



To: Town of Ridgway
From: Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce
Subject: Q2 Interim Lodging Tax Report
Date: Friday, August 3, 2018

Dear Ridgway Town Council,

The RACC Board of Directors is happy to share our second quarter report with the Town of Ridgway. We are excited by the progress that continues to be made at the organization.

Included with this report is the Chamber's Lodging Tax P&L statement. As a reminder, RACC's QuickBooks structures are organized around the Town-approved marketing plan and managed by Middleton Accounting. These actuals are a direct pull from QuickBooks and reflect a continued diversification of investments designed to advance our local business community.

We are happy to see the improving trendline on year-to-date lodging tax receipts. The Chamber's lodging tax funding is up 27% between Jan-July 2018 (\$14,601) as compared to 2017 (\$11,443).

The last few months have focused on a diverse set of activities including Visitor Center volunteer training, itinerary development, website content updates, creation of a CRM for RidgwayColorado.com and RACC membership, as well as preparations for our annual golf tournament. As has been shared with Town leadership throughout the process, due to family health reasons, our Executive Director, Peri Gore transitioned out of the organization in June. This was a setback for the organization, in particular given the time investment that had been made onboarding Peri into that role. That said, the organization has managed the transition well and we are very excited with the new staffing structures.

We continue to see progress being made as a result of the organizational infrastructure investments made in 2017, especially through RidgwayColorado.com and the exceptional group of contractors now engaged with the organization.

Due to a conflict with the annual Ridgway School Board retreat, I will be unable to attend this month's Council meeting. We look forward to hearing any questions or comments you have regarding this interim report and continuing to partner with the Town of Ridgway to advance the interest of local businesses and the community as a whole.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colin Lacy".

Colin Lacy

President, Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce

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Staffing

As has been shared, Peri Gore's transition in June has led to organizational restructuring, which we are ultimately very excited about. We have promoted Pamela Cannalte, who had been supporting the organization on membership cultivation, to the Program Coordinator role. Pamela comes to us with an exceptional background in customer relations, PR and project management. As the coordinator for RiverFest for the last several years, Pamela also has unique experience engaging Ridgway's local business community. As Program Coordinator, Pamela maintains a lead staffing role for the organization focused in particular on the operational/program management of our different tracks of work. In particular, management support to the Visitor Center, membership relations, and the implementation of select special projects throughout the year, including this year's golf tournament and Visitors Guide support.

Meanwhile, we have just engaged Hilary Lewkowitz in the role of Interim Marketing Director. Hilary brings a unique background in sustainable tourism marketing and has worked on behalf of communities across Colorado and the world. Her bio is attached to this report. This position, with direction from the board, will lead on the implementation of the Chamber's marketing strategy and activities. This includes working with the board to develop a new marketing strategy that focuses in particular on boosting economic activity in the low/shoulder season. This is an Interim setup for a three month period through September, at which point both the Chamber and Hilary will assess the fit, with the goal to continue forward as the Chamber's ongoing Marketing Director.

The combined average hours for Pamela and Hilary are in line with what we had budgeted for Peri's time, at approximately 25hrs/week. We have in effect broken out program implementation and operations into one role and marketing management into another. We look forward this model proving effective over the coming months.

Our exceptional group of local consulting partners and staff, all based in Ridgway, now includes:

- *Program Coordinator* -- Pamela Cannalte
- *Marketing Director (Interim)* – Hilary Lewkowitz
- *Visitors Center and Volunteer Coordinator* – Judy King
- *Accounting* – Middleton Accounting (Jane Pulliam)
- *Website and Technology Partner* -- Peak Media (Josh Gowans)
- *Online Content and Storytelling Consultant* – Tanya Ishikawa
- *Media and Design Partner* – Sprout Design Studio (Nicole Green)
- *Communications and Social Media Consultant* – Ashley King-Grambley
- *Youth Ambassador* – Elizabeth Mueller

Board of Directors

As noted in the last report, we are very happy to have two wonderful additions to the RACC board in Daniel Richards (Colorado Boy) and Amanda Swain (Ridgway Adventure Sports). This brings the Chamber to a full seven member board for the first time in several years.

- *President* – Colin Lacy (US2020)
- *Vice President* – Jason Bojar (Balance Natural Medicine)
- *Secretary* – Tim Patterson (RIGS)
- *Treasurer* – Barb Latham (Citizens State Bank)
- *At Large*
 - Erin Stadelman (Ouray County Fairgrounds and Rodeo Association)
 - Daniel Richards (Colorado Boy)
 - Amanda Swain (Ridgway Adventure Sports)

Colorado Tourism Office Grant Applications

RACC will be applying for two Colorado Tourism Office grants for FY19: the Small Marketing Match Grant and the Project and Technical Assistance Grant. These will be the first applications to the CTO that RACC has ever lead on. The Small Marketing Match Grant is a \$10,000 award based on a 25% match (\$2,500) and is due on August 15, 2018. RACC will be collaborating with the Ouray Chamber Resort Association on this grant, and if awarded the grant will split the 25% match amount. RACC and OCRA will be collaborating on the grant in an effort to increase countywide off-peak season visitation and tourism-driven economic opportunities. Both organizations recognize that summer tourism visitation is close to maximum capacity. In contrast, businesses struggle to keep a consistent cash flow during the off-peak seasons of October through April. Outside of just this CTO grant, RACC intends to guide its broader marketing strategy to focus in particular on this shoulder/low season period. This is a period that is critical for our businesses success and an area where we believe we can begin to move the needle in terms of impact. This grant would support the development of a marketing plan, which will include a series of itineraries based on existing initiatives: Creative Corridor, Hot Springs Loop, Colorado Spirits Trail, and San Juan Skyway. Itineraries will detail off-peak season tourism assets related to existing initiatives, and incorporate activities, restaurants and lodging throughout the county. This would just be the beginning of a broader strategy to target the shoulder and low seasons.

RACC is also planning on applying for the Project and Technical Assistance grant in early fall (rolling application until January 2019). This grant is a \$15,000 award with a 25% match. The purpose of applying for this grant is to advance tourism efforts in Ridgway in a way that is sustainable, targeted, and effective. In order to guide a sustainable future, we are in need of better understanding our current visitor demographics and motivations. Part of the grant funding would be spent on a visitor survey that will help inform the RACC of who are current visitors, which will then guide the conversation about what type of visitors we want in the future. In addition to this, funding will be focused on the Ridgway Visitors Center. The Ridgway Visitor Center is in need of a long-term strategy to best manage future growth and support visitor engagement with our local business community. Additional notes on the Visitor Center can be found further in this report. We are excited for RACC to take additional steps to hopefully expanding and diversifying its revenue streams.

Colorado Creative Corridor

RACC has teamed up with the Ridgway Creative District in gathering and presenting information and suggested itineraries to the Colorado Tourism Office for the Colorado Creative Corridor project, which is officially being kicked-off at the Creative Industries Summit in Greeley in May. The Chamber provided \$5,000 in matching funds in order for Ridgway to be included in this important project, which will bring additional visitors to the area during all times of the year. Not only will they come to the area but with the help of the suggested itineraries, they will visit a variety of businesses and “creatives” in the area, bringing income to the area in times that have historically been slower economically. We are excited for this project to continue to bring value to the business and creative economy for years to come, and look forward to this continuing to be an important example of the positive impact of Chamber/Town collaboration.

It is important to note RACC’s investment of \$5,000 to establish Ridgway as a Creative Corridor community reflects the single largest financial investment from any organization from any community involved with the Corridor. It is also RACC’s largest investment into a special initiative for the year. Given Peri’s transition, and more limited than anticipated availability during the spring, RACC was unable to devote all of the staffing resources it had originally hoped. That said, in addition to the \$5,000 investment, RACC’s consultants have supported the initiative, in particular Tanya Ishikawa through the development of new itineraries to support the Corridor and for submission to the Colorado Field Guide. Josh Gowan’s has supported on bringing Creative Corridor content to RidgwayColorado.com and we anticipate increased content creation on the website. With contractor time included (captured in categories of the budget other than “Creative Corridor”), RACC’s investment this calendar year is over \$6,000.

We want to shout out Diedra Silbert for her leadership in managing the new initiative and continuing to serve as a critical partner on a variety of projects.

With regards to 2019, while not finalized, we have discussed with Town staff the possibility of splitting the \$2,500 community investment between Town and Chamber for 2019. We believe it is important for this to continue to be a joint effort between Town and Chamber, and we also believe this an important opportunity that we have yet to even begin to realize. The collateral itself has yet to even arrive and there are many more components to this effort that can be further developed. Going forward, Hilary will serve in a lead strategy role from the Chamber’s end on how we can begin to capitalize on this significant investment and opportunity.

Website

RidgwayColorado.com remains the #1 Google search result for keyword “Ridgway Colorado” as well as other high value keywords. Site optimization is an ongoing effort, however we’re continuing to invest in additional content and our staff/contractors continue to monitor the site and keep membership content fresh and up to date.

We have just begun incorporating the branding for the “Five Themes” (detailed below) within the website and are also beginning to incorporate the new itineraries within the site.

In just the last few weeks we have started the process of developing a CRM (customer relationship management) for the website. With leadership from Peak Media, we will be using CiviCRM technology to better manage Chamber membership and online content. The technology will enable various functionality options, including improved membership content management on the site. A primary benefit will also be our ability to automate the membership renewal process, which will ultimately save the Chamber significant amounts of time on “membership drives”, which has typically been a major staffing capacity drain. As with any technology, its value will ultimately be dependent on how we use it and keep it up to date. Pamela is playing a lead role in uploading our current data into the new system and will manage the content and data input on an ongoing basis. Ultimately we believe this will be an important tool for us to leverage in a variety of ways and allow us to function at a higher level, even with relatively limited staffing capacity.

Visitors Guide

The 2018 guides have been released and are distributed locally, across the state and region. 100,000 copies will be distributed this year as a result of the collaboration with Ouray. In 2017, we invested in improving and aligning the content of the Ridgway guide, in partnership with Tanya Ishikawa. We are very pleased with this significantly improved narrative and the alignment of the guide with the five marketing themes of Culinary Experiences, History & Heritage, Arts & Entertainment, Outdoor Adventure and Health & Wellness.

We are happy to share that we will continue with the collaborative set up with Ouray for the 2019 guide. Tanya Ishikawa will continue in the lead editor role and we are preparing to make additional improvements on the content, including the creation of a more county-wide narrative on select themes. This will be a significant focus for RACC’s team during the third quarter.

Golf Tournament

The Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce the second annual Ridgway Chamber Open. This year’s event will take place on Saturday, September 15th at the Divide Ranch & Club.

RACC will continue with the model launched in 2017 of returning 100% of net proceeds of the event, including sponsorships and donations, directly to the local business community. Sponsors and players are directly advancing the local business community and the community as a whole.

Last year’s proceeds provided small matching grants to brick-and-mortar members for outside upgrade projects. These external improvements positively impact the entire business community and were awarded to the Sherbino Theatre, Provisions Cafe and Citizens State Bank in Ridgway.

The profits from the 2018 tournament will go to launch the Ridgway Youth Apprenticeship Program.

The Chamber recognizes that local business success is predicated on local talent. As a community, our first priority talent pipeline should be our local students. In an effort to support our local businesses' long-term, talent pipeline and better connect our youth with the business community, the Chamber will be launching the Youth Apprenticeship Program.

The scholarship amounts and the number of available apprenticeships will be entirely determined by the proceeds from this year's Ridgway Chamber Open, so please come out and play, sponsor and support!

Visit RidgwayColorado.com/golf

As a reminder, Lodging Tax dollars will not be dedicated to the golf tournament but this is an important initiative for the Chamber and we hope that Town staff and leadership can join us for the event, as players and/or supporters.

Five Themes

With the support of our design partner, Nicole Green of Sprout Design Studio, we have developed a visual representation of the five marketing themes. As we have shared in previous reports, these themes are designed to capture the unique attractions of the Ridgway area and our goal has been to develop these themes and inline with marketing best practices, use them consistently across our media, including website, visitors guide, print ads, social media and visitor center. These are now being adopted across all of our platform in conjunction with the themes:



Print Media

The Chamber coordinated co-op ads with local businesses in the 2018 San Juan Skyways publication as well as in three quarterly publications of the Colorado Life magazine. Ridgway and the five themes will be part of the next three Colorado Life publications, which offers a major distribution channel not previously accessed by the Chamber.

Visitor Center

The Chamber held a training and appreciation lunch for the Visitor Center volunteers in June. It was an opportunity to refresh on new content at the Visitor Center and other Chamber tools, including RidgwayColorado.com. The session was also a reminder of what an incredible group of volunteers staff

the Visitor Center and how lucky our entire community is to have their support. The management of the Visitor Center would not be possible without their service to the community.

In late May, we also held a “Gardening Day” that was made possible by a group of volunteer students from Ridgway Middle School and Ridgway High School. For many of our visitors, the Visitor Center is the first stop and first impression in their Ridgway experience so welcoming them with brightly colored flowers and a warm smile is a great way to kick off their day. A big thank you to our weed warriors! Maggie Guscott, Dee Dee Decker, Pamela Cannalte, Audra Southall, Maggie Ogilvie, Serin Miller, Nico Peele, Morgan Clark, Janel Norman, Autumn Sagal, Kayla Bolane, Lily Thomas, Pantera Bennett, Phoebe Strickler, Harley Bennett, Eleni Wallin and Max Schuetz.

Lastly, we wanted to highlight the need for the Town and other stakeholders, including the Chamber, to begin a conversation of how we can make the necessary improvements to the Visitor Center building and surrounding land. As the Railroad Museum continues its exciting transition to the new location, there is an important need to assess the long-term future and design of the Visitor Center building and lot. This is a critical asset for the entire community and one that will ultimately require much more significant investment than the Chamber itself is capable of making to realize the potential of the asset. This is a plug to hopefully begin a conversation between Town, Chamber, and the wider community of how we can invest in this asset in the long-term. We would very much like to begin incorporating the planning process into our 2019 budget and work plan, as well as the technical assistant grant to the CTO.

Itineraries

Itinerary development is a project that we continue to work on and the itineraries are now included on the RidgwayColorado.com website as well as the Colorado Tourism Office’s Colorado.com website in their Field Guide/Creative Corridor section of the website. These itineraries are important assets for the Visitors Center as well. The Chamber is committed to giving exposure to all five categories of business mentioned above and ultimately develop itineraries to include a wide range of activities, themes and times of the year. We will continue to send fresh itinerary content to Colorado.com, which will incite interest in Ridgway as a whole and provide inclusion of a cross-section of local businesses.

Itinerary development is an important way to collaborate with local partners and create strong, action-oriented content for both visitors and locals, which ultimately leads to more customers for local businesses and nonprofits.

Other Items of Note

Other projects that have been in the works for RACC include:

- We continue to receive weekly leads from the Go-Colorado website and the Visitors Guide requests are up 20% over last year. We process these leads by sending each one a digital copy of our Visitors Guide and add them to our weekly “Specials & Events” e-blast, which now goes out to more than 2,000 targeted recipients.

- The Chamber is continuing to develop its online presence on Facebook and now on Instagram and Twitter too. We post local business specials and events on Facebook and are just starting to develop content for our Instagram and Twitter pages. With the support of *Communications and Social Media Consultant*, Ashley King-Grambley, we will continue to grow a strong online presence, promoting local business and Ridgway as a whole.
- We now have a RACC Youth Ambassador, Miss Elizabeth Mueller, who is helping us with our online presence, providing coverage at local events and acting as an advocate for local businesses within the school system. Supported by Tanya Ishikawa, Elizabeth has helped us launch our new Instagram account. This new “position” within the Chamber network is one that we plan to continue developing for years to come. A scholarship will be provided to the Youth Ambassador at the end of their term. We started the Youth Ambassador program with the vision and support of the Chamber's communications partner Tanya Ishikawa. This is an effort to amplify the youth voice and better connect local commerce with local education. This is a small first step for the Chamber to better connect local business with education.
- On May 8th, the Chamber was the primary sponsor for a Volunteer Fair at the Ridgway High School. Tanya Ishikawa identified a need last fall to bring together local non-profits and high school students wanting to provide volunteer hours. She again coordinated this effort and the Chamber is sponsored all booths of members and providing some door prizes for the non-profits in attendance. This is also where the students signed up for the Gardening Day at the Visitor Center.

The Chamber is very pleased with the progress that continues to be made in 2018 and we sincerely thank the Council and all of the Town staff for their support and partnership.



Ridgway Area Chamber of Commerce
Profit & Loss for Lodging Tax Class
January through July 2018

Jan - Jul 18

Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
Lodging Tax Income	14,601.61
Total Income	14,601.61
Gross Profit	14,601.61
Expense	
Creative District Corridor	5,000.00
Advertising and Promotion	
Ridgway Online Presence Prj	168.20
Online Media and Advertising,	4,436.79
Print Media and Advertising	3,652.72
Collaboration and Networking	84.37
Visitor's Guide Fullfillment, P	435.00
Website Upgrades and Operations	2,336.80
Total Advertising and Promotion	11,113.88
Payroll Expenses	
Staff	10,932.49
Total Payroll Expenses	10,932.49
Visitor Center Operations	
Electric	147.35
Natural Gas	249.55
Property & Liability Insurance	506.00
Repairs and Maintenance	475.17
Telephone and Internet	833.67
Trash	30.18
Volunteer Expense	745.94
Water Cooler	8.75
Visitor Center Operations - Other	420.53
Total Visitor Center Operations	3,417.14
Total Expense	30,463.51
Net Ordinary Income	-15,861.90
Net Income	<u>-15,861.90</u>

Hilary Lewkowitz is the Founder and Owner of Mountain Roots Consulting, a small business located in Ridgway, Colorado. Mountain Roots is a culmination of 15 years of work in sustainable tourism, adventure travel and conservation. In the fall of 2017, she partnered with Arizona State University to create and deliver the Colorado Tourism Office CRAFT Studio 101 pilot program. She has worked with the Ouray Chamber Resort Association to support destination marketing strategies. Hilary currently serves on the Executive Board for the Ouray Climbers Alliance, an Access Fund affiliated non-profit advocating for climbing stewardship in Southwest Colorado.

Before starting her own business, Hilary worked for the Adventure Travel Trade Association as the Adventure EDU Program Manager and Colorado Member Advocate. During her time with ATTA, Hilary was the project manager for several adventure tourism development workshops in emerging destinations. Workshops took place all over the world, including: Canada, Chile, Nepal, Kosovo, Armenia, Chile and Sweden.

Prior to ATTA, Hilary directed membership and communications for the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and The International Ecotourism Society. She was heavily involved in the planning and execution of sustainable tourism development workshops and events in several countries. Hilary has also worked for outdoor retail companies, while spending her summers guiding for the National Outdoor Leadership School, Mountain Education & Development, and Wilderness Ventures. She led restoration and research projects for the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative, National Park Service and California Department of Fish and Game.

Hilary completed her M.S. at the University of Utah in Sustainable Tourism Management. During her time at the University of Utah, she supported curriculum development and sustainable tourism research projects in the US and abroad. Hilary conducted research on visitor behaviors and attitudes in Zion National Park and OHV users across the state of Utah. She completed a yearlong research project with a conservancy in Kenya, Africa, which was designed to guide management decisions for their travelers' philanthropy program. Hilary received several awards for her work in Kenya, and research results were published in the Journal of Ecotourism. She also holds a B.S. in Environmental Science for Humboldt State University, California.

Hilary is an avid hiker, climber and skier. She has traveled extensively throughout the Western U.S. and abroad. Hilary and her husband's love for adventure and the mountains led them to Ridgway, Colorado where they are currently building their own home.

