the west end of town and are talking about putting a couple of decks on the Wichita lot, which is not controversial but will require funding. People get parking tickets downtown, which is okay on normal days but not for events because people can't get to their cars to move them.

Parking is a big pet peeve. The issue is trying to get residents to agree to a parking garage. There's a fear of change and a dislike of re-building.

Certain segments of the community don't want any change—they want it like it was in the 60s. Businesses won't survive without a parking solution. There's a vocal minority of non-business residents who don't want parking solutions.

The City set up a Parking Authority and it's very ineffective; it has no funding and no authority. Our parking problems have been going on forever. There's been study after study and nothing happens because all the special interests can't agree on anything.

Parking meters were proposed but employees and residents were against them. Some shop owners even want to use the parking spaces right in front of their own store. Some merchants were fully behind having meters and some were not.

We need to work more in concert with the school district, like use their parking lots in the summer and use shuttles to bring people downtown.

The City set up a Parking Authority Board which was originally an enterprise fund but is now part of the general fund. People are calling it the 'Personal Agenda' Board because most of the people involved on it are on Ruxton Avenue so no one takes it seriously. EDC wants to use its funding to hire a parking czar.

We had 1,500 signatures on a petition to oppose paid parking.

The Metro District is responsible for off-street parking and they're turning facilities over to the Parking Authority.

Parking's a touchy issue. I don't know who should "own" it.

The City should own it.

The reason for the Metro District is that the City has done such a bad job with proactively dealing with this issue. I have heard that the City wants to take parking over to get the revenue, but with no plan.

The City can't even handle the parking ticket function. There's just a lack of trust in the City's capacity and ability.

I think it's beyond a budget issue with the City. Historically, the City's not been good at dealing with the parking issue.

Parking should be a City responsibility but having these other entities working together to help with it is good.

A parking structure with a shuttle would be lovely.

Council doesn't understand how important parking is. We need to take baby steps. Parking should go from three hour to two hour and the City should enforce it.

In order for this City to prosper we have to solve parking.

The Parking Authority was appointed by Council and it's made up of representatives of the Chamber and EDC. The only funding is from parking enforcement. Their job is to review the traffic study and to provide recommendations to Council.

The Incline creates enormous parking issues.

The only way to solve parking is to charge, even if it's only for part of the year or part of the day.

The Metro District Board is working with the Parking Authority who is responsible for parking all over the community. The Metro District is responsible for parking in downtown Manitou only. There are perceived parking difficulties but it's really only on a few days in the summer and during special events. When the Cliff House builds underground parking that will help.

Parking is an overblown issue because people come to Manitou anyway. We could work with the schools to get auxiliary parking for special events in the summer with shuttles running from school parking lots. It's going to have to be a collective effort rather than a giant parking structure.

Parking is a huge need. There's no space left in town to buy a big piece of flat land for parking. We need to get the Parking Authority and the Metro District working together. Some people in Colorado Springs won't come over here because they assume they won't be able to find a parking place.

The Broadmoor buses people over here to the Cog Railway. I would love to be able to get people who go up on the Railway to stay in town awhile and spend some money. You can't park a big bus in town now so you'd need to build parking facilities for that first.

The parking study that was done looked at ways to manage parking downtown, up Ruxton Avenue, at the Incline, and at the residential impacts. The City formed the Parking Authority Board and it was quite contentious when it was put in the General Fund. The Metro District and the Parking Authority are working together, which is good. I think the downtown business community is split on downtown parking—there are upsides and downsides to the solutions. The strange thing is that it's free to park in front of businesses but you have to pay to walk to and from a parking lot.

We must resolve the parking and traffic issue—it's huge. You know we only have a traffic problem because people are circling around looking for a parking space.

◆ Planning

We need a vision and 1-, 3, 5-, and 10-year plans.

It has to start with City Council. There's just no confidence in the City, either Council or staff. There's a lack of planning the future. The City needs a 5 or 10-year plan. The City's just totally reactionary.

We need a plan for the future and we don't have one. The Rainbow Vision Plan was the founding document for the downtown redevelopment. We need to re-visit it or have a new community visioning process. We have four brand new Council people and the Council needs to get its norms formed. The lack of vision has caused dysfunction on Council. Council needs to decide on a common vision and then take it to the community so we can be proactive, not reactive. We have a huge amount of talent and intelligence in this community and we need to use it.

Council needs to do its best to get on the same page and it's not there yet. There are some hard-charging people on Council, some with big egos. I think everyone intends well. Some healing needs to happen on Council and the community needs to heal. We just need a clear mission and vision as a City and as a community.

We need a plan that is used and not just developed and put away.

Council is not good at having a game plan.

There's a total lack of planning in the community.

◆ Special events

Events have been good and we need to continue them.

Events that bring people to town are important. The City is increasing fees for vendors and use of parks which may mean we'll lose some unique Manitou events. The City needed to do an increase but what's being proposed is just too much. The City has been very good at working with the Chamber on events. Very few events are for profit.

We need more funky events and we need enough to keep people here for a week so that we can put some heads in beds. We need more relationships with other towns to share events and for competition.

We need events. It would be great if we had an event every weekend.

We need to do partnering so we can do two-day events.

Lodging has hemorrhaged losses and multiple-day events would be a good thing for them.

Events are important for getting locals to come here, so events need to still be at the forefront.

◆ Support from City government

Tourism is an economic engine and the City needs to acknowledge and support those needs. It has to invest in developing revenue streams. It also needs to make policy decisions that strike a balance between interests. It can serve as an arbiter and provide leadership on issues.

The current Council understands the importance of the Chamber but I'm not sure the past Council did.

There's a disconnect that business funds services for the community. It would be nice to have Council publicly acknowledge that businesses provide revenue for services.

We need more City help on developing ordinances related to business and enforcing them, like having vendors and signs on downtown sidewalks. There is no code enforcement officer.

We need a new Council. This one doesn't understand business. They don't see strengthening businesses as a way to generate sustainable revenue.

The current City Council is not very business-friendly. Two-thirds of the City budget comes from sales tax and they forget that.

The new Council liaison doesn't understand the business organization perspective. "It's time to heal" doesn't solve anything—it's just a platitude.

The new Council has lots of energy and some economic experience but you can't teach a business understanding overnight. If you're making decisions in a business environment you can't keep everybody happy.

Waiving City fees is really very smart. You don't squeeze when times are tough. There has to be some goodwill at the government level.

Why should Council ever want to charge City fees for things that create civic pride? To get the community's economic grass to grow the City needs to provide the manure.

It would be good if Council was friendly to the business community. There's no trust now—they think we're all untrustworthy. Council people who aren't business people think they are experts in business. They don't understand what we do for the community, like generate about two-thirds of the City budget revenue. They just always want us to do more. It's hard to say how much of this distrust is attributable to the former EDC staff.

◆ Visitor promotion and experience

We need an entity that brings tourism in.

Some businesses downtown have reinvested in the last couple of years and we need to help them by keeping the tourism market strong.

We need to promote the shoulder seasons.

We rely heavily on tourism and need to keep that at the forefront.

The Chamber's Visitors Center is important because they're the greeters to people coming into the community—they make the first impression. Old Colorado City doesn't have that. The Center's open on Sundays and that's important for people taking day trips.

The Center's location is perfect and its numbers rival the Colorado Springs Visitors and Convention Bureau's Center.

Part of what brings people to the region is that there are lots of things to do. There's a lot of crossover between areas in the region, like Territory Days in Old Colorado City.

◆ Other needs

We need a grant writer.

We have lots of 'mom and pops' and sales tax collection is an issue. The City should do its own sales tax collection to make sure we're getting all that we should, instead of relying on the state to do it.

Issues

Consolidation into a New Organization

What's most problematic is what's not getting done—the things the EDC director did.

It seems like the BID and EDC are trying to do the same thing and are going for the same money.

The organizations are competing for marketing money and the lion's share went to an organization that doesn't understand marketing. Competition for money and competition for role was threatening to some, both to staff and board members.

We need a cheerleader for Manitou Springs—we someone to champion this town. City Council can't do it because they're always rotating in and out.

I agree that the functions need to be defined but part of the problem in the past was there was no pro-action like there has been recently. Part of my fear of going back to just the Chamber doing promotion is that it will be monopolized with one kind of business, like lodging. The advertising needs to support all kinds of businesses.

All three organization presidents agreed that consolidation was a good idea.

Having one organization do all events is a great idea. People get the three organizations confused.

EDC doesn't need a full-time director but it also doesn't want to lose the function it's performed.

The City needs to do what's in our code regarding business support but that's it. The community has many other public infrastructure needs. There's a limit to our capacity and a point of diminishing returns.

I doubt the success of all the organizations if they stay separate. They all have their own cultures. The Chamber focuses on the past. EDC is the 'up-and-comer' and the BID is a mix of the old school and the new. There's lots of incestuous-ness on the boards. The Chamber is worried about a 'takeover' of their board. All the organizations have different brands.

I just want to make sure that the EDC functions don't get lost.

The EDC Board's big concern is that all that the former staff person did won't be done by anyone else and we'll go backwards.

This whole thing has come to a head now because without a person in the EDC position the two groups are at a loss about what to do.

Some of the people in the organizations are totally overwhelmed with work right now.

The real issue with all of this is that everybody is trying to get everybody else's money. It's like the Parking Authority trying to get the Metro District's money.

There's a tremendous amount of volunteer fatigue in the business community, particularly with EDC because of all the battles over the past two years. They were attacked because of the rapid rate of change.

The City needs to give these organizations more direction. We want a better product for less money.

We need to figure out how the City should relate to these organizations. About 8½ percent of the City budget goes into the organizations and I'm not sure that the City can afford to do that anymore.

All the organizations are trying to help Manitou, trying to do the same thing in their own way and fighting over money and back-stabbing each other. It makes the City not want to deal with any of us.

The Chamber should be the marketing and organizational arm for all events.

There's duplication in events; I think the City would like the Chamber to be the umbrella organization for all events.

We've got tremendous healing to do and I don't know how we can get the EDC and the Chamber to work together. If we don't it will be the death of this community.

How do we go from 'mine' to 'ours'?

I think it's a good idea to combine organizations.

Three organizations is overkill. The three presidents met through the summer to talk about consolidation and then turned over the plan to staff. Then it got political.

The status quo can't work. The City shouldn't tell the groups what to do, though.

Consolidating into one new organization would be the goal so that the new organization feels ownership for all the functions. It would definitely increase ownership.

All the organizations have office space, copiers, etc. and that doesn't seem very efficient to me.

I think one organization is the way to go. I have been thinking about bringing EDC into the Chamber.

To consolidate marketing you'd have to consolidate the organizations. Otherwise, it would take forever for people to go back and forth to the three boards to get approval.

We need to take a broader look. What's best for Manitou?

Some cities have EDC as part of the city government but I don't know if it would work with our current Council.

I wouldn't support the economic development function as part of the City because of the lack of City staff capabilities.

The Chamber knows there is a lot of duplication.

One of the best images of this town is the Homecoming Parade—it's Norman Rockwell. It creates a wonderful community feeling. We need to integrate that feeling and agree on a common goal.

I would like us all to be unified. I'm sure it would help with communication.

We need to identify redundancies and gaps and then define who's best to do it.

Maintaining the status quo is not okay—we can't afford it.

We need to clarify roles and decide how best to consolidate functions for efficiency. Eliminating organizations is okay or just having one organization. We need to first decide what functions we need and then decide how to get them.

You really only need one administrative slot. We're too small to have three organizations. I would rather have one mission, one group, and get it done. Why duplicate services?

There are only 5,000 of us here so we need to be efficient with our resources and stretch to make it work.

There needs to be streamlining.

The status quo is not adequate. Voices for 'no change' ran off the former EDC director. The momentum is gone and now we need to maintain. Another change agent won't be hired. At a bare minimum I want competence and we don't have that.

Hiring an advertising firm could solve some of the problems but we still need to move forward with consolidation because of increased efficiencies.

I think having economic development as part of the City would be too unstable if it's subject to Council turnover unless there was a dedicated funding source by ordinance.

Setting up a relationship with City Planning would be good because if the BID were not reauthorized in 2012 then the City would know what the BID does.

We need a new organization so we can put the baggage behind us. It will be hard to do if it's just an expansion of the Chamber's role.

I want one organization that's functional and shows a return on investment.

An achievable goal would be one positive step in each of these areas: budget, with the City's help; marketing, using the Chamber's reserve funds; and consolidation of efforts, through this process.

There are overlaps in business recruitment between the Chamber and the EDC.

Business recruitment and convention coordination doesn't need a separate organization.

This situation needs to be fixed but if it takes awhile that's okay. People are still working hard. I think we're in good shape, even while being casual and disorganized.

I just don't see the City funding three organizations in this economy. The City's funding mechanisms won't allow it to stay that way.

Let's exploit what we have to offer and let's put all our resources together.

I don't think the status quo is acceptable.

I'm a new organization kind of guy—the three organizations are really three different flavors of the same dessert.

This move to consolidation is just a move to get Chamber staff fired. I want to make sure that's not behind this.

It would be like trying to blend apples, oranges, and cherries to put these organizations together. The 2.2% lodging tax came about because business owners asked for it. The City is passing through revenue to the people who generate it. The other money the Chamber gets is a portion of sales tax revenue. If the City wants to be ethical it needs to continue to pass through that money.

I'm all for what ever improves services and saves money.

I think a new organization could work. I would love to see whatever is most efficient and harmonious.

I think one organization is good.

One new organization would work if you eliminated all three and started over.

Put the smaller entities into the Chamber.

I think most people are open to reconfiguring the organizations.

◆ Advantages to a new organization

The Chamber doesn't have the resources now to take on more.

Some money that's going to EDC could go to the Chamber for additional duties.

If we merge functions, the EDC could adopt the Parking Authority person and do the other functions it has been doing.

I think there is a sentiment toward consolidation.

There are some people who serve on multiple boards and it would be nice for them just to have to go to one meeting instead of three.

There are some businesses downtown who feel like there's a division and they have to choose an allegiance from among the three organizations. They also feel like they have to make a choice because of the bad economy.

I don't see any disadvantages to consolidation.

I can't think of anyone who would be so tied to the history that they would oppose consolidation.

The funds will be going in one direction.

It would eliminate a lot of bureaucracy.

It would reduce badmouthing.

You'd have one organization reporting to Council.

For healing and maximum efficiency we need a new organization.

Residents want the business community to work out our differences.

We need a structure that stops the distrust.

I think most people are resigned to some sort of change.

Something has to be done. Everybody's fighting over money and the City's money is going to be reduced.

The timing is good for these discussions, but Manitou's still doing really well, considering the bad economy.

I think Chamber staff would welcome having a new boss.

The Chamber needs a complete overhaul and bringing in a new person would be good.

If the marketing were to be taken over by a new organization then all the BID money could go toward downtown maintenance.

There's a resistance to change and turf protection but I think people here are sincere enough they could overcome that for the common good.

One new organization could start fresh.

We have some momentum now and we have to move on it or it will be lost.

Relatively speaking, the City of Manitou Springs spends much more on these organizations than other communities.

I think consolidation is a really good idea but I want to make sure the prime efficiencies of each organization don't get lost.

◆ **Disadvantages and barriers to a new organization**

A consolidation of functions could decrease the effectiveness of the Chamber.

Money—curiosity by Council about lowering costs.

The ego issue.

Volunteer brain drain.

There's been a depletion of the brain trust because people don't want to have to go through the conflicts and the same old headaches.

The biggest hurdle is all the different personalities involved. The trust piece is huge. There is a perception of hidden agendas and the volunteers align behind the different staff.

Staff might be a barrier to consolidation.

Leave all three organizations separate so they don't lose their focus.

I'd like to see the organizations remain separate but do quarterly meetings to stay in touch.
More would get piled on Chamber staff—they are so good they make it look easy.
There will be political opposition to shutting the Chamber down.
Some people might be threatened, some bad attitudes.
There's some territorialism on the boards.
There's resistance from some in the organizations.

Structure of a New Organization

We should treat the new organization as a business with public and private money and with someone at the top with a wealth of experience in community development and who knows about marketing and about business development and recruitment.

You have to get past the idea of kingdoms and the attitudes of old-timers. The Cog and the Garden of the Gods Trading Post have huge economic impacts on this community so let's let them have a voice—they have the best interests of the community at heart.

There needs to be a change. I think there needs to be one overall structure to govern a new organization.

I want to re-voice support for the idea of consolidating administrative assistance in order not to lose what each organization shines at.

You could consolidate administrative functions, like bookkeeping and reporting to the City. That's not how the staff's time should be spent. That would be a great help.

I'm fine with the Chamber hiring an advertising firm.

I wouldn't be at all opposed to a new organization with a good, balanced board.

Consolidate event management.

We need an organization that's pared down. The Chamber board has 12 people on it, the EDC board has 7 and the BID has 5. Board members for EDC and the Chamber are appointed by their own boards.

I like the idea of the Chamber handling all promotion and events. I don't have any insights about the other two organizations.

The Chamber staff is not qualified to do marketing and change is very hard for them.

The Chamber does a pretty good job with the visitor experience and with special events.

The most problematic aspect of all this is that roles and responsibilities are unclear.

We need a marketing director who understands the Internet and social marketing.

The Chamber does marketing but we've got people not versed in it making marketing decisions. We need to bring in professionals to do it.

The Chamber is looking at bringing in a marketing firm to do all of the Chamber's marketing, someone who knows how to do return-on-investment [analysis]. We could also use them for other marketing. It's important to get heads in beds so we need to spend some of the marketing dollars in markets beyond this region.

I don't see how you get 15,000 people to town and not make money. These people putting on the events don't know how to sell sponsorships. We need to have a packaging deal where you package events.

My biggest issue with the Chamber is that we don't have the skills on staff to get the job done, such as with the Internet and web site.

The Chamber could handle the Welcome Center and events.

The only way to solve the communication problem is to have one leader or executive director who understands marketing. You'd see efficiencies.

The Chamber board has 12 members, which is too big, but that's what's in the bylaws.

Combining and co-joining will be hard. You probably need to leave a figurehead at the head of each to keep their own purpose and perspectives. For example, Chamber staff runs spectacular events and making them do everything else on top of that won't work. Combine the three entities but keep the functions separate to maintain the quality.

You could hire one person to do the west and east end redevelopment and that person could work for the City. I don't see that function in the Chamber.

The Chamber has three full-time positions and two part-time positions. One of the full-time positions is vacant.

Maybe we should find a city administrator who has an EDC background.

It should be an easy transition with the EDC and the Chamber but I don't know about the BID legally. The board shouldn't be too big. People are going to have to take their agendas out of it. The majority of board members of the current organizations are involved for personal gain.

Who heads it up from a staff and board perspective is key. Having two functions under one roof would be good. The BID is different as a legal entity but their goals should align with the other organization. Staffing could be helpful to them; maybe they could contract with the consolidated organization for administrative assistance.

You could create a director of marketing for the City which could be funded by the lodging tax with part of that person's focus on economic development.

You could do a new organization with one board of directors and have a director of the Visitor Center who could handle visitors and membership and one director of economic development who could also handle marketing.

The three organizations should be put under one roof with one board and different divisions.

If we create one organization or one Board, I would like to also create a citizen advisory type of committee that could receive the same materials as the Board and give the board a community perspective. Ideally, this committee would meet at least a week prior to the Board's meeting and provide written recommendations. Such would assure non-business entities that all perspectives were being considered. It would also keep the Board more connected to the greater community.

I don't see a specific City oversight role.

How you choose the new board is going to be critical. How do you take out the self-interests?

As far as the board of the new organization, you'd have to remember that some current board members of the organizations are self-serving and some are concerned about Manitou. It would probably work best to take some from both existing boards.

Half of the Chamber Board would be okay if Chamber staff does not lead a new organization and half would not. Staff would not.

If you brought in a new person to oversee a new organization that person would be hated by the Chamber staff.

Re-purpose the Chamber as a visitors center.

In order for a new organization to do marketing, existing staff would have to be re-assigned.

There may be the political will to shift the Chamber staff's duties but not remove them.

There are many significant stakeholders on the boards now and those people would have to be on the new board because of their economic impact on the community. You could have business seats and at-large seats. An independent nominating committee might work. Inclusiveness is the most important thing in board selection.

The main thing is removing the personal and political influence from the equation as much as possible.

I'd prefer to find a new, professional marketing person to lead a new organization.

The Chamber staff will be there for a long time and you'll have to deal with that in setting up a new organization. Does that staff have the skills and the vision needed? That's going to be the most difficult part.

If the three organizations were combined you'd have to deal with the money and the legal issues. You need one CEO to oversee the organization who's very good with people and who has the vision and the ability to fight the territorial crap.

Funding a New Organization

It would be nice to see how other cities our size deal with economic development—that would help us make decisions.

We need to leverage all the money we've got.

Having the organization eventually self-sustaining is probably a good idea. The 'beholden' relationship hampers the process of becoming self-sufficient; it's dysfunctional. For them to be subject to the political whims of Council is difficult, and government intrusion into marketing is not good because it's not their expertise. The organizations, or organization, would have to be very competent in raising money but I think self-sustainability in the long run would serve everyone better. Phasing it in would work best.

I want the organization to be self-sustaining as the BID is. The Chamber and EDC are accountable to the public.

There also needs to be financial support from the City.

It's nice that the City has a financial hand and some guiding power in economic development-type decisions.

Relationship with the Business Improvement District

The BID must stay separate by statute but we would like assistance from a new organization with things like marketing and administrative organization.

The BID is very reticent to hand over to the Chamber the little bit of money it has for marketing. Lodging drives our downtown businesses and they basically have 100 days a year to make it work.

Who will determine BID's marketing now?

If the BID Board decides to spend most of our money on streets and maintenance and cleanliness downtown, I would advocate partnering with the City Community Development Department. Their staff could help guide us on ordinances and code enforcement and take minutes at our Board meetings. We'd still keep our contract with the accountant but would phase out doing events and marketing. Our expectation is that a new organization would also market downtown.

The BID could focus on downtown maintenance.

Need for an Economic Plan

Manitou can complement Colorado Springs' economic development efforts, such as our green initiatives. I would like a more proactive approach, maybe even brand ourselves as the "anti-Colorado Springs".

The EDC doesn't have a vision.

When the Cliff House has convention space that will be a big opportunity for us. We need to look at our capacity for small, high-end convention business. I agree that convention coordination is important.

We need to develop tourism as much as possible. Let's also expand our base and focus on health tourism and sports tourism.

We should form partnerships with other little towns, like Key West or some little town on the coast of Maine.

Manitou considers itself a tourist community not a resort community.

City Council is supposed to represent the community. Without a strong economy, City services will suffer. Without economic development you shrivel on the vine and die.

I don't think Council has a clear sense of what the community needs are when it comes to economic development for the future. I believe for the community to be successful we have to define what we want for our economic future. If we don't, it will die.

A plan may help with some of these issues. Let's all focus on what we have in common.

We just need to decide what people want and how to get there. We need evidence that we want the same outcomes.

I think we should do a mini-Glenwood Springs here—we have the springs. The Mineral Springs Foundation needs to be part of this discussion. Our springs are an integral part of our community and should be marketed.

We have a big problem with the strength of our lodging properties in this community and they need help they are not getting right now.

It's the goodies that bring people here and we need to concentrate on that.

There should be more focus on the arts, health, and recreation and the businesses that support those things.

I like the Chautauqua models. We have all the pieces here—we draw arts, education, and entertainment together. It would create a deeper community for ourselves that will work for visitors as well. Why not get people to stay here for a deeper experience, to capitalize on what we have here? We need an organization that can facilitate and coordinate that.

We are one dimensional in Manitou because we are so tourism-based. We need to expand our tax base and need something in addition to tourism. We recently did an urban renewal study and it suggested making Manitou also a health destination. We need a reason to fill this town year-round and it could be a holistic health and a sports training base.

We need better public understanding of EDC's five-year plan.

There is a lack of giving people the opportunity to get involved in economic solutions. There's a fundamental rift because the economic models from other communities don't fit Manitou. We need more organic, Manitou solutions, not models from other places.

We should encourage more partnerships regionally, for instance with Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPR). We need relationships with Colorado Springs to leverage our resources.

I would like to see trails for all kinds of races and a zip line. The Manitou Incline is an opportunity to create another amenity.

We need a music venue with 500 seats for national music acts. That's really an under-served market.

Need for a Comprehensive Marketing Approach

I'm not sure it possible to consolidate marketing and keep separate organizations.

The BID at their last meeting was having serious talks about getting away from some of the marketing and focusing more on the maintenance/cleaning of the downtown. That would appear to jive with the overall concept of focusing items to the proper organizations.

We need a consolidated marketing plan—we have to do it.

When you type in "Manitou Springs" online you get all sorts of disjointed stuff. One web site could fix that.

I'm hugely in favor of consolidating marketing—collective effort would far exceed individual efforts. I've seen it work in other communities. Speaking with one voice is important.

Consolidated marketing would be the way to go. There's no cohesive message and there are three web sites.

It makes sense to consolidate marketing. The Chamber is looking to hire a marketing firm. We've always tried to appease everyone when it comes to marketing and that doesn't always work. We need to get someone who knows about marketing.

I think consolidation of marketing would be good.

There are multiple web sites now that could be unified into one.

I wouldn't mind consolidated marketing. It makes sense as long as the marketing also embraces marketing to locals. We forget there are 365 days a year that we can do business, not just 90.

I think one unified web site is a good idea.

There does need to be a central Internet site for the community.

I wholeheartedly agree with consolidating the marketing efforts of the three organizations.

There are areas of each of the three entities where it would work to share marketing.

Let's get people excited about something new, like a new, fantastic web site for Manitou Springs.

I would like to invest Chamber money in a super web site that's outstanding that the whole community could use, like the BID, the EDC, the City, and the Chamber.

A single, comprehensive marketing plan is absolutely necessary—that's the biggest need for all three organizations.

Consolidated marketing is okay as long as the person responsible has the skills.

I think a single web site would be fine.

Marketing is the only overlap function.

When you have Pikes Peak and Colorado Springs next door, do we need separate marketing? We need to document the impact of marketing efforts.

When talking about the merger of the three entities maybe combine marketing money to make it go farther.

I would rather seeing consolidation of marketing than nothing.

We need to brand ourselves as a cool place. Some of the best money spent by the BID was getting Manitou Springs on military television—that really paid off with visitors who hadn't known we were here.

We need advertising and promotion and we need people to do things together.

We need stronger marketing.

I want to spend money promoting Manitou Springs and not promoting an organization.

We also need events promotion.

There's lots of new, hipper technology that should be used to market Manitou.

There is duplication in marketing now but we're not always putting out the same message.

We need to do downtown marketing.

Work on advertising.

We need market analysis and demographics to base the marketing plan on.

We need one consolidated message.

We need to ask ourselves "What is 'authentic' Manitou and what should we be marketing?"

We need a consistent marketing message. The ads are now done in-house and the Chamber works hard not to show favoritism.

There needs to be a cohesive message about what makes Manitou so unique. The Chamber tries to please everyone and it dilutes the message.

We need advertising. The BID has tried to attract Fort Carson families and it's worked pretty well. I believe the secret to the success of Manitou Springs is the military base population and getting the locals in Colorado Springs to come and enjoy what they have in their own backyard. We really need them for our off-season. We have over half a million people there to draw from. People like the west side because it just has a different feel from the east side. The BID has done the TV camera shot of Manitou on KKTU and it's cost us \$10,000 but I think it's worth it because when people see that shot it just reminds them that we're here.

There should be targeted marketing goals. The Chamber has no goals or focus on market segments.

There's no Chamber marketing plan.

Accountability and Expectations

The key to all of this is going to be with Council. We have to set priorities. Council doesn't know what these organizations do, especially the EDC.

Communication is not good between groups. When the City talked about cutting funds to the organizations, a Chamber board member brought up that the Chamber has a reserve fund and both boards of the other organizations turned against the Chamber. The Council liaison didn't always get the information to Council. The purpose of the reserve fund is to buy land from the City that the Chamber building is on. About 65% of the Chamber's budget comes from the City through a contract to promote the Manitou community. The City's obligated to pass through the lodging tax revenue but the City's been reducing the percentage. Now the City wants to know in detail where all the money is going.

I think we're getting to the point of understanding what they [the City] want from us. Now they want to know exactly where their money is going.

The City needs to communicate directly. If the City staff needs information, they should just ask, and not in a critical way.

Council liaisons are expected to be advocates but also call it truthfully. The City Attorney has called the liaison system into question because of potential conflicts of interest. I don't think the system works very well. You need real reporting to full Council, and it should be done quickly and quarterly.

The City's ultimately responsible for the taxpayers' money, so it should be accountable.

My interest is in the money the City spends and what it gets for it.

The burden is on the City to set expectations.

The expectations between the City and the Chamber are really not very clear.

I don't think the Chamber has clear expectations of the City or vice versa. If the City's going to fund any organization to the tune of thousands of dollars it needs to set out expectations clearly.

If money comes out of a promotion budget it should be spent on promotion. The City shouldn't have to audit organizations to get information from them.

Expectations are not clear. The City promotion money given to the Chamber hasn't been spent.

The City's expectations are not clear.

The City keeps saying, "We want you to be accountable" but a presentation was made to them about return-on-investment that showed for every dollar spent in business support and development you get \$10 back but nobody seemed to listen.

The City's expectations of the Chamber haven't been clear in the past but they're much better now with our new Council liaison.

The Chamber staff is having to spend hours justifying how the budget is spent and it distracts from their strengths.

Expectations are not clear from the City to the organizations and their reporting back to the City is not good. I've asked for the first time and have gotten lots of documentation from the organizations about what they are doing. What I got from the EDC didn't make much sense but I got good numbers from the Chamber. The Chamber has tried to work on getting along and on planning.

Council wants information on return-on-investment.

I've never heard a direct statement of expectations of what the City expects of the Chamber.

Council worries about how the City's money is being used. We need to discuss as a Council what we want.

There hasn't been accountability to the City from the organizations. There need to be quarterly updates to Council and annual reports and they need to be presented in person and in writing. We need to clarify roles and have a contract for specific services. We knew good was being done but we weren't sure what. Having the organization come to Council without controversies would be good.

The Council liaison system hasn't worked out as well as it should have. We need to keep it but look at clarifying expectations and reporting back to Council.

The City should bear the burden for setting up a system of accountability with procedures and requirements. The City administrator should coordinate it. We need to publicly document what we're doing.

There was no direct reporting or accounting from the EDC but there was from the Chamber. The City had no real control over the EDC. There was a similar disconnect with the BID. They just have the assumption that the City is inept. When we've been able to get information from them we've had to demand it.

We're well on our way to fixing the reporting system. We're segregating sources of funds and how they are spent. The Chamber has good tracking and has been able to work with us, but not EDC and the BID.

A contract for services is exactly what I've envisioned as a result of this process.

The Chamber of Commerce is being punished for managing our money well. Now the City has the information it asked for but now our Chamber staff is having to spend lots of time documenting how every dime of City money is spent.

We need an entity that has defined metrics that are reported to City Council.

We have intergovernmental agreements with EDC and the BID, not contracts. We pass through tax revenue to the Chamber.

I want accountability because of City funding with at least quarterly reports that address return on the City's investment.

The lack of accountability to the City is a problem.

A contract for services with a new organization would probably work really well. The benefits from it are that expectations are spelled out and professionalism would have to be maintained.

All of the City money that goes to these organizations is discretionary.

Improved Relationships and Communication

I think personality has been the largest barrier to cooperation.

People matter in Manitou Springs. You walk down the block and you'll be greeted by everyone. We care about all of our people.

We've developed this heated air but I think it's beginning to cool off.

I think the personalities of some have been the largest barrier.

There is some division. Some people aren't conditioned to change and what we've been doing in downtown Manitou is positive change. People really do want to keep the 'mom and pop' shops here. Some people don't want any national chains; when they put in a Subway on the eastern edge of town there was a big outcry by some.

The majority of residents aren't thrilled with living in a tourist town. When the downtown redevelopment was started some people didn't want it because they just wanted to keep the small town culture. Change is hard but it's happening in small steps.

Our former director of the EDC was a very driven woman. Her social skills could have used a lot of help but she got a lot accomplished. She pissed some people off and they got elected to Council and the only way for them to get rid of her was to cut EDC's budget. It somewhat killed the EDC. Four Council members really used the economic hammer to control EDC and get rid of one person.

We celebrate everything in this community but we fail to celebrate our own community and celebrate all that we've done over the last five to seven years.

We need to stop beating up people who are trying to do things for the community.

About 55% of City revenues come from downtown businesses but the businesses don't reciprocate by recognizing the value of the local residents. Businesses want to close City facilities and reduce other things that residents value. There's just a disconnect between all businesses and residents. We need a healthy balance between the vibe created by the residents and the revenue generated by businesses.

Process matters in Manitou, expertise alone doesn't work. A little hand-holding goes a long way.

There are silos here. People are very guarded and there's mistrust and turf protection.

A lot of the disagreements are personal and some of it's philosophical—you want to take care of yourself and your membership and no one else.

City Council needs to have a "Kumbaya" retreat to talk things through and get rid of some of its infighting. Council sets an example for the community—they're sort of the 'parent.'

There are ongoing fights between restaurants and lodging.

The bad economy started this whole thing.

We need less territorial-ness among the groups. Communication is not as good as it could be. Sometimes there are events planned that the Chamber doesn't even know about and could help give out information on them.

Feelings have gotten us to this point—feelings of ill will!

Those feelings and the attitude of “That’s the way it used to be.”

Some residents hate having tourists here.

There are folks who don’t get involved unless they want to protest something but they don’t offer any solutions.

The Manitou community is very focused on self interests and not on the whole community.

Some people don’t care that businesses are paying taxes for everything around here.

EDC has criticized the Chamber as antiquated but hasn’t come up with any solutions.

I’m gratified to see the genuine desire by some in EDC and the BID to change things.

Building trust is key.

The lack of trust among the organizations is amazing. There’s been some in-breeding on Council and the organizations and that has caused some of the infighting.

The organizations fight amongst themselves as much as they do with the other organizations.

I’m sitting on Council because of this issue—how much we’re spending on it and on downtown. The community wants to get back to “Me, me, me.” If we don’t listen to our folks people won’t trust us anymore and then we’ll get into a situation like Colorado Springs.

The divisions between the organizations are long-standing.

There’s a Chamber/EDC divide and a business/resident divide in this community. Businesses depend on tourists and residents don’t like them. The community forced the Metro District to give up 3,400 square feet to use as open space at the District’s parking lot and that was like stealing property from the District.

The EDC and Chamber relationship has really been tough.

I think the community is happy with the Chamber. They didn’t like the EDC much. I think people questioned why we couldn’t afford to hire a City administrator but we could hire an EDC director.

Communications are bad between all the organizations and there’s been lots of bad press which hasn’t helped.

Communication is huge. There are so many boards and no one knows what everybody does. The Chamber Board talked about working with the City on setting up a communication system.

There were a few years when it was just a ‘pissing contest’ between the Chamber and EDC and that was just ridiculous and now everybody’s looking back and telling stories about what happened. Let’s just let that go and move forward.

All of this controversy points to great passions and that’s good.

The Chamber staff gets beat up on for not being Internet experts.

Some people are very protective of Chamber staff and some people don’t appreciate them.

Some people are really bitter about the loss of the EDC director and I don’t know if they can let go of that.

You have to go back to the past to understand it. Most of it was a personality problem.

Communication from the City is important, both communicating the facts and making sure constituencies understand the various approval processes.

We need an online city-wide Listserve so people can see what’s going on in town and it’s inclusive. I think that’s something Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPR) could help us with.

There’s just a lot of emotional fatigue.

Downtown is divided after seven years, and I think the Chamber staff has perpetuated that.

Residents complain about tourism, mostly because of parking issues.

How much the former EDC director got paid was a big issue.

How do you take the personality out of it? Logic doesn't work.

How do we stop the bad behavior?

The community is divided. Like the country, it's a 50-plus-one situation. Some businesses got behind the EDC and others blamed the director for change, and there is resistance to change by some. There was resentment by City staff of the director and her autonomy.

The relationship with the City is much better with our current Council liaison. He attends meetings, communicates with Council, and communicates constructively with us.

Communication with citizens is miserable. We're working on having a Listserve and it would be great if we could have all the organizations on it.

The media who cover Manitou are biased and have written terrible things.

The BID needs to do a better job of communicating to our members what the BID does for them.

Because it's such a small place rumors spread fast. Word-of-mouth is the primary communication method. Hopefully, the City will be starting Listserves for a subscription service.

Communication between the City and the three organizations is a problem.

Membership

The BID businesses don't always want to also pay to be part of the Chamber or the EDC because they already pay to be in the BID.

There has been talk about giving BID businesses a Chamber membership.

The Chamber has memberships from businesses outside of Manitou and that could be an issue from some with EDC. They don't like that the non-Manitou businesses are put in the Visitors Guide.

Some people think the Chamber concentrates too much on members and not enough on other things like the web site. It's important to get heads in beds so we need to market beyond the region. There is talk of BID members automatically being Chamber members.

The Chamber is a member-driven organization and we do things to benefit our members but also promote all of Manitou. There has been talk of changing the focus of the Chamber to visitor focus only because that's what it does. It's not a traditional Chamber. It gets \$56,000 annually through members' dues and over half of those are non-Manitou based, mostly attractions. There is some objection to that because if visitors support non-Manitou businesses it takes tax money away from Manitou and the Chamber's funding comes from the City's lodging tax.

I'm a non-Manitou member of the Chamber and I get a lot of benefit from it.

There's been a proposal for BID members to automatically become Chamber members and to contract with the Chamber to do BID marketing.

The Chamber doesn't actively solicit memberships and about 50 percent of Manitou's businesses are not Chamber members.

The Chamber does everything for its members only. They won't hand out the BID downtown map because some members of the BID are not Chamber members, even though they get \$200,000 from a public tax. I would like to see an organization that includes all businesses.

Why does the Chamber get City funds if it limits their promotions to its members? It is problematic. They probably shouldn't get City money if they're not willing to promote all businesses in the city. Why aren't they funded by the members they promote?

The Chamber only makes referrals to its own members, including those who are outside of Manitou, and that bothers people, me included, because they get taxpayer money. I think all businesses should be members because the Chamber's getting tax dollars.

I have some issues with the Chamber getting taxpayer dollars but only supporting or promoting local businesses who are Chamber members.

I think one of the biggest issues is the Chamber's promotion of just its membership.

I would hate to see membership to the Chamber limited to Manitou businesses only. Tourism is important to the whole region and shutting others out wouldn't benefit anyone. Protectionism doesn't work.

Some people want the organization to still be membership-based.

Determining the Need for a Traditional Chamber of Commerce

The vast majority of our businesses are mom and pop operations and they're not really interested in getting advice from the Chamber about how to run their business. I think the Chamber staff's strength is visitor promotion.

If we as a business community aren't savvy to business people who have disposable income and are tech-savvy that's a problem and we need to fix it. If you're not a national flagship lodging property you probably don't have the skills to do your own web site. That would be a good thing for the Chamber to teach its members.

Implementation of a New Organization

To make the consolidation work, we'll have to look at the skill sets at both organizations. There's one vacant position at the EDC and one vacant full-time position open at the Chamber.

We'd need to re-write the Chamber's bylaws. We'd need a new name, like the Manitou Springs Visitors Bureau and Office of Economic Development, although that's quite a mouthful. The BID is the hard part. Maybe it could contract for services with the new organization.

Part of it will depend on how consolidation is portrayed by each organization; it will be important that the leaders of each organization portray the consolidation as a positive.

All the boards of the organizations will need to step forward to embrace any changes. Volunteers all need to be informed because we really need them.

I guess I want the organizations to come to Council with a plan.

You need to get the boards of the organizations to say consolidation will be good for the community.

I don't think healing relationships will happen on its own. I think it will need a more formalized process.

You'd need a new name for a new organization.

If there were a new organization it would be necessary to have shared office space.

Whoever does this needs the support of the community and divisiveness must end. It must be a shared responsibility.

I think defining the mission of the new organization would need to be a joint effort between the City and the new organization so that expectations are clear from the very beginning.

There are probably ordinance restrictions that I'm not aware of that would need to be looked at.

Other

The City of Manitou Springs needs not to make decisions on consensus. Citizen involvement leads to 'analysis paralysis.' They should remove feelings from running a city. They just need facts and good data so people can make good decisions.

As long as people can set aside personal issues, we can get this done.

The more we can take ego-driven stuff out the better and taking political equations out is a good thing.

We have a new liaison, a new mayor—new faces are helping with the healing process.

I would just like to reiterate my opinion to try and base any decision-making on data and facts and encourage folks to leave their past and pride at the door. When decisions are made on data and not emotion, it reduces waste in the long-term.

Council spent four hours on whether to waive \$1,800 in fees and just a couple of minutes on an \$800,000 project plan.

Often times it's the 'squeaky wheel' that grinds everything to a halt. The City needs to acknowledge the squeaky wheel and move forward.

It's a trend with Council. Council doesn't want to upset anyone and lose votes.

Council wants to micromanage and wants to be popular.

Lodging struggled this year; there were some employee layoffs.

There's a perception by some that the edges of town are not safe. Council is going to have to deal with the panhandling problem. It's something we all need to work on.

Most of Manitou's good stuff happens through the efforts of grassroots volunteers.

There is a lot to be said for what this community has done with volunteers.

The lodging tax has to go to the Chamber but not the discretionary money.

We're going through some changes and are getting gentrified so that lots of people who work here can't afford to live here anymore.

Manitou doesn't have any serious problems. The City's reserve is way under-funded. Increasing sales tax is not the way to fix it. They need to look at efficiencies. An energy audit might help them save on utility costs. They just can't balance the budget by reducing employees' salaries and benefits.

We're in darn good shape economically in Manitou, relatively speaking, and we need to keep at it to maintain what we have.

Your fresh input on this issue will be helpful.

I am curious to see a report or other representation of our discussions. Will there be a report or any follow-up with this process?