

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
MARCH 14, 2000

PRESIDING: Bill Mears, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Alan Friedman, Chris Blackburn, Linda Smith, Dan Sharp, Peggy Page, Brad Higginbotham

MEMBERS ABSENT: Robin Kleinschnitz, Wade Haerle

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Erin Chapman, Judy Shormann, Irene Carlow

GUESTS: Linda Hill, Lisa Rohe, Tim Campbell, Jenny Aubke, Leif Johnson, Norm Cook

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 pm.

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8, 2000: Brad Higginbotham moved the minutes be approved as written, Peggy Page seconded, motion carried.

HOST REMARKS: Leif Johnson, Director of Sales for the Adam's Mark, discussed the renovation project that is scheduled to begin in early April. Nearly 4,000 square feet of meeting space will be added by taking out the Cancun Saloon and Kokopelli Room/lounge area; 11 guest rooms will also be added. Sales efforts include developing packages that feature Grand Junction as the recreational center of the region as well as suggested 1-day itineraries.

BOARD BUSINESS: Retreat—Board members are asked to meet at the VCB Tuesday, April 4 to depart for Powderhorn at 7:30 am. We will leave Powderhorn at 4:00 pm. The Director distributed Participant Surveys and PDP ProScans for each Board member to complete and return directly to Jasper Welch. Staff and a selected group of community stakeholders will be asked to complete the surveys as well. The Board will decide at the retreat whether to hold a regular monthly meeting in April.

Country Jam – Event organizers have requested a cash contribution from the VCB. The Director reviewed VCB event promotion and funding, explained that she had encouraged Country Jam to apply for funding in the Fall of 1999, and that their request was outside the boundaries of the VCB's Special Event Funding Policy. She then presented the question of how, from a historical perspective, the Bureau can promote Country Jam in a fair and equitable manner that is similar to past activities. Special Event applications are accepted in June if the full budgeted amount is not awarded the previous November. Remaining Special Event funds not awarded in June have historically been spent on direct advertising of Fall events; 1999 advertising funds totaled \$13,750 and 1998 was \$17,600.

Approximately \$23,000 is available for the June 2000 application cycle; a specific amount could be earmarked now for Country Jam promotions but that would pre-empt the June application process. (The Director has been informed that the Air Show Committee will apply in June.)

Staff distributed a history of Special Event applications, noting those events that were funded as well as events that did not receive awards.

Dan Sharp reported that several hotels (representing 60% of the room supply) met with a Country Jam representative. This is Grand Junction's most economically viable event and the hotels don't want Country Jam to think the community is not supportive. The hotels involved will make a cash contribution of \$5,000 to Country Jam this year. Dan reminded the Board that funding and promoting "marquee events" was discussed at the 1999 retreat but a mechanism to do that has not been developed.

General discussion items included:

1. Funds should not be awarded outside the Special Event policy. Organizers were informed of the November 1999 application process but did not apply. They should be encouraged to apply in November 2000 for the 2001 event.
2. Is this a "marquee event" worthy of funding?
3. Taking funds from Special Events will decrease seed money available to events that meet the criteria.
4. If this were a new event, how would it be viewed? Should it be considered only through Special Event criteria or outside the existing Policy?

The Director stated the VCB currently spends \$15,000-\$20,000 per year promoting Country Jam, e.g., staff time, telephone and postage expenses, Front Range promotions. A separate campaign to promote Country Jam could be developed – designed and controlled by the VCB – rather than issuing a check to Country Jam. This could be viewed as a total marketing opportunity, with \$5,000 coming from the Special Events account and \$2,500 from other operating accounts. Organizers' estimate of economic impact is \$8.5 million, but the actual economic impact is unknown; Chris Blackburn stated that restaurant business suffers that weekend.

Motion by Brad Higginbotham: \$5,000 in Special Events funds and \$2,500 from operating funds be used to promote Country Jam; Dan Sharp seconded.

Discussion: Alan Friedman stated that doing this without a "marquee event" policy in place will open the VCB for criticism. It would be better to discuss this and establish a "marquee event" policy at the April retreat, have it in place and then act on it vis-à-vis Country Jam.

Amended motion by Brad Higginbotham: Re-direct the advertising campaign to include \$7,500 in support of Country Jam: \$5,000 from Special Events, \$2,500 from the general advertising budget; seconded by Dan Sharp, motion carried.

HILL & TASHIRO MARKETING & ADVERTISING: Linda Hill distributed the first report of the Overnight Visitor Study; 419 surveys were returned. The six participating properties randomly select 3 guest names per day and send them to Hill & Tashiro, who sends the guest a survey questionnaire. The months selected for the study include August, September and December 1999 and March, May and June 2000.

Highlights of the first report:

- 83% rated their experience as very satisfied
- 47% were Colorado residents
- 78% have access to the Internet and 70% use the Internet for travel arrangements

The online pressroom is in the staging area for the Director's review and approval. The pressroom includes photos, press kit, press releases, travel writer fam information and quick facts.

Linda Hill presented two bronze awards from HSMIAI:

- Meeting planner direct mail (1,900 entries in the category)
- Website (competed against major cities such as San Diego)

Summer Campaign – Over the years, the creative campaign has played up the area's diversity of activities. The "Surprising Choices" tagline was very successful, but it was still difficult to distinguish Grand Junction from other Colorado locations. Focus group research results indicate that wineries are of great interest to in-state travelers and the VCB can capitalize on the fact that no other area in the state can claim the number and concentration of wineries as the Grand Valley.

The recommended summer campaign will focus on Grand Junction as "Colorado Wine Country". The goal of the winery "message" is to evoke an image that will attract a new audience with higher demographics than Grand Junction's typical visitor. Two additional website domain names have been registered: coloradowinecountry.com and coloradoswinecountry.com. In-state advertising will move into radio, increased TV exposure, continue the 16th Street Mall bus posters and place less emphasis on newspaper. Additional print options include *Colorado Homes & Lifestyles*, 5280, and a newsheet distributed in the LoDo area. The photo on the poster and the 2000 Visitor Guide cover will carry through to print ads. The creative campaign was very well received and Board members were enthusiastic and supportive of placing greater emphasis on the wine industry.

STAFF REPORTS: The VCB is coordinating the marketing efforts of a new tour product: Colorado Wine Country Tours. Seventeen partners – 8 wineries, 6 hotels, 3 transportation companies – have joined forces to offer scheduled tours of area wineries beginning in early May. Tours are scheduled every Sunday, Wednesday and Saturday from 1 – 5 pm, with pick up and return to the participating hotels. These will be guided tours, not just tastings, of 3-4 area wineries; cost will be approximately \$20 per person. Co-op partners will contribute \$500 each. The VCB will absorb \$3,500 which will include production and design (by Hill & Tashiro), printing rack cards, table tents, etc. Approximately 15,000-20,000 rack cards will be printed; distribution will include direct mail and a drop mailing in Grand Junction.

Conversion study materials are complete and questionnaires will be mailed within the next 10 days.

The Director and Chair will meet with general managers/owners of local properties (50+ rooms) March 29 to identify and discuss emerging issues.

Alan Friedman moved the meeting adjourn, Brad Higginbotham seconded; there being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.