

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

January 12, 2010

PRESIDING: Paul Petersen, Chair

MEMERS PRESENT: Brunella Gualerzi, Nathan Knoll, Brian Barry, Deborah Hoefler, Rick Martindale, Steve Meyer, John Williams

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

GUESTS: Donna Horii, Karin Mast, Linda Hill, Kate Peterson

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

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 8, 2009: Nathan Knoll moved to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Brian Barry, passed unanimously.

HOST REMARKS: Rick Martindale, General Manager of Quality Inn, welcomed the Board. Major renovations of all interior spaces – meeting room, restaurant, lobby, hallways – will begin soon. The guest rooms were renovated 1-2 years ago.

BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS: Hill Aevium Linda Hill and Kate Peterson presented a recap of 2009 marketing strategies, creative campaign and research. The brand identity is strong and the creative will continue with only minor changes. The 2010 advertising plan has been finalized and the marketing plan will be distributed in February.

Miles Media Karin Mast reported that national web trends changed dramatically in 2009:

- EBay and Craigslist were both down nearly 40%
- News sites such as Yahoo! and CNN were down approximately 20%
- Tremendous increases were seen in escape-based sites
  - You Tube 109%
  - Facebook 236%
  - Twitter 539%
  - Fantasy Football 1,840%
- Colorado's site was up 6% over the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter
- Many DMO sites saw significant decreases

Although the VCB's site traffic was down 2.2%, more traffic is coming from search engines, which is attributable to the depth of content. Local experts' blogs and multi-media sections are very popular. In 2010, we will work toward increasing site traffic and user engagement by:

- continuing local experts
- launching an online game/sweepstakes
- adding more videos and photos
- encouraging local businesses to expand content
- enhancing the meetings/group section

Front Range Sales Donna Horii reported that the Denver-area meetings market is down throughout; hotels and businesses are cutting staff. It is critical for the GJVCB to maintain a presence in the Denver market. State associations and government meetings are the best markets for Grand Junction. Sales activities during 2009 included attending associations' monthly meetings; personal sales calls; the meeting planner reception in August; smaller after-work events; and a new partnership with Ft. Collins. Those who have been to Grand Junction are very positive about the area; great strengths are the GJVCB's reputation, continuity of staff and strong marketing/branding. It is still challenging, however, to get new clients to come from the Front Range; difficulties cited include drive time, distance of the convention center from hotels, and the lack of a large hotel with meeting space that could host a group under one roof.

Donna stated that this is her final presentation to the Board. She has ended her representation of Grand Junction to accept a full-time position with the Breckenridge Resort Chamber. Donna thanked the Board and staff for their support and confidence and said that she has very much enjoyed representing such a wonderful destination for the past three years.

Special Events Nathan Knoll reported on two applications reviewed by the committee.

*Palisade Bluegrass & Roots Music Festival* The Town of Palisade is the applicant and is requesting \$6,325. The committee recommends asking for more statistical information regarding the 2009 event, which did receive a Special Events award of \$5,000. After discussion, the consensus of the Board is to table a decision on this request until the committee receives additional information. Rick Martindale stated he will abstain from any vote because of a conflict of interest: the Wine Country Inn is potentially the biggest beneficiary of overnight stays generated by this event.

*Art Space and Open Studio Tours* Organizers are requesting \$7,200 (\$3,500 was awarded in 2009) for two weekend events, one in May and one in October. The 2009 event attracted 1,600 people from out of town (500 were projected), although the number of overnights generated is not known. Organizers have good tracking and many artists reported an increase in sales. The committee recommends a total award of \$4,000 (\$2,000 for each weekend). Steve Meyer moved to approve \$4,000 funding for Art Space and Open Studio Tours, Deborah Hoefler seconded, passed unanimously.

Annual Planning Retreat Staff recommends holding the retreat in March instead of April so the revenue outlook and potential budget revisions can be reviewed earlier. It was agreed that a one-day session will be held in Grand Junction during the weeks of March 15 or March 22. Staff was directed to check availability with The Chateau at Two Rivers Winery.

STAFF REPORTS: Barbara Bowman reported that December lodging tax collections were down 31.7%, ending the year down 19%. Indications are that December business was better than November, but January occupancy appears to be weak.

Sales Erin Chapman reported that we are 88% to goal of sales leads issued for the year; two leads issued in December were for larger groups in 2012, but no decisions have been made. We previously submitted a bid for the Colorado Parks & Recreation convention in 2011. When that group's board met in Grand Junction in December to discuss the convention location, there were strong leanings toward meeting on the Front Range because of travel expenses. Grand Junction was able to convince this group to still hold their meeting here.

Staff is taking an even more proactive sales strategy locally and made a presentation to the Mesa County Fire Chiefs Association, whose members attend at least three conferences per year. The presentation to that one group could potentially result in three sales leads.

Visitor Center Melanie Wiseman distributed copies of *The Beacon* which ran a wonderful cover story on the Visitor Center as a result of her contacting the publication. We average 85-90 volunteers who donated 10,300 hours in 2009.

City Administration Debbie Kovalik stated that the City and County made a presentation today to the Department of Local Affairs requesting funding for the 29 Road project. This project is shovel-ready and could begin 6 weeks after notification of award. Funding decisions are expected at the end of January.

OTHER BUSINESS: The Doubletree Hotel will host a meeting of general manager/owners January 28.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm on motion of Deborah Hoefler and second of Nathan Knoll.