

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
AUGUST 10, 2004

PRESIDING: Linda Smith Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Somma, Lynne Sorlye, Jane Fine Foster, Jill Eckardt, Steve Meyer, Alan Friedman

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kevin Reimer, Peggy Page

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Irene Carlow, Layne Whyman, Tamara Vliek, Vivian Brodine, Sarah Allen

GUESTS: Mary Campbell, Lynn Campbell, Linda Hill, Bruce Hill, Cheryl Trent, Heather Ahuero

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 pm.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION: The Chair recognized Mary and Lynn Campbell for attaining the milestone 1,000 hours of volunteer service at the Visitor Center.

HOST REMARKS: Rick and John Gibson welcomed the Board to Empire Theater's new facility, which they purchased in March of this year. While operating at their previous location on Horizon Drive, the Gibsons listened closely to customers' comments, particularly with regard to seating. Theater capacity is 240 but the owners choose to limit audiences to 90 so that guests can be seated at tables of 2 or in larger groups. Family-oriented performances are at 2:00 pm on Saturdays, with admission of \$5 - \$7. Theater classes are taught by degreed professionals. Main stage productions are Thursday – Sunday; show-only tickets are \$15-\$17. Tickets for the show and dinner, catered by DMT Catering, are \$28-\$32. Private shows can be arranged for groups and the facility is available for rent as an alternative meeting venue.

MINUTES OF JULY 13, 2003: Jane Fine Foster moved the minutes be approved as written, Lynne Sorlye seconded, approved unanimously.

BOARD BUSINESS: Special Events **Tour of the Vineyards** – Funds have been disbursed. **Colorado Mountain Winefest** – Awaiting City Manager's signature, then funds will be disbursed. The most recent lodging survey indicates nearly 70% occupancy. The VCB will again offer a coupon for \$10 in gas for those visitors who will postpone their trip until the weekend following Winefest. **Downtown Car Show** – Funds are being disbursed this week. **Kokopelli Adventure Race** – Registrations are coming in slowly, but the organizers expect to have 25 teams. **Rim Rock Run**- The insurance company has not yet corrected the wording on the liability

policy. **Holiday Wine & Food Pairing** – Organizers have not yet contacted the Board liaison or staff.

Funding Policy Updates: The Workshop discussion last month suggested simplifying the application and funding process. A consensus was reached that amounts of \$3,000 or less be in the form of a grant, which will not involve the current insurance requirements. The Board can require that recipients report specific information (e.g., number of room nights sold) at the conclusion of the event. Funds awarded in excess of \$3,000 would remain as a VCB sponsorship and the existing Agreement and insurance requirements would apply. The City Attorney advised staff that the Special Event Policy is written broadly enough to accommodate these funding changes; this is not a substantive change that requires Council approval. The Board would like to schedule a meeting with Council in the next 3-6 months to discuss the future of Special Event funding.

Staff is experimenting with a new survey tool that may result in more accurate information about event attendees. Hand-held units similar to Palm Pilots will be pre-loaded with survey questions and software to tabulate and track responses. Surveyors with these units can circulate among an event and get responses from a high number of attendees. The information we are most interested in includes: zip code; if they are staying overnight, how many nights; are they staying in a hotel or with friends/family. The data is then downloaded to a PC and the results are tabulated. The Board may want to consider requiring funded events to use these units and survey a specific number/percentage of participants. The information gathered could provide an accurate picture of out of town participation and economic impact. The VCB could consider conducting these surveys for non-funded events as well. Lynne Sorlye suggested asking the hotels to do zip code reports for event weekends. Hill & Co. has used this method for two years for Vail Resorts to conduct on-mountain surveys. Throughout the state there is a need for these intercept studies that provide quick results. Lengthy surveys are also possible with these Palm Pilots and the scope is nearly unlimited.

The consensus of the Board is to continue Special Events funding for 2005 and to re-examine all the Special Events mechanisms, including return on investment, during the coming year.

HILL & CO.: Results of the 2nd quarter ADR/Occupancy study were presented. The average rate was up \$5 in April, decreased slightly in May and was even in June. Occupancy posted gains in April and June with a decline in May.

Website: The Board selected the red/gold color concept of the two color schemes presented. Work has already begun on the design concept that was selected at the July meeting.

The decline in website traffic is attributed to low ranking on two of the main search engines. The VCB still ranks in the top 5 on Google and AOL, but has dropped to 40 or lower on Yahoo and MSN. Hill & Co. recommends purchasing keywords on Overture, which fuels the search engines for both Yahoo and MSN. This would be a pay-per-click buy; the agency recommends purchasing the #3 or #4 position because the first two positions are usually a bidding war with

large entities such as Expedia and Travelocity. Purchasing Colorado IP addresses from Google is also being explored.

The Director related information received through PRACO, the agency for the Colorado Tourism Office. Many people believe we are in the transition from free search engine placement to pay for placement. This is because the web has reached critical mass and search engines are a necessity to search through the immense quantity of information available. The people who developed search engine technologies are now in a position to reap (potentially huge) profits from their technology that has been virtually free. Search engine advertising has the potential to be as important as other media such as TV or radio. (At the July IACVB Convention, the Director learned that the Las Vegas CVB currently spends \$80,000 per month to buy keywords, phrases, and adjacent ads; San Diego spends approximately \$60,000 per year.) Staff and Hill & Co. will continue to research options and opportunities to increase our ranking on search engines.

STAFF REPORTS: Barb Bowman is attending her last Executive Committee meeting as a member of the National Tour Association Board; her term ends in November at the Annual Convention. As a result of Barb's service on the NTA Board, Grand Junction was invited to submit a bid for the September 2005 NTA Board meeting. That bid was accepted and we will host 30 tour professionals at that meeting, 25 of whom are significant tour company operators.

Sales: Invitations to the Denver sales reception were mailed August 4 and RSVPs have already started coming in. Attendance is expected to be 100 – 125.

Layne Whyman attended the Gold Wing Gold Rush annual convention in Baraboo, Wisconsin to promote attendance at next year's convention in Grand Junction. Reservations are already coming in to the Holiday Inn, which offered an incentive for early booking.

Promotions: Tamara Vliek and Chef Wayne Smith of UTEC were in Denver August 2-3 for the VCB's annual peach media promotion. Chef Smith performed cooking demonstrations on Channel 9, Channel 7 and WB2. Peaches were shipped to major media outlets in Denver, Colorado Springs and Salt Lake City; ads promoting the Palisade Peach Festival were placed in the Denver Post and will run through August 15. The Back to School promotion is running in 7 regional papers through August 19. Dates of the fall wine train will be announced and tickets will go on sale September 8. The VCB is again partnering with CD104.3 for promotions and RMA Tours will sell the packages.

OTHER BUSINESS: The 1997 economic impact study is being updated. Tucker Hart Adams spent a day in Grand Junction conducting interviews of key individuals, and the intercept surveys are going well.

Tim Foster, President of Mesa State College, would like to attend the September meeting to update the Board on the College's activities and long term plans. Steve Meyer will confirm the date, time and location with Tim.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:10 pm.