

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
JUNE 10, 2003

PRESIDING: Alan Friedman, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Somma, Peggy Page, Lynne Sorlye, Jane Fine Foster, Jill Eckardt, Linda Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Meyer, Kevin Reimer

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Irene Carlow, Barbara Bowman, Layne Whyman, Tamara Churchman

GUESTS: Linda Hill, Anna Maria Ray, Gaylene Orr

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm.

MINUTES OF MAY 13, 2003: Jill Eckardt moved the minutes be approved as written, Linda Smith seconded. The Chair noted a correction to the minutes: Michael Somma abstained from the vote on use of Special Events funds for golf promotions. Lynne Sorlye moved the minutes be approved as corrected, Jane Fine Foster seconded, approved unanimously.

BOARD BUSINESS: The Director introduced Gaylene Orr, who is managing public relations activities for the VCB through the Hill & Co. contract. Gaylene's efforts resulted in the excellent *Denver Post* article that promoted the Spring Barrel Tasting event and she organized and managed the Denver media golf fam that just concluded.

The Director distributed a letter from Tom Norton, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Transportation, regarding the repairs on I-70 near Vail. The letter was distributed to some Colorado municipal officials; we received it from our City Manager. Not included on the distribution list was the Colorado Tourism Office nor any tourism organizations along the I-70 corridor. The Director will attend a meeting of the Club 20 Tourism and Transportation committees on June 12. Tom Norton will also be at that meeting and the Director will request a broader distribution of future communications concerning I-70.

(Peggy Page and Michael Somma arrived.)

Special Events Linda Smith reported that the Fruita Fat Tire Festival was fairly well attended, considering that the weekend before the event was the spring snowstorm that closed I-70. The bad weather had a significant affect on late entries and the number of paid participants declined for the first time in 6 years. Michael Somma stated that the Art & Jazz Festival is the best organized ever and there is an excellent line-up. The only negative comments he has heard is that

there will be no outside beer or wine sales on Main Street. Peggy Page stated that liquor sales were dropped because the cost of insurance was prohibitive.

Summer Golf Promotions Michael Somma reported that the June 8-10 media golf fan is going very well and he has received excellent feedback. Participating media outlets include the Rocky Mountain News (article will publish 6/12), the Ft. Collins Coloradoan (article week of 6/16), and two people from KOA radio. The KOA show "Sunday on the Fairway" will air June 15 and the VCB will receive a tape of the broadcast. Ads will begin running this week on 950 AM "The Fan", an all-sports radio station. This first promotion on "The Fan" is in conjunction with the US Open; others will include The International and the PGA.

2004-2005 Budget The Director distributed a budget planning report showing expenses through the end of May and identifying fixed and discretionary expense. Staff has begun working on the 2-year planning process and will present a rough estimate of the 2004-2005 budgets at the July 8 Board meeting. Lodging tax receipts are down 7.5% YTD. Vendors Fee revenue is also down as it reflects City sales and use tax receipts which are up 2% over last year but 3.5% below projections. Staff anticipates no new major programs will be implemented unless the Board wishes to change marketing direction; adding a new program will require dropping an existing one. A Budget Workshop will be held July 8 at 1:30 pm, followed by the regular monthly meeting from 3:00 – 5:00.

Council requested several possible dates to meet with the VCB Board; the Director stated that this is typically a breakfast meeting. The following dates will be forwarded to the City Manager for consideration by Council: July 31; August 6, 12, 14, 19; September 16.

HILL & COMPANY: Website The main photos on the home page now rotate between wine and golf; the Specials and Packages section has numerous golf packages listed. The meetings slide show has been launched and a link to the show is on the home page.

Other Projects Preliminary planning has begun for the 2004 Visitor Guide. Front Range focus groups will be conducted to help us determine how to better serve visitors needs with the design and layout of the Guide. The meeting planner direct mail piece is nearing completion; it includes a map showing the location of all the meetings facilities with distances and driving times between each property.

STAFF REPORTS: Promotions/Public Relations Denver radio station 100.3 (The Mix) broadcast live from Two Rivers Winery on June 3. The "Dom & Jane Show" has traveled throughout the state with a 7-member crew doing live remotes from several different towns. Grand Junction received excellent coverage from this show, including photos posted on the station's website. Upcoming promotions include "Back-to-School" in mid-July and press releases about the Winefest and peach harvest. The VCB will host a Swiss travel writer June 23-24; this lead came from Pow Wow, which staff attended in May of this year. Staff exhibited at the Manitou Springs wine festival on June 7 and will have a booth at the Lafayette wine festival June 21.

Sales The Grand Junction Pow Wow delegation met with 34 tour operators at the trade show, a decrease from previous years' estimated 70 appointments. The Colorado delegation hosted 32 tour operators at a dinner during Pow Wow.

Sales leads issued to date are at 40% of this year's goal; we were at 50% of goal this time last year. Staff and 7 of our partners made a presentation to 70 clients of Celestial Travel in Denver; hotels had to offer a package that can be booked through Celestial. Developing a relationship with Celestial Travel has the potential to open up the Denver corporate travel market. The GJ delegation also hosted a hospitality suite at the Colorado Society of Association Executives conference in Colorado Springs.

Visitor Center The exhibit remodel is nearly complete. The number of map displays has been increased in response to requests by both visitors and volunteers. The front part of the Center closest to the information desk is exclusively Grand Junction information with brochures grouped by category. Information about other parts of Colorado and Utah is toward the back of the exhibit area. Four pieces of artwork will be brought to the Center when the Art on the Corner is changed.

(Alan Friedman left the meeting.)

Travel Expo The income/expense report was distributed, showing \$13,000 in expenditures of the \$29,250 budgeted. Expenses were less than anticipated because staff was able to re-use many of the decorations and supplies from 2002. Those types of items will have to be replaced if the Expo is held again in 2004, however, and the budget will need to reflect the increased costs.

The original goal of the Expo was to promote local attractions and tourism businesses to the local community. It was extremely difficult to get local businesses to exhibit and many of those that purchased booth space did so only at the last minute. Several of the exhibits were shared booths, which decreased revenue, and the VCB provided a number of exhibit spaces at no charge. Only 10% of our local hotels had booths.

Community recognition of the VCB has increased as a result of the Expo. This event has also strengthened the VCB's leadership role with other tourism organizations in western Colorado/eastern Utah.

Staff is directed to add to the income/expense report an estimate of staff time and overtime for the Board's further evaluation of this event.

Statistics Increases in lodging tax receipts during 2002 were very unusual: double-digit percentage increases were reported for 6 different months. Comparing 2003 to 2001, receipts are up 1%. Advertising responses increased in May, reflecting later publication dates in this year's ad plan. While the number of phone calls to the toll-free line is decreasing, the average length of the calls is increasing. Potential visitors want more detailed information and staff is spending increasing amounts of time "selling" to individual leisure travelers than ever before. We continue to believe that our high level of customer service sets Grand Junction apart from most other

destinations that use automated voice response systems to handle advertising responses. Staff continues to explore additional marketing opportunities that could capitalize on consumers' short decision-making times. The \$8,900 balance in Special Events funds would be used for those opportunities, as approved at the May Board meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:52 pm.