

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
NOVEMBER 9, 2004

PRESIDING: Linda Smith, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lynne Sorlye, Kevin Reimer, Jane Fine Foster, Steve Meyer, Jill Eckardt, Alan Friedman

MEMBERS ABSENT: Peggy Page

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Irene Carlow, Erin Chapman, Layne Whyman, Tamara Vliek, Sarah Allen

GUESTS: Linda Hill, Anna Maria Arizzi, John Pankey, Aleta Davey

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 pm.

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 12, 2004: Jane Fine Foster moved the minutes be approved as written, Lynne Sorlye seconded, passed unanimously.

HILL & CO.: The build-out phase of the website is complete; copy uploading will begin soon. The 3rd quarter ADR/Occupancy study was distributed. Occupancy increased each month but the rate was essentially flat. Overall, 2004 rates are consistent with 2003 with the exception of April, which saw a substantial increase of \$5. The Director reported that lodging tax collections YTD are up 1.3% vs a projected 4%, and estimates that business lost to Fruita properties represents approximately 2% of the budget shortfall. Linda Hill agreed that Grand Junction business is being displaced to Fruita and Parachute. Attrition is expected to occur in off-the-street business with the addition of two new Horizon Drive properties in 2005, but continued strong destination marketing can position Grand Junction to overcome that.

Linda Hill discussed results of the October lodging property focus group, in which 8 properties participated. The purpose of the session was to collect feedback regarding challenges; opportunities; market and market segment changes; VCB programs; new ideas for 2006-2007. Challenges included increased competition from surrounding cities improvements in directions/signage/gateway and hotel-overbuilt market resulting in lower ADR. Opportunities included medical services, Mesa State College, entertainment (film/concerts). Some of the trends identified were: increases in Front Range and repeat business; wine events are strong; Farmers' Market creates potential; better image attracts more group business. Other feedback included: continue the ADR/Occupancy Study (try to increase participation); events and promotions are key to enticing visitors. VCB materials, both print and electronic, received very positive comments.

A suggestion was made to change the "Colorado's Wine Country" branding to "Canyonlands". Comments during the discussion pointed out that Canyonlands carries a strong connotation of

Utah and could be a very confusing message to consumers. Participants prefer that hospitality training be conducted on-property. The Visitor Center is a valuable resource and several properties send guests to the Center for email access.

A focus session of meeting planners will be conducted in Denver December 9.

PROMOTIONS: Tamara Vlieg reported that the wine train was very successful; surveys have been sent to participants. A total of 55 packages were sold; the event was not promoted to local residents. The Denver Post/Amtrak ads have resulted in nine bookings (18 room nights) thus far. Holiday Shopping ads began November 9; 15 properties are offering special rates through December 30.

Alan Friedman asked what is being done in the website re-design to improve search engine rankings. The site will be better "sectioned" to our target audiences, with copy and keywords better tailored to each section. More pages will be submitted to search engines. Links to our site have a greater affect in the rankings than links out from our site. Staff is developing a log of reciprocal links and a mechanism to verify, on a quarterly basis, that those links are in place.

SPECIAL EVENTS: The Board met in workshop session immediately before this meeting to review and discuss applications for 2005 funding. Discussion topics included the history, fundamentals and criteria of the Policy. Four events (Peach Festival, Fruita Fall Festival, Mesa State Welcome Week, Mesa State Homecoming) did not meet the criteria of demonstrating matching fundraising from other sources, and two other events (Art Center special exhibition and United Way Taste of the Grand Valley) were not recommended for funding.

Alan Friedman moved that the following funding awards be recommended to Council:

- \$2,000 Fruita Fat Tire Festival (contingent upon matching funds from City of Fruita)
- \$3,000 Colorado Mountain Winefest (for advertising in new markets; printed materials must include Tour of the Vineyards)
- \$3,000 Grand Valley Bicycle Classic (must provide documentation of matching funds by February 1, 2005)
- \$2,000 Art & Jazz Festival
- \$2,000 Air Show
- \$3,000 Downtown Car Show (VCB will place ads)

Jane Fine Foster seconded, passed unanimously.

BOARD BUSINESS: Next year is the final year of the current Hill & Co. advertising contract. A Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposals will be issued probably in April with agency presentations in August.

Alan Friedman moved, Lynne Sorlye seconded, that the advertising contract with Hill & Company Integrated Marketing and Advertising be renewed for the period January 1, 2005 – December 31, 2005; passed unanimously.

Election of 2005 officers will take place during the December 14 Board meeting.

STAFF REPORTS: The Director reported that the wine train, while very successful, requires a great deal of staff effort to ensure a quality product. The Director and Barb Bowman rode on the train and other staff were involved in numerous details. Considering the VCB resources dedicated to this event, three times per year is the optimum number for the wine train.

VISITOR CENTER & CONVENTION SERVICING: Layne Whyman reported that we have several new volunteers and this is a good time of year for training.

The Gold Wing Touring Association has the 2005 Grand Junction event information on their website. The group will meet in Arkansas in 2006 and are discussing a possible return to Grand Junction in 2007. The Horse Expo event met its goals for this first year and will return in 2005.

OTHER BUSINESS: No Board members are available to join the Chamber event center trip to Loveland November 12-13.

Staff requested direction on whether to sponsor a website seminar for local tourism partners. The consensus of the Board is that a website seminar is not within the parameters of the VCB's tourism promotion.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 pm on motion of Kevin Reimer and second of Jill Eckardt.