



Visit Buffalo

Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, November 12, 2025
Buffalo Convention Center

PRESENT: C. Abbott Letro, M. Brown, D. Castle, A. Chase, M. Chiazza, P. Kaler, B. Karmazyn, T. Long, K. Minkel, M. Roberts, M. Urbanczyk

ABSENT: T. Alford, M. Alnutt, T. Beauford, B. Gould, D. Castle, D. Gallagher, M. Glasgow, W. Paladino, S. Patch, S. Ranalli, D. Schutte, M. Urbanczyk

STAFF: J. Bialek, J. Calkins, K. Fashana, J. Flood, L. Mueller, D. Marzo, H. Nowakowski

PRE-MEETING PRESENTATIONS: Prior to the commencement of the business meeting, the Board heard two guest presentations introduced by Dan Castle, Erie County Commissioner of Environment and Planning.

Mr. Castle outlined upcoming leadership transitions at Buffalo Place, introduced Steve Carmina as incoming Board Chair, and reviewed the organization's focus on expanded downtown activation, promotion, partnerships, and revenue growth. He also noted that TalentRise has been engaged to conduct a search for the next Executive Director, with emphasis on marketing, public relations, and downtown engagement experience. Representatives from TalentRise briefly summarized the executive search process, noting broad outreach and coordination with the Board search committee.

Mr. Carmina shared his vision for Buffalo Place, emphasizing increased collaboration with community stakeholders, modernization of operations and bylaws, expanded revenue streams, and support for long-term downtown development.

Mr. Castle also introduced a presentation on Erie County's Public Art Initiative. County staff reviewed the one-percent-for-art program, highlighting recent installations at the Buffalo Convention Center and future projects supporting placemaking, tourism, and local artists.

CALL TO ORDER: The Visit Buffalo Board of Directors meeting was called to order by Chair Cindy Abbott-Letro at 3:32 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Ms. Minkel and seconded by Ms. Urbanczyk to approve the August minutes. Motion carried.

FINANCE REPORT: Mr. Marzo reviewed the financial statements for Visit Buffalo and its affiliated entities for the month and quarter ended September 30, 2025. He reported that total assets at quarter end were approximately \$5.6 million, with the majority comprised of cash and receivables. Grant and trade receivables reflected in the statements were subsequently received in October.

Total current liabilities were reported at approximately \$2.9 million, primarily related to accounts payable and deferred revenue associated with the Erie County grant and advance sales for the 2026 Visitor Guide. Net assets at the end of September totaled approximately \$2.5 million and remained in compliance with Erie County grant requirements.

The organization reported an increase in net assets of approximately \$1.6 million year-to-date. Revenues were running ahead of budget due largely to the receipt of employee retention tax credits and higher-than-budgeted hotel occupancy tax revenues. Additional favorable variances were attributed to earned revenue, joint marketing initiatives, and unanticipated sponsorship support.

Expenses through September were reported below budget, primarily due to timing-related factors. Personnel costs were lower than anticipated due to delayed hiring and the later-than-planned opening of the Canalside Visitor Center. Marketing and project-related expenditures were also affected by timing, with several initiatives expected to carry into early 2026.

Mr. Marzo noted that year-end projections indicate an estimated surplus of approximately \$900,000. He explained that these funds are expected to support future contingencies, large-scale event opportunities, and long-term strategic initiatives.

Mr. Marzo also reviewed activities for the Foundation and the Sports Commission. He reported that Foundation activity during the period continued to focus on support for the Mobile Visitor Center and the Paul Murphy Scholarship Fund. He noted that the Sports Development Corporation had limited activity during the quarter and continues to be used on an as-needed basis to support sports-related commitments.

A motion to approve the financial report was made by Mr. Minkel and seconded by Mr. Karmazyn. The motion carried unanimously.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Mr. Kaler opened the Q3 President's Report with brief remarks and then turned the presentation over to Ms. Mueller for the Sales and Services update.

Ms. Mueller reported on third-quarter activity, noting that while total leads were slightly below the prior year, this was anticipated due to staff transitions earlier in the year. She reported that definite booked business and total room nights were ahead of prior-year levels, with overall economic impact also showing year-over-year growth. Ms. Mueller highlighted a mix of new and recurring conventions, sporting events, and group tours hosted during the quarter, as well as several site visits and familiarization tours that are already converting into future business. She noted that booking activity for future years remains strong, with significant business secured well into 2029 and beyond.

Mr. Kaler then provided an update on Destination Experience initiatives, reviewing staffing and operational planning for the Canalside Visitor Center, which is scheduled to open with a soft launch ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday. He also highlighted recent industry engagement efforts, including the successful launch of the Certified Tourism Ambassador program, noting strong participation and plans to continue expanding the program through the remainder of the year and into 2026.

Ms. Fashana next presented an update on marketing and brand initiatives. She reviewed the successful launch of the Visit Buffalo brand in September, highlighting strong partner attendance and positive engagement at the launch event. She outlined recent in-market activations, advertising placements, and public relations efforts, and reported continued growth in digital engagement and media coverage. Ms. Fashana also shared an overview of Visit Buffalo's upcoming winter marketing campaign, noting that it

