

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
MINUTES OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
NOVEMBER 13, 2007

PRESIDING: Deborah Hoefler, Vice Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lynne Sorlye, Paul Petersen, Steve Meyer, Brunella Gualerzi, Bill Hill, Brian Barry

MEMBERS ABSENT: Eric Feely, Rick Martindale

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Jennifer Grossheim-Harris, Barbara Bowman, Erin Chapman, Irene Carlow, Amber Rich

GUESTS: Anna Maria Ray

HOSTS REMARKS: Debi Revis, General Manager, welcomed the Board to the Grand Vista Hotel. Ms. Revis has worked in the Grand Junction hotel industry for many years and joined the Grand Vista in April 2007. Her goal is to raise the level of service and the product. The hotel is full nearly every night and those increasing revenues provide the capital for improvements, many of which were begun before she joined the property. Major projects for 2008 include roof repair, landscaping, kitchen upgrades, interior signage and improvements to the pool area and banquet equipment. She commended the entire staff on accepting change and the different/new standards that are being put into place.

The meeting was called to order at 3:20 p.m.

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 9, 2007: Lynne Sorlye moved the minutes be approved as written, Brunella Gualerzi seconded, passed unanimously.

BOARD ITEMS: Special Events Organizers of the 2008 Colorado Pro Rodeo Finals confirmed the dates of September 5-7; they are requesting \$3,500 in marketing assistance. The Finals have been held in Grand Junction 5 of the 35 years this event has been in existence. The VCB's marketing role would be to increase attendance. Paul Petersen moved the VCB provide Special Events marketing assistance in an amount not to exceed \$3,000, Steve Meyer seconded, passed unanimously.

Expand the Tent With Council approval, in 1993 the VCB began offering lodging properties outside the city limits the opportunity to participate in the bureau's marketing programs for a fee of 3% of gross room revenues. The most recent re-authorization was in 2006. Participating properties include Gateway Canyons, Inn at Wildewood (Powderhorn) and several bed and breakfasts. At the end of each year, the Director prepares a written report to the City Manager of

the Board's recommendation for continuing this program. Brian Barry moved to continue the Expand the Tent program, Lynne Sorlye seconded, passed unanimously.

Contract Renewals In 2005, a Request for Proposal was issued for both advertising and website services. Hill & Company was awarded the contract for advertising services, Miles Media Group received the award for website services; both contracts are annually renewable for a period of 5 years. Steve Meyer moved that the advertising services contract with Hill & Company be renewed for calendar year 2008 in the amount \$425,000; Paul Petersen seconded, passed unanimously. Steve Meyer moved that the website services contract with Miles Media Group be renewed for calendar year 2008 in the amount of \$125,000; Brian Barry seconded, passed unanimously.

A Request for Proposal for a sales person to represent the VCB in the Front Range was issued in 2005. Donna Horii was awarded the contract for 2006 and it was renewed for 2007. Ms. Horii has exceeded the goals of the 2007 contract and staff recommends renewing the contract for 2008. Steve Meyer moved that the sales contract with Donna Horii be renewed for calendar year 2008 in the amount of \$30,000; Bill Hill seconded, passed unanimously.

Board Vacancies/Election of Officers Deb Hoefler and Brunella Gualerzi have applied for reappointment. Eric Feely did not reapply because he felt that he would not be able to commit the amount of time he feels is appropriate to effectively serve the VCB. The City Clerk will notify the re-applying members and new applicants of the Council interview date.

Elections for 2008 Chair and Vice Chair need to be held at the December 11 meeting. Members who are interested in serving should contact the current Chair and Vice Chair.

Impacts of High Occupancy The Director reported that staff has received several complaints about lodging properties this year. Most of the complaints are related to service levels, room conditions, reservations not being honored, etc. It is anticipated that a rising number of complaints will be a direct result of continued high occupancy rates. Customers who would normally stay at a 3-star property are displaced to 2-star and even 1-star properties, where the level of service and amenities are of a lesser quality than those customers expect. Staff always requests that any complaint be in writing, then responds to the customer. The Board discussed several different ways the VCB might respond and attempt to resolve disputes. Deb Hoefler suggested this topic be discussed in depth at the 2008 annual retreat. Staff is directed to continue to track complaints, and to forward to the Board a sample of a typical response letter.

STAFF REPORTS: Sales Barb Bowman reported that the Governor's Conference on Tourism was very successful and attendee survey responses gave very high marks in every area. Bill Hill congratulated the staff and partners on a successful conference and stated that all the events he attended, both social and educational, were excellent. Barb also commended Layne Whyman who handled registrations, the CTO reception at the Museum and several other convention responsibilities because the CTO lost two staff members who normally handle those duties.

The Director and Barb Bowman had 58 appointments at the National Tour Association Annual Conference in Kansas City. This is a good market for Grand Junction, with 200-300 motorcoaches stopping here each year.

A Request for Proposal for the sales division database software has been issued; responses are due November 19.

The post-season wrap up meeting will be at the Ramada Inn November 15 from 2:00 – 5:00 pm.

Marketing/Promotions Jennifer Grossheim-Harris reported that the holiday shopping promotion is underway. Response from lodging properties was strong; our website lists three more properties than are in print ads. Downtown participation is much higher than in previous years.

A press release announcing Special Events applications will be sent to the media November 19 or 20. Interested parties will be directed to the City website, where they can download the policy and application.

Website redesign is progressing; samples of the home page, wine country page and a story were distributed. The site architecture is woven together very well and work is being done on content pages.

The two October AAA wine trains were very successful, with one unexpected challenge the second weekend. Amtrak personnel had not loaded the AAA food order on to the dining car and wine train participants were not seated for lunch. The Amtrak experience/service level cannot be controlled by either the VCB or AAA. To make amends for the lack of service on the train, on Saturday AAA purchased wine and the VCB purchased Enstrom's which were delivered, along with a hand-written note, to each guest's room after the group departed for the Saturday winery tours.

The February cultural/culinary promotion has been titled "Arts, Hearts & Tarts". Hill & Company will develop a brand and do the media buys, Cobb & Associates will assist with local promotions and activities. The cultural arts organizations are very enthusiastic about this campaign and have numerous activities planned throughout the month.

Director's Report Lodging tax collections for October are up 23.5% over 2006. The budget presentation to Council went very well and there were few questions; first reading of the 2008 budget will be at the December 5 Council meeting. The Director reported that the RV wrap previously discussed is no longer under consideration due to a number of other promotional options staff is working on for 2008.

OTHER BUSINESS: Bill Hill presented his letter of resignation from the Board because of health considerations. He has thoroughly enjoyed serving on the Board and working with other members as well as with staff. He discussed the geo-tourism seminar presented at the Governor's Conference and encouraged the Board to aggressively promote culture and heritage tourism. He expressed the concern that Grand Junction could eventually be branded with the negative connotation of an "energy town". Building Grand Junction's image as a cultural center

could help overcome potential negative impacts of the energy industry slowdown and at the same time enhance the lives of area residents. Bill said he hoped he would be able to attend the December Board meeting and holiday party and again thanked the staff and Board for all their efforts and encouraged everyone to continue promoting cultural tourism in his absence.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm on motion of Steve Meyer and second of Paul Petersen.