

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU  
MINUTES OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
AUGUST 12, 2003

PRESIDING: Alan Friedman, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Somma, Lynne Sorlye, Jane Fine Foster, Jill Eckardt, Linda Smith, Kay Berry

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kevin Reimer, Peggy Page, Steve Meyer

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

GUESTS: Anna Maria Ray

The meeting was called to order at 3:02 pm.

The Director introduced and welcomed Kay Berry, the Chamber of Commerce Board representative to the VCB.

MINUTES OF JULY 8, 2003: Linda Smith moved the minutes be approved as written, Lynne Sorlye seconded, approved unanimously.

BOARD BUSINESS: Special Events The Renaissance Faire did submit their paperwork by the deadline set by the Board at the July meeting. Staff discussed some of the challenges event organizers face in securing appropriately-worded certificates of insurance that meet the requirements of the Special Events funding Agreement. Staff was directed to work with the City Attorney to develop a checklist of requirements and, possibly, a sample certificate of insurance properly completed. Those documents could be included with the application packets.

Colorado Mountain Winefest: 27 wineries will be represented at this year's festival. Enhancements for this year include more high-quality food vendors; expanding the space to ½ of Main street on the east side of the park; decreasing the number of artisan vendors; prohibiting blankets/coolers so the audience in front of the stage doesn't take up so much space. Winemakers' dinners are sold out and the Friday seminar has 3 times as many registrants as the Sunday seminar. The Tour of the Vineyards bike ride has 272 registrants versus 127 at the same time last year.

The Mesa State College Rodeo will not be held this year. The Kokopelli Adventure Race has fewer teams registered than at this time last year, but organizers remain optimistic about the success of this year's event.

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) solicited comments on proposed changes to the tourism direction signs on I-70. CDOT's recommendations will be forwarded to the legislature for consideration in the 2004 session. Signage location is determined by the population that is accessible from a particular interchange; signs can be located at the Clifton and Redlands Parkway exits, but not at Horizon Drive.

The City's Gateway Beautification Committee has made very good progress in its discussion of how to improve the entryways to the city. The committee will meet with an architect later in August to consider site plans. Any decisions the committee makes will still be dependent upon CDOT's plans for individual interchanges. Additionally, the Horizon Drive Association has met with Council regarding improvements to the Horizon Drive interchange.

HILL & CO.: Planning for the 2004 Visitor Guide began with focus groups that were conducted in Denver on July 10; one group had previously visited Grand Junction, one had not. Each session started with a discussion of individuals' travel habits, especially how they plan a trip. In-state travel planning ranged from 1-5 days and all participants reported that the Internet is their main source of information. A variety of visitor guides from other areas were presented to the groups to critique. The most important elements were:

- Photography
- Larger format (better for photos)
- Good flow of information, well-organized
- Calendar of events
- Maps
- No advertising
- Overview of the community/area
- Directory-type listings of lodging/attractions/activities
- Table of contents

The Grand Junction Visitor Guide was introduced last. Several people thought it was about wineries only and would (or would not) pick it up for that single reason. The groups felt that the information was not well-organized and that the wineries were over-emphasized with not enough information on other activities. Those who had visited suggested that the Monument and the Mesa should be more prominent. More information on children's activities would also be helpful.

Hill & Co. and VCB staff have discussed the focus group results and recommend a complete redesign for the 2004 Official Grand Junction Visitor Guide. Those recommendations include:

- Go to a larger size format (but not full magazine size)
- Include more photography
- Shift the focus of the cover to avoid the misperception that the brochure is wineries only
- Re-write the copy to describe the area and its diverse activities
- Change to directory listings by category in the back of the Guide

Currently, every attraction/activity has its own write-up, ending with address, phone, etc. This lay-out was very confusing to readers and contributed to the sense of disorganization and lack of flow. Consolidating lodging and attractions into a directory format could help visitors find the detailed information they want much quicker than reading through the Guide.

Hill & Co. and the VCB staff had a lengthy discussion about the distribution of the Guides, particularly the contracted distribution service throughout Colorado and parts of Utah. The service has racks in hotel lobbies, at attractions, restaurants, and other high-traffic locations. Approximately one-half of the total quantity printed each year (100,000) is distributed in this manner. The difficulty with this method is that there is no ability to track the effectiveness of either the brochure or the service itself. Staff would like to concentrate on our most valuable customers: those who call the VCB, visit the website and stop in the Visitor Center. Staff recommends we develop a stronger image for the Visitor Guide, decrease the quantity of brochures printed, and discontinue the rack distribution. The Visitor Guide would still be distributed to Colorado Welcome Centers, AAA offices and visitor centers/Chambers of Commerce in Colorado. Possible future rack distributions could change to a less expensive rack card with a specific offer that would be trackable.

Advertising strategies for 2004 will be redirected to adapt to consumers' shorter planning and decision-making times. Additional planning for 2004 includes ads that are more directed at specific packages and specials, not just imaging. More focus will also be placed on website development and enhancement.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter ADR/Occupancy study reflects a \$3 increase in ADR; occupancy, however, declined 11% versus the same period in 2002.

**OTHER BOARD BUSINESS:** Norm Christianson, of the Grand Valley Winery Association (GVWA), submitted a request for (1) a designated area in the Visitor Center for the GVWA; (2) VCB involvement in GVWA-sponsored events; (3) permission to use the VCB's "Colorado's Wine Country" logo.

The Chair said that items #1 and #3 would need a great deal of discussion of possible guidelines and policies that would be equitable to all future requests, particularly with regard to use of the "Colorado's Wine Country" logo. The VCB has invested a great deal the past 5 years in establishing that "brand" and the Board would want to fully consider the ramifications of allowing use by another entity. Jill Eckardt suggested creating a task force to develop guidelines and policies to address items #1 and #3. In the short term, the VCB might welcome display items provided by the GVWA for potential use in the Visitor Center as part of the rotating exhibits. Regarding item #2, the VCB was very supportive of the GVWA's First Annual Spring Barrel Tasting. If the association applies for Special Events funds, that application would be reviewed as part of the annual process.

The Chair, Vice Chair and Director will schedule a meeting with representatives of the GVWA on Monday, August 18, as requested in the association's letter dated August 6. The Chair and Director will follow up with a written summary of the meeting.

Proponents of a whitewater park on the Colorado River east of Palisade have asked the VCB for a letter of support for the project. Over the years, the Board has written letters in support of a variety of projects that would potentially enhance a visitor's experience and the tourism industry

in Mesa County. Jill Eckardt moved a letter of support be written, Michael Somma seconded, passed unanimously.

STAFF REPORTS: YTD lodging tax collections are down 7.3%; July receipts, representing June business, were down 17.6%. The Director presented staff's proposed budget and 10-year financial plan. Staff recommends the following revisions to the budget that was presented at the July meeting :

Decrease Supplemental Marketing by \$5,000

Decrease the Travel Expo by \$4,950 for a budget amount of \$25,000

Staff requested further direction on whether to begin planning for the 2004 Expo. The original intent of the event was to provide a forum for local businesses to promote their products; however, there was little participation by local tourism businesses. Approximately 1,000 hours of staff time was spent on the 2003 Expo, which was time that was not spent on convention servicing, sales efforts and the Visitor Center. One possibility is to hold the Expo every-other-year so that the event doesn't get "stale" in the mind of attendees. Staff recommends keeping the \$25,000 in the budget but not earmarking it specifically for the Expo. This amount would be utilized for special, short-term package promotions.

Michael Somma moved that the Western Colorado Travel Expo not be held in 2004 and that possible future dates be reconsidered next year; Jill Eckardt seconded, passed unanimously.

Jill Eckardt moved that the newly-revised budget be approved as presented, Lynne Sorlye seconded, passed unanimously.

Website/Research: Focus group participants made it very clear that they use the Internet as their main information source; that trend was reinforced as well as in educational sessions at the International Association of Convention & Visitor Bureau's annual conference. As the VCB continues to invest in website upgrades and enhancements, it is important that we "test" our website much as we did the Visitor Guide with the focus groups. Staff would like to contract with an independent firm to conduct an audit of our website and provide a report on ease of navigation, usefulness of information, presentation, design, etc. The auditors' recommendations would form the basis for future redesign, upgrades and enhancements. The cost would be in the range of \$7,500 - \$9,000. Michael Somma moved that the VCB contract with an independent firm to conduct an audit of the website, Linda Smith seconded; passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS: On behalf of the Rocky Mountain Association of Vintners & Viticulturists, Amy Nuernberg presented the Board with framed Winefest posters for 2003 and 2002. The RMAVV appreciates the VCB's support of the Winefest, through Special Events funding and assistance in numerous other ways, in making the event so successful. The RMAVV looks forward to seeing Board members and staff at this year's Winefest September 20.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:07 pm.