

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
May 12, 2009

PRESIDING: Paul Petersen, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Deborah Hoefler, Brian Barry, Nathan Knoll, Steve Meyer

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Williams, Rick Martindale, Donia Moore, Brunella Gualerzi

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

GUESTS: Sharon Delay, Karin Mast

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 pm.

MINUTES OF MARCH 3, 2009: Deborah Hoefler moved to approve the minutes as written, Brian Barry seconded, approved unanimously.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION: Melanie Wiseman introduced Sharon Delay who has volunteered 1,000 hours at the Visitor Center. Sharon joined the VCB staff in 1995 as the Volunteer Coordinator, and then began volunteering when she retired. Sharon thanked the Board for the wonderful new Visitor Center exhibits. They are a tremendous asset and visitors are definitely staying in the Center longer and learning more about everything there is to do in Grand Junction.

BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS: The Chair reviewed revisions to the Mission Statement that were discussed at the annual planning retreat. Nathan Knoll moved, Brian Barry seconded, that the VCB Mission Statement be revised to read: The Grand Junction Visitor & Convention Bureau's mission is to pro-actively market the Grand Junction area, resulting in the positive economic impact of visitor dollars. Motion passed unanimously.

Miles Media Karin Mast reviewed the progression of measuring website activity. When Miles Media entered this business in 1995, information could only be gathered from the website server – the number of "hits". There was no tracking and no way to identify if a hit was an individual actually viewing the site or a search engine spider. In-depth web reporting and analytics now provide very specific information such as conversion tracking, geographic location and segmentation of a specific audience in a given location. We will soon be able to track social media, identifying if users are reading blogs or watching videos rather than just starting a video.

Signals of Intent to Travel (SITs) are a very important part of web analytics because they track conversions on the site. Current SITs being measured are:

- Visitor Guide orders
- Visits to the "specials and packages" page
- Visits to individual event listings
- Opt-ins to email program

Karin reviewed the April online Measurement Dashboard:

- Visitor traffic is up 3% but in-state traffic is down 15%. That is not a concern now because early spring is not a good season for Grand Junction; however, if that trend continues through May and June it may be cause for concern.
- SITs are strong; events are the biggest driver and people stay on the site longer. The event pages are so important it's almost unfortunate the VCB supports multiple events on the same weekend.

Three local experts have been contracted for the year: Chef Wayne Smith (Food & Wine), Diana Fritzler (Art & Culture) and Bill Haggerty (Outdoors). Currently, more people are engaging in Art & Culture than the other two. At the end of a year we will evaluate not just the individuals but also the areas of interest.

STAFF REPORTS: Barbara Bowman reviewed the monthly statistics and noted that lodging tax collections are down 15% for the month, 8.6% YTD. She noted, however, that both occupancy and average daily rate were exceptionally high during most of 2008 and business started softening in November as Grand Junction began feeling the effects of the nationwide recession. Comparing lodging tax collections from 2007 to 2009, April is up 1.1%, year-to-date is up 13.3%. Hotels remain positive about bookings for the next 3 months.

Marketing/Public Relations Jennifer Grossheim-Harris informed the Board that Anna Maria Ray resigned from Hill & Company. This is difficult timing because many of our ads are dropping and we have big events coming up. Other Hill & Co. staff will take on aspects of our account and Linda Hill will be more involved during this transition.

Current projects include:

- "Let's Meet in GJ" campaign – encourages locals to bring meetings to Grand Junction; 1,300+ mailing to Chamber members and clubs/organizations that emphasized resources and assistance the VCB provides to meetings/groups
- "Friends & Family" packages -- six participating properties, rates must include added value; offerings include Downtown certificates, Bananas Fun Park passes, winetasting
- 20 travel writers will be hosted in the next two months
- Der Tour fam June 1-2, the "AAA" of Germany

Sales Erin Chapman reported there were nine networking events in April. Additionally, an after-work event in Denver was very successful, resulting in 34 contacts. Erin will travel to Dallas May 18-19 for the Destination Colorado event; Barbara Bowman and Debbie Kovalik will attend the International Pow Wow trade show in Miami May 16-20.

Convention Services Layne Whyman stated that overall meetings attendance is still high and a lot of attractions are willing to customize their product for group activities. Some of the large conferences that will be hosted this year include Colorado Economic Development Council (CEDCC) Spring Convention in April, Colorado Cattlemen in June and CEDCC Rural Entrepreneurship conference in the Fall.

Visitor Center Melanie Wiseman reported that visitors are responding very positively to the new exhibits. Many of the volunteers were initially resistant to the remodel but now are very enthusiastic. Part of the exhibit remodel project was to change from static displays with numerous brochure racks to more interactive exhibits and less printed material. The Visitor Center Brochure Policy, originally approved by the Board in 1994, needs to be updated to reflect the changes in the Center itself. Staff will email the Board the existing policy and a draft proposed policy for review. Discussion of the proposed policy will be included on the June 9 agenda.

Local outreach efforts resulted in hosting our first group of 75 third-graders; 10 members of the Marriott staff also toured the Visitor Center.

OTHER BUSINESS: Barbara Bowman announced that Jennifer Grossheim-Harris was selected as the department Employee of the Month for April. She was nominated for her work on the Two Rivers Convention Center website design and implementation.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 pm.