

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
MARCH 8, 2005

PRESIDING: Jane Fine Foster, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kevin Reimer, Jill Eckardt, Lynne Sorlye, Brunella Gualerzi, Eric Feely, Steve Bailey

MEMBERS ABSENT: Steve Meyer, Linda Smith

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

GUESTS: Anna Maria Arizzi, Charlie Novinskie

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

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 8, 2005: Jill Eckardt moved the minutes be approved as written, Lynne Sorlye seconded; approved unanimously.

BOARD BUSINESS: The Sales Tax Analysis Report (1991-2004) was discussed. Brunella Gualerzi noted that, while the downtown area represents a very small percentage overall, per capita revenues increased more than the rest of the City during the last three years.

Special Events: The Chair reported that the Special Events Committee (Jill Eckardt, Kevin Reimer and the Chair) has discussed the process and offers potential recommendations for consideration and further discussion at the annual retreat.

1. Awards of \$3,000 or less be in the form of a grant with no requirement for the City to be a named insured, etc. (This would be a continuation of the type of awards made for 2005.)
2. Awards over \$3,000 in the form of a grant for defined projects, e.g., for signature events.
3. Applicants select from a menu of options/marketing opportunities; funds would be spent by the VCB on behalf of an event. Staff would prepare a list of options such as billboards, direct mail, direct advertising, and listings on colorado.com, etc. An estimated cost would be assigned to each option.

Requests for funding would remain as an application process. Events could apply either of two ways:

1. Events would apply and the Board would decide where they fit/what type of funding to award.
2. Events could apply specifically under item #3. This may be a good avenue for a fledgling event in which organizers need marketing expertise; funds may be assigned to piggy-back (or add to) planned VCB ad buys.

The Board could also consider assigning a percentage of the Special Events budget to specific funding awards and hold a percentage in reserve to include in scheduled advertising. The Committee will continue to explore options if the Board agrees with this direction. The consensus of the Board is for the committee to continue along the same lines and to bring an additional report and recommendations to the retreat.

The Director made the Board aware that the Visitor Guide policy may need to be reviewed before production of the 2006 edition. Staff may request a review of what businesses can be included in the Visitor Guide under "Wineries" to better define wine-related attractions, e.g., winery; tasting room; retail liquor store that offers tastings. A clearer definition could also be applicable in the future to breweries, distilleries and other similar operations that locate in Mesa County.

The Director reported that Glenwood Springs and many other cities served by Amtrak have written letters to their Congressional delegation in support of continued funding of Amtrak, which was not included in the budget presented by the Administration. Amtrak service has afforded Grand Junction a real marketing opportunity in the Front Range; additionally, rail service is one of the major transportation choices of international travelers. The Director asked if the Board would want to send a letter in support of continued federal funding for Amtrak. Discussion items included: Should Amtrak be subsidized; total rail passenger numbers are probably much less than total air passengers at DIA; European governments subsidize rail service, but with substantially higher ridership. No action was taken by the Board. Staff is directed to obtain details regarding funding, passenger numbers and expenses to present to the Board at a future date.

Ride the Rockies: The Denver Post Charities gives back to host communities along the route by donating to local non-profit organizations. Layne Whyman reported that the local RTR committee reviewed over 100 non-profits in the area and identified eight that meet the funding criteria of the Denver Post Charities. Those eight non-profits were asked to submit a grant application to the Denver Post Charities for funding consideration.

Hotels are already taking reservations and over 40 potential volunteers have contacted the VCB. The Director, Barb Bowman and Layne Whyman will attend the Downtown Association meeting to discuss opportunities for events to be held downtown. Planning for the Monument Loop Ride is going very well; the Monument Superintendent has been very cooperative and supportive. Current plans are for riders to exit at the West Entrance of the Monument with some type of activity at the Colorado Welcome Center in Fruita.

PROMOTIONS: Tamara Vliek reported continued strong interest in the Spring Blossoms Wine Train; tickets went on Sale March 1. The Denver Golf Expo February 11-13 was very successful with over 10,000 in attendance. We captured 1,100 email addresses for our database. Denver sports radio station The Fan AM950 will do a live remote from Tiara Rado April 30-May 1. The new website is expected to launch the week of March 14. The new site is much larger than the existing one with increased content for keywords that should trigger search engine listings.

HILL & CO.: Anna Maria Arizzi reported that the Denver billboard locations have been secured as well as one in Colorado Springs; two additional locations in Colorado Springs are possible. The

Overnight Visitor Study began in February; this survey will also be conducted in April, May, July, August and October.

STAFF REPORTS: Lodging tax collections continue to be very strong as are retail sales tax collections. Significant increases in Internet activity are attributed to Hill & Company's efforts to enhance search engine optimization and staff efforts to increase the number of reciprocal links. Increased Internet activity, however, translates to declines in Visitor Center statistics and the downward trend we have seen in the last three years is expected to continue. Staff will identify costs associated with maintaining the Visitor Center as part of the budget review process.

Sales: Proposals have been submitted for five statewide and regional conventions in 2006. Barb Bowman and seven tourism partners will attend Meetings Industry Council March 15-16. This is a Denver-area trade show that targets meeting planners and corporate travel planners.

Convention Servicing: Large convention groups being assisted this summer include:

- Ride the Rockies - June
- Gold Wing National Touring Association - July
- Triple Crown Baseball World Series – July
- Colorado Parks & Recreation Association - September
- Colorado Government Finance Officers Association/City Clerks Association - November

OTHER BUSINESS: Charlie Novinskie reported that Walker Field passenger traffic increased 20% during January. Skywest has added an additional daily flight to Salt Lake City.

Trent Prall, City Public Works Department, presented an update on the Riverside Project.

The being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm on motion of Eric Feely and second on Jill Eckardt.