

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

December 14, 2010

PRESIDING: Paul Petersen, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Williams, Per Nilsson, Glen Gallegos, Brunella Gualerzi, Jessica Stimmel, Nathan Knoll, Deborah Hoefer

STAFF PRESENT: Barbara Bowman, Debbie Kovalik, Erin Chapman, Layne Whyman, Jennifer Grossheim-Harris, Holly Prickett, Susan Weigand, Becky Wilken, Melanie Wiseman, Irene Carlow

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

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 9, 2010: Jessica Stimmel moved to approve the minutes as written, Per Nilsson seconded, passed unanimously.

HOST REMARKS: Per Nilsson, General Manager of the Doubletree Hotel, discussed renovations that will begin in March-April. Upgrades will be made to the front desk, halls and meeting space, including sound system, lighting and air walls. The 1st quarter of 2010 was challenging but business bounced back in the 2nd-3rd quarters and more groups are on the books now than the same time last year.

BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS: Special Events Nathan Knoll reported on one application that's been received for 2011 funding:

Rabbit Valley Rally \$3,500-\$4,000 requested 2011 will be the 4th year for this 2-day mountain bike event. It is part of a 9-event regional championship series that takes place in various locations from April – September. Last year's event attracted 375 racers and 200 spectators; approximately 400 of the attendees were from out of town. There is no host hotel but the Fruita hotels fill first with overflow to Grand Junction; approximately 25% of attendees camp. The 2011 event will be the same weekend as Fruita Fat Tire Festival so it is likely that Grand Junction hotels will sell more room nights than previous years. The committee recommends an award of \$2,000 for magazine, newspaper, and/or radio advertising outside of Mesa County.

Discussion: The Board expressed disappointment that the application does not indicate financial support from the City of Fruita, since Fruita will derive the most economic benefit from the event. When the VCB provided funding to the Fat Tire Festival, the award amount was a match to the City of Fruita's funding. The consensus of the Board is to encourage event organizers to request funding from the City of Fruita. Barbara Bowman will contact the Fruita City Manager to see if they still provide special events funding.

John Williams moved to award \$2,000 in Special Event marketing assistance to the Rabbit Valley Rally for magazine, newspaper, and/or radio advertising outside of Mesa County. Brunella Gualerzi seconded, passed unanimously.

2011 Chair/Vice Chair Election The Chair noted that Council has not yet made appointments for the three seats that expire at the end of December and the vacancy created by Rick Martindale's resignation. Although members serve until their replacement is appointed, the Chair suggested the Board could suspend the bylaws and postpone election of officers until the new appointments are made. The Chair also noted that members who are eligible for reappointment have expressed interest in being an officer next year; postponing the election will eliminate the possibility of someone being elected but not reappointed.

Glen Gallegos feels the Board should follow the bylaws as written and hold the election today. If the timing of elections conflicts with appointment of new members, then perhaps the Board could consider amending the bylaws in the future but the election should go forward today.

Deborah Hoefer concurred and withdrew from consideration as Chair. Her term is expiring and she would not want to create the potentially difficult situation if she were elected but not reappointed. John Williams, who had expressed interest in serving as Vice Chair, agreed and also withdrew his name from consideration.

The Chair stated that Per Nilsson has expressed interest in serving as Chair; there would be no potential conflict because his term expires at the end of 2012. There was discussion of electing a Chair at this meeting and postponing the Vice Chair election until appointments are made but that option was not widely supported. John Williams stated that he would stand for election as Vice Chair, pending reappointment; if he is not reappointed, a Vice Chair could be elected at a later date.

Nathan Knoll moved to elect Per Nilsson as 2011 Chair and John Williams as 2011 Vice Chair, pending reappointment; Deborah Hoefer seconded, passed unanimously.

STAFF RECOGNITION: The Chair recognized the presence of the entire staff, thanked them for their dedication to the VCB and all their good work on behalf of the tourism industry in this area.

Staff Reports Melanie Wiseman has surveyed a number of visitor centers around the country and is surprised at how many centers do not have volunteers. We currently have 90 volunteers who give over 10,000 hours of time a year – the equivalent of 5 full time employees.

Erin Chapman recapped the direct mail "peach crate" that was sent to in-state meeting planners, followed by a peach give-away in Denver. We are now following up with the rest of the database by sending a set of four note cards with Grand Junction photos of each season (the note cards were also included in the peach crate mailing). The call to action for the out-of-state mailing is to go to the VCB's meeting planner website and register to win a flip video camera.

Jennifer Grossheim-Harris reported that all electronic files have been transferred to CCT from Hill Aevium. CCT presented the 2011 ad plan, which strongly emphasizes ROI. The plan includes a great deal of electronic media which can be corrected and adjusted during the year based on results. CCT will be asked to attend a monthly meeting after the full Board is appointed (possibly February) as well as the annual retreat. The online conversion study is complete; staff will forward the executive summary to the Board. The Arts, Hearts & Tarts campaign was dropped following budget discussions earlier in the year. However, some locals wanted the VCB to continue this promotion in some form as a way to market the arts community to local residents. There will be no hard costs, e.g., ads and printing, but staff time will be spent on personally contacting businesses to gain participation as well as entering event information on the website calendar.

Irene Carlow reported that the Visitor Guide print bid was awarded to Pezcuh Printing. Pezcuh has an office and print shop in Grand Junction but the Visitor Guide will be printed at their main plant in Price.

Becky Wilken answers all incoming calls, responds to visitor inquiries (both on the phone and via email), keeps the website calendar of events current and does all the data input for the budget.

Susan Weigand does trace calls for the 2,900+ records in the sales database; 1,200 calls have been made this year. Susan also does trade show follow-up and researches international tour operator websites to find those that include information about Grand Junction.

Layne Whyman stated that 700 people are registered for the Faith Walkers conference at Two Rivers Convention Center December 26-30. This is the first year Grand Junction has hosted the conference, with the possibility of a 3-5 year commitment. The Visitor Center volunteers assist with convention services in a number of ways including assembling information packets, assisting at registration desks, aid stations and a variety of other tasks for large events such as Ride the Rockies.

Barbara Bowman reported that November lodging tax collections were up 4.1%. YTD receipts are down 6.1%, but that is a tremendous recovery from the 20% deficit for the first five months of the year.

Other Business: The Chair thanked Brunella Gualerzi for her 6 years of service on the Board, with special recognition for twice serving as Chair of the Qualification Review Committee for the advertising and website agency RFPs.

Barbara Bowman presented a plaque to Paul Petersen with the thanks of the Board and staff for serving as 2010 Chair.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm on motion of Brunella Gualerzi and second of Deborah Hoefler.