

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
MARCH 11, 2003

PRESIDING: Linda Smith, Vice Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Fine Foster, Michael Somma, Jill Eckardt, Steve Meyer

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kevin Reimer, Alan Friedman, Lynne Sorlye

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Irene Carlow, Erin Chapman

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

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 18, 2003: Michael Somma moved the minutes be approved as written, Jill Eckardt seconded; approved unanimously.

BOARD BUSINESS: Chamber of Commerce Events Center Study: The Director updated the Board on the interviews being conducted by Convention, Sports & Leisure (CSL). On March 4, VCB representatives Alan Friedman, Kevin Reimer, the Director and Barb Bowman met with CSL. This is the same firm that did the Two Rivers Convention Center expansion study, so they are familiar with the Grand Junction market. Alan Friedman discussed the Board's concern about the potential funding mechanism of a 2% lodging tax increase. Grand Junction's total room tax is currently ranked #12 out of 40 cities surveyed by the Colorado Hotel Lodging Association. A 2% increase would move the city up to #5, with only Denver, Pueblo, Aspen and Vail being higher. CSL's discussion centered on the importance that the *community* decide what the proposed facility would be. It is better to accommodate 3-4 things well, rather than try to meet the needs of a wide range of activities and handle them poorly. The report, which is due in mid-April, will discuss possible impacts on existing facilities as well as the percentage of traveling acts that might book Grand Junction before/after a Denver or Salt Lake City performance.

Board Retreat: AMTRAK will provide complimentary transportation and lunch for the April 3 trip to Glenwood Springs; a representative of Skywest Airlines will also join the group for an in-depth discussion of transportation issues. Representatives of regional tourism partners (Glenwood Springs, Vail, Breckenridge, Aspen/Snowmass) have been invited to a reception and dinner discussion focusing on regional issues and potential cooperative efforts.

HILL & COMPANY: Files have been received from Map Network; VCB navigation needs to be added and the site should launch soon. Other current projects include adding a slide show to target the group market and upgrading the "For Clients Only" part of the Hill & Company site, which will give the Board access to the ADR/Occupancy Study, Marketing Plan and creative. A retreat agenda item is an in-depth discussion of the new website reporting/tracking system and how to refine the information that is gathered.

STAFF REPORTS: Because of the Promotions Coordinator vacancy, Hill & Company will contract with an outside firm to handle public relations efforts for the VCB for the next few months. The promotions aspect of the position is taking more time than anticipated and efforts to develop travel writer leads have been minimal. A writer for a UK newspaper will be in Grand Junction March 13-14; British Airways provided airfare to Denver and AMTRAK provided transportation from Denver-Glenwood Springs.

Spring Barrel Tasting Event: Staff continues to work with the Grand Valley Winery Association on promoting this event, scheduled for May 3-4. A brochure is in process and Hill & Company is designing a website; hotel packages will be listed on the VCB site. The VCB is assisting with marketing efforts and public relations; an email will be sent to our website database.

Statistics: Lodging tax receipts through the end of February declined 1% from 2002. Visitor Center numbers for 2002 were skewed by the Olympic Torch Relay activities. We have more paid advertising this year than last and we anticipate that both inquiries and advertising responses will increase.

Travel Expo: We are on track to reach our goal of 59 exhibitors for this year's event. Staff met with the Daily Sentinel to discuss the special section that will be produced again this year. Local advertising (TV/radio/print) will begin in mid-April.

HOST REMARKS: David Bailey, Curator of History for the Museum, discussed the improvements and changes being made to the facility. An additional 2,000 sq ft of exhibit space is planned over the next two years. A deceleration lane is being installed on Ute Avenue; parking lot improvements are being made and better lighting will be installed.

New exhibits include an aviation history of Grand Junction; visitors can have a virtual reality experience in an airplane – including starting the engine and a 4-minute flight around the Grand Valley. A natural history section is also being created. "The Trial of Alferd Packer" will be staged at the Cabaret Theatre on September 6; this fundraising vehicle has been very successful on the Front Range. The Museum is engaging in more educational outreach; the most recent "lunch with Dave Fishell" session drew 160 people. Dinosaur Journey is undergoing major renovations. Cross Orchards will host the 2003 Celtic Festival in September and the Wild West Festival is scheduled for June 14. The Grand River Indian Artists Gathering may be revived in 2004. Some out-of-country trips are being planned, with the first offering in 2004 to the Inca ruins of Machu Pichu.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm on motion of Jill Eckardt and second of Jane Fine-Foster.