

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
JUNE 9, 2009

PRESIDING: Paul Petersen, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brian Barry, Nathan Knoll, Steve Meyer, John Williams, Rick Martindale, Donia Moore, Brunella Gualerzi

MEMBERS ABSENT: Deborah Hoefler

STAFF PRESENT: Barbara Bowman, Jennifer Grossheim-Harris, Erin Chapman, Layne Whyman, Melanie Wiseman, David Schwenke, Irene Carlow

GUESTS: Lynne Sorlye

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm.

MINUTES OF MAY 12, 2009: Nathan Knoll moved to approve the minutes as written, Brian Barry seconded, approved unanimously.

HOSTS REMARKS: Lynne Sorlye welcomed the Board to the Clarion Inn. Conversion to the new franchise involved changing out nearly everything in the hotel – bedding, soft goods, amenities – as well as upgrades such as in-room microfridges. The Business Center is complete, all exterior signage and billboards have been changed and staff has adjusted to a new computer system. The property is now 100% non-smoking. Occupancy for early June is soft but picks up the rest of the month and Country Jam weekend is strong.

BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS: Visitor Center Brochure Policy Melanie Wiseman reviewed the changes from the existing policy (in place since 1994) and the proposed policy. The recommended revisions place a greater emphasis on the Grand Valley, which supports the new direction for the Visitor Center that was implemented in the exhibit remodel. The Center still displays and distributes numerous publications (both Colorado and eastern Utah) that have broad appeal to the traveling public. We have decreased the number of brochures from individual attractions and cities in Colorado, but detailed state-wide information is available at the Colorado Welcome Center in Fruita. Brian Barry moved to approve the Visitor Center Brochure Policy as proposed, Rick Martindale seconded, passed unanimously.

Special Events Nathan Knoll reported on three applications:

Rim Rock Marathon - \$3,675 request This is the former Rim Rock Run which was purchased by a professional event organizer and expanded to a full marathon. It is still a one-day event (mid-November), but more participants are expected because it will be elevated to a marathon distance. Marketing assistance is requested for posters, online

and magazine ads. The committee recommends awarding the full amount requested. Steve Meyer moved to award \$3,675 Special Events marketing assistance to the Rim Rock Marathon, Brunella Gualerzi seconded, passed unanimously.

Western Colorado Triathlon - \$3,000 request This is a one-day event the same weekend as Colorado Mountain Winefest. The VCB has committed marketing assistance to two events on that weekend, the Winefest and Pork 'n Hops, and the committee is concerned about hotel availability. No award is recommended because the event is scheduled on a weekend of historically high hotel occupancy.

Pork 'n Hops - \$3,000 request This is the third year for Pork 'n Hops and there has been good cross-over with Winefest attendees. The event has grown each year and there is good potential for future growth as well, which may require a larger venue. The committee recommends \$3,000 for regional advertising. Steve Meyer moved to award \$3,000 Special Events marketing assistance to Pork 'n Hops, Donia Moore seconded, approved unanimously.

City Administration & Economic Development Debbie Kovalik reported that City retail sales tax collections continue to decline. A city-wide staff review is in process to assess workloads and identify staffing capacity. Employees may be transferred to other departments where there is a greater need in order to avoid layoffs. TRCC bookings are holding but attendance is down approximately 10%; JUCO concession revenue was off 17%. The Avalon Theatre is breaking even. Independent films are no longer being shown because of the very low attendance. In an effort to encourage continued development, the City is deferring some residential development fees until completion of a project instead of requiring payment in the initial stage. The City is very active in identifying funding opportunities and submitting appropriate applications for projects under the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act. Projects include public safety, transportation, sewer lines, and Community Development Block Grants. In the next few weeks, Council will be discussing the Public Safety Initiative; ballot language would have to be defined in August for a potential November vote.

Mesa County's unemployment rate continues to increase but the number of people employed in May 2009 was the same as in May 2008. It appears that the total employed figure is affected by a high number of people returning to the workforce, e.g., retirees and homemakers.

Budget Planning The Board typically meets in workshop session immediately before the July monthly meeting to review and discuss staff recommendations, then approves the budget at the August meeting. Input into the finance system is completed by the end of August; budget review teams meet in September; and the full City budget is presented to Council in November.

Debbie Kovalik stated that staff will not have a projection for Vendors' Fee revenue at the July workshop. City Management is closely monitoring sales and use tax receipts and adjusting revenue projections accordingly. The VCB will be told what Vendors' Fee

amount to budget but that figure could change as the year progresses. Expenditures of \$150,000 could be cut later in the year if need be without affecting core programs. At the workshop, staff will need policy direction from the Board in order to develop the 2010 budget. Some specific areas the Board will be asked to provide direction on:

- Advertising and website contract amounts
- Across-the-board cuts to every program and market segment, or
- Identify specific areas to maintain, increase or decrease

The Chair stated that staff recommendations on promotions, programs and campaigns are extremely important. The Board relies on staff to report the effectiveness and results of these marketing efforts.

In the past four years of strong revenues, the VCB budgeted for and invested in significant assets – photography and videography; website redesign; sales software; Visitor Center exhibits – that can support and sustain our marketing efforts in this time of declining revenues.

STAFF REPORTS: Statistics Lodging tax for the month of May declined 16.6% or 10.5% YTD. The decline in brochure mailings reflects the cut-back in national advertising, which did not perform well in 2008. Calls to our toll-free number also are down but the length of each phone call continues to increase as visitors want more detailed information prior to their arrival.

Sales Debbie Kovalik and Barb Bowman attended Pow Wow trade show and met with 51 international tour operators. Grand Junction is on more fly/drive itineraries than we were aware of and is included in 18 of 20 German tour operators' catalogs. Erin Chapman attended Destination Colorado's Dallas Showcase; the VCB provided wine for this meeting planner show. We hosted 16 top travel agents from Der Tours, the German equivalent of AAA. This fam group spent more time in Grand Junction than any other destination on their itinerary.

Convention Services June is an extremely busy month with 22 events; 50% of the groups did not do a sales lead through the VCB. The local direct mail campaign has generated a lot of walk-in clients, including large family reunions of 150-200 people who will stay 2-3 nights. In the past few months we have issued sales leads for groups that represent repeat business, including Lions Club (both state and district conferences) and Gold Wing.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:07 pm on motion of Steve Meyer and second of Rick Martindale.