

MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
October 8, 1996

PRESIDING: Brad Higginbotham, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Doug Gust, Karen Berryman, Tom Kleinschnitz, Fay Timmerman, Ken Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dan Sharp, Lon Carpenter, Ron Maupin, Bill Mears

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Irene Carlow, Judy Shormann, Barbara Bowman

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm.

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 10, 1996: Karen Berryman moved the minutes be approved as written, Doug Gust seconded; passed unanimously.

BOARD BUSINESS: Results of the first year of "expand-the-tent" operations was discussed. Doug stated that he doesn't believe the hotels have a problem with continuing this program. The Director reported on input received from the participating properties as well as the bed and breakfasts inside the City limits.

Participating Properties

Verbal responses were received from both The Orchard House and Stonehaven:

Orchard House - pleased with the first year's results and would like to continue participating in the VCB's marketing promotions.

Stonehaven - this is a good program but unsure of continued participation because ownership of this business may change in the foreseeable future.

B&Bs inside City

All three B&Bs in the city returned the questionnaire. Results are as follows:

Tracks source of all inquiries:	yes - 2; no - 1
Top 3 sources of inquiries:	Other bed & breakfasts VCB website/Visitor Center/Visitor Guide Bed & breakfast books/miscellaneous guidebooks
Inquiries originating from the VCB:	20%; 18%; not sure
VCB inquiries booked:	95%; 60%; 10%
Would support continuing program:	yes - 2; not sure - 1

The consensus of the Board is to recommend Council continue this program; staff will have this placed on the October 14 Workshop agenda.

Air Service Task Force: The Chair reported that Western Pacific's senior management says Grand Junction is in their immediate business plan; service from Colorado Springs could begin as early as January 1997. It was pointed out that both Telluride and Durango paid \$150,000 to paint the

Western Pacific plane that will service their respective airports. These are up-front funds that were not part of the original discussions but were “expected”.

The Chair has also talked to TWA’s vice president of planning regarding tagging on service from DIA. A TWA plane currently overnights at DIA; the Chair asked TWA to consider bringing that plane to Grand Junction in the evening, overnighting, and returning to DIA early the next morning. A follow-up letter has been sent to TWA.

Maverick Airlines should begin accepting reservations October 20 for the inaugural flight November 4. The introductory fare will be \$69. (1-800-I-FLY-MAV)

Special Events: The Norwest Bicycle Classic report was received before the deadline; Special Event funds were spent appropriately. The VCB was not listed in the event advertising, nor on the official sponsor list; the VCB was listed on the event poster. Participation was strong. Downtown merchants would like to see better coordination; streets were closed off far in advance of the race, making access to Main Street difficult for both spectators and shopper traffic.

Preliminary reports of the Kokopelli Marathon indicate strong out-of-town participation. Runners were spread out among several Horizon Drive properties.

Sports Marketing Committee: Ken Smith and the Director met with Jim Parronto of Mesa State College. Jim was willing to participate and work with the VCB. VCB staff will meet tomorrow (October 9) with coaches. It is possible that Mesa State will host a winter (January) wrestling tournament; staff suggested the college apply for Special Events funds.

Applications for Special Event funds are available at the VCB; applications are due Tuesday, November 5. A workshop to review funding requests is scheduled for Thursday, November 21 at 3:00 pm at the VCB.

Cross Orchards will host the November meeting; the date has been changed to Tuesday, November 5 to accommodate staff travel schedules. Both the Chair and Vice Chair indicate conflicts with that date. Staff is directed to poll all Board members to determine when the majority could be present, either November 5 or November 12.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT: Thirteen properties will participate in this year’s Christmas shopping promotion; ads will run in selected western Colorado/eastern Utah papers from late October through mid-December. This campaign has been expanded from a general message of shopping in Grand Junction, to showcasing local products and the distinct shopping areas of downtown and Mesa Mall. A list of gift items and a copy of the lodging package ad will be enclosed with Visitor Guides mailed from late October through the shopping season. All of this information has been loaded on the VCB’s website as well, and the newspaper ads and Visitor Guide inserts highlight the Internet address.

Gift Baskets Galore will make up baskets containing products made in the Grand Valley or sold in gift shops at local attractions. Twelve baskets will be sent to selected publications and travel writers along with a press release and slide of a sample basket. Three baskets will be used as prizes in a contest on the Internet. Visitors to the website fill in an entry form and e-mail it to the VCB; a random “drawing” will be held December 9 to select three winners to receive a giftbasket. These entries will be downloaded to a database which can be used in future mailings, research, etc.

1997 Advertising: In addition to the Official State Vacation Guide (OSVG), the CTTA will produce two additional publications next year - a state map and a lodging/planning guide - and advertising is being solicited for all three. The OSVG ad will cost less than last year, but the publication may change from a planning guide to a lure brochure. State map advertising is expensive and not trackable; the map will be distributed at Welcome centers, etc. The new lodging/planning guide seems to be a directory of listings; staff reiterates the recommendation of declining to advertise in a first-time publication. Which piece(s) will be used as fulfillment to 1-800 inquiries is not known at this time. Linda Hill may have more information about the OSVG at the November meeting; she will present the preliminary 1997 media plan at that time.

1997 is the last year of Tashiro's current 3-year contract. An RFP will be issued in April, with agency interviews and presentations in July.

This year's direct mail piece was sent to meeting planners and tour operators in our sales database. The purpose is to qualify the leads we have as well as purge our records of companies that wish to be deleted. Responses are going to Tashiro; Linda Hill will give a preliminary report at the November meeting.

Lodging tax receipts are down 4.5% for the month, but up slightly for the year. Tom Kleinschnitz said that his business is usually solid through the 3rd week in August, but slowed about 5 days early this year. Schools opening earlier could be one reason for the overall slowdown in August.

A budget update was distributed; revisions to the '96 budget have been finalized. No increase in revenues is projected for next year, the first such occurrence since the VCB was organized. The challenge for 1997 will be to spend funds on proven, rather than experimental, programs and to closely review any proposal for new programs. The Board anticipates that co-operative marketing funds/efforts may be requested by Western Pacific, Air 21 and World Travel Partners.

Group Sales: Through the end of September, 107 sales leads have been issued. A direct mail campaign targeting the local market (Chamber members, clubs and organizations) will be mailed within the next two weeks. This is timed to be delivered approximately 1 week before the Chamber Technology Showcase. The VCB's exhibit at the Showcase will reinforce the direct mail by focusing locals' attention to bringing reunions, receptions, meetings and conventions to Grand Junction.

VCB membership in the Colorado Group Tour Association (CGTA) continues to produce business. As a result of a 1995 state-wide fam tour, Talbot Tours will bring 11 motorcoach tours to Grand Junction; this translates to an economic impact of approximately \$147,000 per year. The CGTA is producing a brochure to send to 600 NTA members; Colorado has not had printed material directed to the group market for 2 years.

FAMS: 10 tour operators from Thailand visited Grand Junction and were very favorably impressed; tour bookings from that market would be in March-April-May 1997. We will host 10 AMTRAK reservations agents later this month. Rocky Mountain Business Travel is scheduled for November 1 - 3.

The post-season wrap-up session will be Wednesday, November 20 at the Best Value Inn from 2:30 - 5:30 pm.

Visitor Center: International visitors increased substantially in September, but total visitation for the month was down 11%. The normal surge in the RV crowd did not materialize this year. Winter hours (8:30 - 5:00) have been instituted and the volunteer staff has seen its normal reduction for the off-season. The Board is invited to attend the volunteer appreciation banquet October 15 at Adobe Creek.

Tom Kleinschnitz moved the meeting be adjourned, Doug Gust seconded; there being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm.