

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
NOVEMBER 14, 2006

PRESIDING: Lynne Sorlye, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Eric Feely, Kevin Reimer, Bill Hill, Deborah Hoefler, Jane Foster

MEMBERS ABSENT: Brunella Gualerzi, Steve Meyer, Denise Henning

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Jennifer Grossheim-Harris, Layne Whyman, Erin Chapman, Irene Carlow

The meeting was called to order at 3:07 pm.

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 10, 2006: Bill Hill moved the minutes be approved as written, Deb Hoefler seconded, passed unanimously.

HOST REMARKS: Lynne Sorlye welcomed the Board to the Holiday Inn. It's been a very busy year but things have tapered off a bit. The major improvement underway is replacing the carpet in all the meeting rooms to get ready for the holiday party season. Other small repairs and improvements will be made as well during the window of opportunity through mid-January before business picks up again.

HILL & COMPANY: Participating via phone, Anna Maria Arizzi presented the results of the Denver focus groups. Two sessions were held: the first "non-user" group was comprised of individuals who have not visited Grand Junction; the second "user" group had visited within the last three years. Both groups discussed not just Grand Junction but general vacation trip patterns, how they plan, how far in advance they plan a trip, etc. The non-user group had traveled primarily within Colorado but the second group had traveled more extensively, both nationally and some internationally.

Both groups said that the maximum driving time for a trip should be 4-6 hours; non-users still think that Grand Junction is much farther from Denver. Even though most of the people in both groups had been to Glenwood Springs, the non-users still had a distorted idea of how much farther Grand Junction is. For in-state travel, planning time ranges from 2-3 days to 2-3 months with most planning taking place 2-4 weeks in advance. The participants make decisions on which destination to visit based on word-of-mouth and printed materials. Motivators for visiting include events, scenic drives, lack of crowds and affordability. The Internet is definitely the predominant source for gathering information but booking is not necessarily done online. Most of the participants type the destination name in a search engine, indicating that they had a strong idea or had made a decision on where they were going.

Non-users had a good awareness of the brand, with comments that the wineries, orchards, scenery and Grand Mesa were great. A reason not to visit was a general lack of knowledge of the area. This group found it difficult to believe that the photographs in our materials were actually taken in Grand Junction. Overall there was very positive feedback on “Colorado’s Wine Country”. The user group was very familiar with the signature color and liked the photography because they had seen the images presented – wineries, Colorado National Monument, Redlands Mesa. The older individuals in both groups gravitated to the scenery shots and the relaxing images; the younger members were more interested in the group wine tasting shot because it depicted an activity and something fun to do.

Several Visitor Guide covers were tested and both groups preferred the multi-photo covers depicting activities, scenery (Colorado National Monument) and water. Including Grand Junction’s 125th Anniversary on the cover was of interest as well, with the potential for multiple events.

Overall recommendations resulting from the focus groups are to proceed with “Colorado’s Wine Country” and to continue highlighting the diverse activities. Several group members spoke of the lack of family activities but they saw only the cover not the contents of the Visitor Guide. There is still a strong impression that Grand Junction lacks a cultural element and moderate to high end dining options. The user group didn’t feel the city has a “center” indicating a lack of awareness of the downtown area.

BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS: Lynne Sorlye reported that the National Tour Association Executive Program was very interesting and well worth attending. NTA’s incoming president discussed the history and mission of the organization and all the program participants went on the floor of the exchange to observe the appointments. The VCB delegation was a co-host of the Tour Colorado dinner for tour operators who are currently coming to Colorado. Kevin Reimer discussed the importance of developing relationships with tour operators. Success in the group tour market is a long-term investment and it can take several years to get on an itinerary. Grand Junction is strong in the group travel market which is the result of many years’ effort on the part of the VCB and Grand Junction partners.

Barb Bowman was the Chair of the Convention Committee, which was truly an honor for Grand Junction. Barb is a past NTA Board member and served on the Legislative Affairs Committee for several years.

2007 Officers The Chair and Vice Chair serve as the nominating committee. Members who are interested in serving as 2007 Vice Chair are asked to contact the current officers. The election will take place at the December meeting.

Board Vacancies Eric Feely reported there are four vacancies. Jane Foster and Kevin Reimer are not eligible for re-appointment and Denise Henning has notified the City Clerk that she will not apply. Steve Meyer has applied for re-appointment and there are five new applicants. Council has scheduled interviews for December 11.

STAFF ITEMS Visitor Guide: The Director stated that the Guide is a planning tool that is mailed to individuals who contact the VCB either by phone or email and specifically request a Visitor Guide. It is also distributed at Colorado Welcome Centers, visitor centers and chambers of commerce throughout the state as well as at trade shows and in our convention packets. Attractions and activities listed in the Guide are based on the most commonly received inquiries and questions both on the phone and in the Visitor Center. Irene Carlow presented staff recommendations for the 2007 Visitor Guide.

Lodging The two new Marriotts will be added and all 7 of the 2006 “expand the tent” participants will continue in the program for 2007. There should be adequate space to keep all the lodging listings on 2 pages; any future additions may necessitate a different layout.

Wineries/Tasting Rooms There is adequate space for listing the new winery, Mesa Grande Vineyards, that will be added. Staff recommends that the separate listings for Confre Cellars and St. Kathryn Cellars be combined under Confre Cellars because they are in the same location. Additionally, Colorado Cellars has requested that their listing be changed to: Colorado Cellars Winery/Rocky Mountain Vineyards. By consensus, the Board accepted staff’s recommendation.

Activities A request was received to add “Orchards” as a new category. Staff reviewed the current website listings:

- Map of fruit stands
- Map of orchards
- Fruit vendors section lists 31 businesses (name, address, phone and link if the business has a website)
- Growing/harvest schedule

Staff recommends adding descriptive copy regarding orchards that will direct visitors to the website instead of listing individual businesses in the Visitor Guide. The Board directed that “Orchards” be added as a category with the suggested descriptive copy.

Staff also received a request to add breweries/brew pubs/distillery as a new category. Breweries and distilleries are not yet fully-developed visitor industries and few inquiries have been received. Brew pubs are generally restaurants. The VCB publishes a Restaurant Guide (distributed at the Visitor Center and in convention packets) and maintains an updated restaurant listing on our website. Only restaurants inside the Grand Junction city limits are included in both the printed and website listings; there are currently two brewpubs in the city limits. The Board concurred that this new category will not be added to the Visitor Guide. However, “Restaurants” and descriptive copy regarding the diversity of cuisine will be added to the Guide and the website will again be referred to.

Staff recommends adding two new businesses to the Family Activities category: GJ Scores and the Grand Junction Motor Speedway. GJ Scores offers multiple activities that appeal to families, not just adults. GJ Scores also has meeting rooms and has demonstrated the ability to bring in groups (the owners are vying to host an international competition). Grand Junction Motor Speedway also brings in groups that book local hotels and offers corporate and other group activities. By consensus, the Board adopted the recommendation to add these two businesses.

Staff also recommended eliminating the category for Horseback Riding, combining the two listings in that section with Western Adventure. When the existing Visitor Guide format was created, there were four businesses offering horseback riding and now there are only two, both of which are also listed in Western Adventure. Staff suggests changing the category heading to “Western Adventure (Guided)”, indicating that the businesses listed provide a guide for the individual activities. Staff will confirm that all the businesses in this section are providing guided services. Combining these categories will also create additional space that will be needed to add listings in other areas.

A new company, Catfish Canoe, has requested a listing in the Visitor Guide. This company provides rafting/canoe equipment rental, maps and information as well as a shuttle service, but the rafting/canoe/float trips are self-guided; an employee/representative of Catfish Canoe does not take visitors on a float trip. The Board directed that the rafting category heading be changed to “Rafting and Float Trips (Guided)” and that companies that only rent equipment will not be listed in the Guide. Rental companies can be included on the website as are bike rentals.

Bill Hill stated that the script font for category headings is difficult to read and suggested that a different font style be used and perhaps printed in bold. He also suggested that the body copy heading “The Land” be changed to “The Grand Valley”; that the Old Spanish Trail be included; and that the “Passport to Adventure” be added to encourage visitation to the cultural attractions. The Director responded that staff is monitoring efforts to improve the Old Spanish Trail but the Trail is not easily accessible at this time; staff recommends postponing copy references to the Trail until it is more visitor-friendly. The “Passport to Adventure” is a co-operative effort between the VCB and cultural attractions, which offer two-for-one admission to visitors presenting the Passport. At the attractions’ request, a small quantity was printed in 2006 and distribution is limited; the attractions will assess the effectiveness as well as the cost of the discounted admissions and discuss with the VCB the potential of continuing this program.

The Board accepted the proposed cover of the 2007 Visitor Guide presented by staff. It was noted that several different cover renditions were critiqued by the focus groups and the recommended cover was the top choice of both groups as well as the staff.

Advertising Contract Renewals: The Directed reminded the Board that the contracts with both Hill & Company and Miles Media Group renew annually. The Board’s contract recommendations must be approved by Council at a December meeting in order to be effective January 1, 2007. Eric Feely moved that the advertising contract with Hill & Company Integrated Marketing and Advertising be renewed for the period January 1-December 31, 2007; Deb Hoefler seconded, passed unanimously. Eric Feely moved that the website maintenance/marketing contract with Miles Media Group be renewed for the period January 1-December 31, 2007; Deb Hoefler seconded, passed unanimously. Staff will submit these items for the December 6 Council agenda.

Building Remodel: A project meeting was held November 8. Both electric and gas lines are within the footprint of the addition so the first step is to install a temporary gas line and do initial preparations for moving electrical service. It appears that the phone lines are outside the

footprint so the T-1 service will not be affected until the new equipment/wiring is installed later in the project.

Statistics: Lodging tax collections for October were the second-highest monthly revenue ever reported. Revenue for 2007 is projected to increase 5.5% over 2006.

Internet usage decreased in October. Miles Media believes this is weather-related, as the Denver area and mountains experienced inclement weather and potential visitors were not looking at outdoor activity-oriented websites such as ours. Miles Media staff has been much more responsive and is developing a closer working relationship with Hill & Company.

Other Business: The annual holiday party will be Thursday, December 14 at Bookcliff Country Club. Board, staff and spouses/guests will begin at 4:30 and guests are invited from 5:30 – 7:00.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m. on motion of Eric Feely and second of Kevin Reimer.