

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU  
MINUTES OF THE  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

January 14, 2003

PRESIDING: Alan Friedman, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Linda Smith, Jane Fine Foster, Michael Somma, Jill Eckardt, Kevin Reimer, Lynn Sorlye, Steve Meyer, Peggy Page

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Irene Carlow, Layne Whyman, Barbara Bowman, Kayla Arnesen, Erin Chapman, Jeannie Hodge, Vivian Brodine

GUESTS: Doris McElhinney, Lawrence Capps, Anna Maria Ray

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

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 10, 2002: Jill Eckardt moved the minutes be approved as written, Jane Fine Foster seconded, approved unanimously.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION: Vivian Brodine introduced Doris McElhinney and Lawrence Capps, both of whom have given 1,000 hours of their time to the Visitor Center. The Chair thanked Doris and Lawrence for their contributions to the community, noting that the Visitor Center could not operate without the dedicated staff of volunteers we are so fortunate to have.

HOSTS REMARKS: Lynn Sorlye welcomed the Board to the Holiday Inn and gave a brief history of the property. The Holiday Inn opened in 1966 with 100 rooms; it is now Grand Junction's largest hotel with 292 rooms. In the past 4 years, \$6 million has been invested in renovations; 250 of the 292 rooms have been completed so far.

BOARD BUSINESS: The Chair reviewed some of the major accomplishments of 2002 (TIA Odyssey Award; hosting the Governor's Conference; the Travel Expo; significant increase in lodging tax revenues). Challenges in the coming year that will impact the entire travel industry include airlines' continued financial difficulties and the possibility of war in Iraq. Grand Junction is well positioned as a regional travel destination and modest gains in lodging tax collections are projected for 2003. The Chair is optimistic that the efforts of the Board, staff and Hill & Company will result in continued successes for the VCB and the community.

Walker Field Air Service: Kevin Reimer presented a brief history of the community's efforts to improve air service, including 10+ years of research. He asked the Board to consider appointing a committee to hold discussions on how air service might be improved and how to strengthen communication between the VCB, the Airport Authority and the business community. It was suggested that this topic be discussed in more depth at the annual retreat.

Steve Meyer stated that the Chamber had been very involved in previous efforts, but the community has not been inclined to subsidize air service as Montrose and Eagle do. The Chair asked if Skywest might be encouraged to code share with other airlines? Jill Eckardt suggested the VCB take the initiative to market Walker Field, perhaps by putting a route map and airline schedules on the VCB website. It was also asked if there were some way the VCB could have a presence at the airport and distribute the Visitor Guide there. The Director explained that Walker Field contracts with a private vendor to manage advertising space at the airport. The terms of the vendor's agreement prevents the VCB from displaying any photos that include the names of attractions or companies unless the VCB pays the normal advertising rate. The Director will talk with the airport manager to determine what options might be available in the future.

Lynn Sorlye stated that, 10 years ago, thousands of room nights per year were sold to visitors who came to Grand Junction as the gateway for raft trips. Those visitors are now going into the Salt Lake City airport. Steve Meyer said that airlines will increase flights if there is demand. Grand Junction residents make their own decision whether to fly or drive to Denver.

Kevin Reimer moved that the Board appoint a committee to work with the Walker Field Airport Authority to support increased and improved air service to Grand Junction; Michael Somma seconded, passed unanimously. Kevin Reimer, Linda Smith and Michael Somma responded to the Chair's request for volunteers to serve on that committee. Michael Somma nominated Kevin Reimer, Linda Smith seconded; approved unanimously. Kevin Reimer nominated Michael Somma, Linda Smith seconded, approved unanimously.

Board Retreat: The Chair stated that the top three priorities identified at the 2002 retreat were: (1) increase economic impact; (2) communication; (3) packaging and positioning. Members will be asked to identify and prioritize retreat discussion topics. There followed a discussion of whether to hold a one-day retreat at a local location versus a 2-day session out of town. Possible locations for an overnight include Glenwood Springs, Moab, Montrose and Keystone. The Chair moved that a one-day retreat be held in Grand Junction, Linda Smith seconded; motion defeated.

Steve Meyer moved that a two-day retreat be held in an out-of-town location, Lynn Sorlye seconded, passed unanimously. Staff is directed to prepare a list of possible locations and obtain quotes to be presented at the February Board meeting. The dates of the retreat are April 3-4; anticipated departure from Grand Junction would be mid-day April 3, returning late afternoon April 4. Michael Somma moved and Jane Fine Foster seconded that the regular monthly meeting for April 2003 be canceled; passed unanimously.

Both the Director and Director of Sales will be in Albuquerque the week of February 9 attending the Go West Summit where they will have appointments with domestic and international tour operators. In view of that travel schedule, the consensus of the Board is to re-schedule the regular monthly meeting from February 11 to February 18.

HILL & COMPANY: Anna Maria Ray displayed artwork that will appear on two I-70 billboards near Dumont. The billboard contract, which runs from February through June, is for 2 locations, one east-facing and one west-facing.

The Winery Intercept Study final report was distributed. The survey was conducted at eight wineries during the period June – October 2002. The study confirms that Colorado residents are Grand Junction's customers. A large percentage of those surveyed knew of "Colorado's Wine Country" before they visited and a very high rate planned to return at a future date. Of those surveyed, 55% planned to visit the wineries before their trip and 60% had previously tasted Colorado wines. (Colorado Wine Industry Development Board research of Front Range consumers indicated that just 38% had tasted Colorado wines.)

A slideshow has been added to the VCB website. The photography highlights Wine Country as well as the variety of activities in the Grand Valley.

STAFF REPORTS: Kayla Arnesen stated that the Holiday Shopping promotion was very successful. Seven of 12 participating properties report selling 645 room nights this year versus 609 room nights for all properties last year. A new regional campaign begins January 15 and runs through February 28. Twelve hotels have signed up for the "Wine and Dine Your Valentine" promotion which will utilize print and radio and will also be on the Specials and Packages section of the website.

Barbara Bowman led a discussion of the Group Sales reporting process and how sales lead information is handled and distributed. Staff surveyed six other CVB's reporting standards and found that the GJVCB exceeds all of those surveyed. The monthly report presents cumulative information for the current year as well as some historical information regarding the sales lead conversion rate for the previous 5 years. Few bureaus report the conversion rate. In 2002, 92 sales leads were issued. In comparison, 45 leads were issued by the Ft. Collins bureau, which has 2 full-time sales people. The Bloomington, Minnesota bureau, with 6 sales people, issues 100 leads per month.

Working with the group market requires staff to balance the needs of potential clients and our constituents. Staff's first priority is to determine a client's needs and then to proceed appropriately. Clients want:

- One contact
- Confidentiality
- Timely response

Our constituents want:

- A lead distribution system that is fair
- Confidentiality of their own clients' names
- To be able to provide additional VCB convention services to clients

An important component of the VCB's credibility with both our client base and our constituents is honoring each party's request of confidentiality.

Linda Smith moved that the Board adopt the policy that sales lead/client information discussed at a Board meeting is confidential and not to be used in any other forum; and that the Board establish an administrative policy in relationship to sales lead information maintained in the VCB office, whether electronic or paper, be kept confidential in respect of a client's wishes. Peggy Page seconded.

Discussion: Jill Eckardt asked if the proposed policies are in line with industry standards and if professional associations the VCB holds membership in generally have a "best practices" statement? The Director responded that the proposal is in line with industry standards. The VCB holds membership in numerous industry organizations, but information provided by the organization may not be disseminated to non-members. Additionally, our membership in the Denver Metro CVB does not entitle us to receive Denver's sales lead information.

Michael Somma asked if the number of sales leads are dropping? Leads are declining not just in Grand Junction, but throughout Colorado. The length of time between initial contact with a meeting planner and the decision/booking date has shortened dramatically, resulting in fewer leads being issued. In the future, group sales will place more emphasis on convention services; increasing the length of stay; increasing additional income from groups. Michael also asked if some of the Special Events funds not awarded could be used as incentives to groups? The consensus of the Board is to add this topic to the retreat agenda.

The Chair called for a vote on the motion; passed unanimously.

Travel Expo: Layne Whyman reported that the hospitality training will change from classroom style to a "passport" that will encourage participants to go to exhibitors' booths to learn about their product/activity. The passport would be stamped at each booth and the passport holder would be entered in a prize drawing. All the Expo information is on our website and exhibitors can register online. The goal for this year is 75 exhibitors.

OTHER BUSINESS: On January 10, seven of the 12 local wineries met and agreed to form a cooperative association to look at marketing and quality standards. The group will incorporate and plans to sponsor a new event that the association would own. This event would possibly be in April ("Blossoms and Barreltasting"). Each winery would have an event at their facility. The Director informed the group that the VCB has \$5,000 budgeted for wine promotions in 2003. Special Events funds not awarded are often used to promote other events during the year and the VCB would consider this new event as part of a general event promotion.

The Director also informed the Board of ongoing discussions between the Bureau of Land Management and multi-user groups regarding uses that will be allowed on land in the 18 Road area. Mountain bike enthusiasts and bike groups want to prohibit motorized vehicles in that area. The VCB has received numerous emails asking that the 18 Road area be restricted to mountain bike use only. We have not responded to any of this correspondence because other interest groups have posted the VCB's website email address, along with many other agencies' addresses, as a general response comment area. The BLM is the lead agency for developing the public use

access and all these comments and all this correspondence is also going directly to the BLM. The Board directed staff to continue filing copies of this correspondence, but not to respond.

The Tourism Industry Association of Colorado's annual Legislative Reception will be Monday, January 20 at the Adam's Mark-Denver. Board members interested in attending should contact the Director.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 pm on motion of Linda Smith and second of Jill Eckardt.