

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
January 13, 2009

PRESIDING: Paul Petersen, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lynne Sorlye, Nathan Knoll, Rick Martindale, Deborah Hoefler, Brunella Gualerzi, John Williams

MEMBERS ABSENT: Brian Barry, Steve Meyer

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

GUESTS: Per Nilsson, Shayla Kraft

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 pm.

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 9, 2008: Rick Martindale moved the minutes be approved as written, Deborah Hoefler seconded, approved unanimously.

HOST REMARKS: Per Nilsson, General Manager of the Doubletree Hotel, welcomed the Board. He stated that 2008 was a good year for the hotel, with just a slight slowdown in the 4th quarter. Renovations are going well: 42" flat screen TVs have been installed in all rooms; electric reader boards will be placed in the meeting rooms; improvements in the hallways are finished on all but two floors. In the 2nd quarter of 2009, the entire first floor and lobby will be re-done as well as the tennis courts, pool deck and the parking lot.

BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS: Board Vacancies The City Clerk received applications from Nathan Knoll and five other prospective board members. City Council expects to conduct interviews in February. The two members with expiring terms are asked to continue serving until Council makes new appointments.

Special Events Jennifer Grossheim-Harris reported on two applications that the committee reviewed. The Spring Barrel Tasting will again be held on two weekends, one in April and one in May. The application requests \$6,000 to complete production of the video that was shot last year and to make 4,000 CDs to send to prospective attendees. The committee recommends funding in the requested amount. Brunella Gualerzi moved that the Spring Barrel Tasting be awarded \$6,000 in Special Event marketing assistance, Lynne Sorlye seconded, passed unanimously.

(John Williams joined the meeting.)

Art Space & Open Studios, scheduled for May 2-3, is in its third year. This event is a self-guided tour of artists' studios; 4,000 participated in the 2008 event with 400 out-of-town attendees. Organizers have requested \$2,780 for regional advertising; staff advised the committee that the requested amount would not be adequate to run ads in regional publications and suggested that \$3,500 is a more realistic cost estimate. The Board discussed the need for tracking the number of out-of-town attendees to demonstrate that this event does, indeed, bring visitors from outside the area. John Williams moved to award \$3,500 in Special Events marketing assistance to Art Space & Open Studios, with the condition that organizers provide a record of the number of out-of-town attendees, Nathan Knoll seconded, passed unanimously.

2009 Committee Assignments The Chair asked members to serve on committees as follows:

Special Events: Brian Barry (Chair), Nathan Knoll, Rick Martindale
Community Awareness: Deborah Hoefler (Chair), Brunella Gualerzi, John Williams, Steve Meyer

2008 Year-End Review Debbie Kovalik stated that the department now has a total of 80 employees comprised of the VCB and Two Rivers Convention Center/Avalon Theatre. The Avalon continues to host movies, concerts and a variety of events. Economic development activities focus on building resources for accessibility of information for new and expanding businesses, specifically in the North Avenue corridor and Clifton.

Layne Whyman discussed the street banner program that began informally in 2005 and became Board policy in 2006. During 2008, approximately 135 banners were utilized that featured a range of subjects and events. (This program does not include downtown, where the DDA retains exclusive use.) Parks & Recreation staff continues to handle installation and maintenance, but maintenance (particularly wind damage) is the biggest challenge.

Jennifer Grossheim-Harris reported that 10 Special Events received marketing assistance in 2008. Staff will notify previous recipients of the need to re-apply and that the Board has stated that the 120-day application deadline will be enforced. We will explore options other than just print ads in regional publications because we saturated that market promoting numerous events from mid-August through the end of September. Community Awareness activities included staff-designed brochures for local distribution; strengthening local partnerships (DDA, Mesa State, Palisade); and participation in a CTO matching grant program to shoot agricultural-related photography and video for media use.

The VCB and Miles Media received two Adrian Awards from the hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International: Gold was awarded for the E-zine program and silver for the overall website design. Jennifer Grossheim-Harris and Karin Mast, our Miles Media account manager, will travel to New York to accept the awards.

Staff hosted 26 journalists during the year and fulfilled information requests from 24 other members of the media.

Irene Carlow discussed the transition to the City's new accounting system and the different budget reports that the Board will see in 2009.

Erin Chapman reported on the nearly year-long process to transition to the new IDSS sales database. Staff investigated several software providers and worked very closely with the City's Information Services and Purchasing divisions to develop an RFP, review and evaluate the responses and award the bid. The sales staff reviewed and made any necessary corrections to the over 3,000 records in the previous database to prepare the data to roll over to the new software, and participated in many hours of training. IDSS went "live" on June 25 and staff has held two training sessions for our hotel partners. IDSS also has a brochure fulfillment module which the VCB began utilizing January 1; Becky Wilken and Susan Weigand are the staff members who worked on that portion of the database. A public relations tracking module is also being used; it is expected that IDSS will grow into a single information source for the VCB. All the data is inter-related which can increase efficiency and improve communication with our partners, clients, visitors and the media.

Layne Whyman said that a goal of Convention Servicing is to increase repeat customers by making it easy to do business in Grand Junction. Services provided to groups include attendance builders (postcard pre-mailers to prospective attendees), blast emails and writing articles for newsletters. The VCB provides services to 130-150 groups per year.

2009-The Year Ahead Barbara Bowman talked briefly about industry trends and stated that value-added services will be very important in our sales efforts. Leisure travelers will look for value without sacrificing quality and professional meeting planners expect value-added services, such as attendance builders, to be part of bids we submit.

Melanie Wiseman discussed the Visitor Center exhibit upgrade project. The Visitor Center will be closed February 23-March 1. Monday, March 2, staff will be trained on the exhibits, text panels, interactive displays and brochure replenishment; staff will then train the volunteers on March 3-4. On March 13 an open house will be held for the Board, City Council, City employees and our tourism partners. The public will be invited to an afternoon open house Saturday, March 14.

STAFF REPORTS: Lodging tax collections were up 13.7% for the year versus a 15% projected increase. Many regional destinations experienced significant downturns in the 4th quarter of 2008 and are already discussing budget and staff cuts.

Sales With the agreement of lodging partners and Grand Mesa Youth Soccer Association (GYMSA), VCB staff will no longer do the lodging placements for teams participating in the soccer tournaments. A total of 98 sales leads were issued during 2008, which is 75% of the annual goal. The decline is attributable to the large amount of time diverted from direct sales efforts to prepare for and accomplish the transition to IDSS software.

OTHER BUSINESS: The Chair presented an appreciation plaque to Deborah Hoefler in thanks for her leadership and service as 2008 Chair.

The Chair also thanked all the Board members for their service and encouraged them to be involved and engaged in VCB activities and issues in the coming year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm on motion of Deborah Hoefler and Lynne Sorlye