

GRAND JUNCTION VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
February 10, 2009

PRESIDING: Paul Petersen, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rick Martindale, Deborah Hoefler, Brian Barry, Nathan Knoll, Lynne Sorlye, Steve Meyer

MEMBERS ABSENT: Brunella Gualerzi, John Williams

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

GUESTS: Tim Seeberg

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

MINUTES OF JANUARY 13, 2009: Deborah Hoefler moved the minutes be approved as written, Lynne Sorlye seconded, passed unanimously.

BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS: Board Vacancies Barbara Bowman thanked Lynne Sorlye and Nathan Knoll for continuing to serve until Council makes new appointments. Interviews were conducted February 3 and appointments are expected to be made at the next Council meeting.

Annual Retreat Paul Petersen opened the discussion about the annual planning retreat:

- Location – 1 ½ days, held in Gateway the past 3 years; continue with that or downscale to a 1-day session in Grand Junction?
- Facilitator – Jasper Welch did a good job, but suggests a fresh face and fresh approach
- Goals – what does the Board want to accomplish?
 - Stay at 30,000 ft level
 - Focus on 6 months-1 year, considering current economic conditions or longer term?
- Contractors – bring in for presentations on first day only?

Steve Meyer commented that the 1 ½ day sessions have been much more productive than a 1-day planning meeting. The short travel time makes Gateway Canyons very convenient, but is still far enough away to eliminate workday distractions and interruptions. All members agreed with those comments and concurred with the Chair that a new facilitator is preferred. Barbara Bowman has received a referral from the Denver Metro CVB on a new facilitator and could investigate further. The Board also

discussed whether a professional facilitator is really needed and if that expense is necessary; consideration will be given to having Debbie Kovalik or the City's training coordinator serve as facilitator. After further discussion, the Board selected the dates of March 30-31 and directed staff to make reservations at Gateway Canyons.

JUCO Sponsorship Jamie Hamilton thanked the Board for the VCB's ongoing support of JUCO and stated that the long-standing relationship between the two organizations is very important to the JUCO committee. Jamie and Debbie Kovalik met approximately 2 months ago to discuss how to brand this important community event to gain more visibility in the sports world and how the awareness and recognition that the VCB has gained could assist in those efforts.

Jamie offered the following proposal to the Board:

- \$10,000 sponsorship
- VCB would be the official sponsor of the Hall of Fame Banquet (would receive recognition at the Banquet)
- 4 commercials during future potential television broadcasts of the championship game
- VCB and JUCO will co-sponsor lunches at national coaches' convention and athletic director meetings

Debbie Kovalik stated that the 2009 budget includes \$10,000 for an anticipated TV sponsorship similar to the 2008 broadcast.

Jamie Hamilton asked if the Board had any questions about the proposal. There being none, he departed the meeting to allow the Board to have a full discussion of this item.

Debbie Kovalik discussed the various types of support the VCB has provided to JUCO over the years, including TV sponsorship in the early 1990's. If the Board wishes to provide this \$10,000 sponsorship, funds could come from either supplemental marketing or from Special Events. The consensus of the Board is that these funds should not be allocated from the Special Events marketing assistance budget item. Steve Meyer moved that the VCB accept the JUCO Baseball World Series Championship sponsor proposal offered by Jamie Hamilton in the amount of \$10,000 with line item funds allocated from supplemental marketing; Deborah Hoefler seconded, passed unanimously.

Special Events Committee Brian Barry reported on four applications:

Colorado Pro Rodeo Finals, \$3,500 requested – A lot of staff time was devoted to this event when it received funds in 2008, but that investment of time did elevate the event. At staff's suggestion, event organizers will hire an intern from Mesa State College to assist this year. Approximately 3,500 people attended in 2008, with 25% from out-of-town. This event is the same weekend as Winefest but attracts a different

demographic; many participants will camp or bring travel-trailers. The applicant is open to suggestion for marketing assistance. The committee recommends \$3,500 total funding, \$1,500 for printing brochures and \$2,000 for country-music radio stations.

Western Colorado Botanical Gardens – Garden Tour, \$4,000 requested – Approximately 100 out-of-towners are expected to attend. The event will likely have little impact on hotels but has the potential for a larger impact on retail sales tax. The committee recommends \$1,500 for a poster and the event must track attendees.

Colorado Mountain Winefest, \$12,000 requested – All registration and tickets sales for 2008 were online which provided detailed tracking information indicating this is truly a national event. Staff advised organizers that they need to extend this event another day by bringing back the golf tournament. The committee recommends \$6,000 if the event stays in its current format, or \$7,500 if the event is extended to either Thursday or Sunday; all funds are to be used for radio advertising.

Art & Jazz Festival, \$3,500-\$4,000 requested – The event will be held May 8-10 in a similar format as last year. It is very difficult to track attendance because there are no ticket sales; however, vendors could be surveyed. Funds are requested for regional publications and organizers would like to add Public Radio to the advertising schedule. The committee recommends \$3,500 for regional publications and Public Radio.

After discussion, motions were made as follows:

Rick Martindale moved that the *Colorado Pro Rodeo Finals* be awarded \$3,500 for brochure printing and radio advertising, Lynne Sorlye seconded, passed unanimously.

Deborah Hoefer moved that the *Western Colorado Botanical Gardens' Garden Tour* be awarded \$1,500 for posters/printing; Lynne Sorlye seconded, passed unanimously.

Brian Barry moved that the *Colorado Mountain Winefest* be awarded \$7,500 if the event is extended by 1 day, \$6,000 if it is not extended, all funds to be used for radio advertising; Deborah Hoefer seconded, passed unanimously.

Rick Martindale moved that the *Art & Jazz Festival* be awarded \$3,500 for regional publications and Colorado Public Radio and that surveys be conducted; Deborah Hoefer seconded, passed unanimously.

City Administration Debbie Kovalik reported that the city continues to be watchful of revenues and that 1st quarter spending is very conservative. The management team is identifying General Fund monies that will not be spent in the next three months. Regarding the Federal stimulus package, it is unknown if any of those funds will flow directly to cities. The top priority for Grand Junction and Mesa County is the 29 Road

bridge extension. Both entities have funds allocated for 2009 but would re-direct some of that money to other projects if the stimulus package finances the project.

STAFF REPORTS: January lodging tax collections decreased 2.6% from January 2008; lodging properties are reporting mixed results with some showing increases and others down 15%-19%. Visitor Center numbers dropped significantly and, if that is related to January lodging tax receipts, could represent a declining trend.

Sales The year has started strong with 13 leads issued in January. Another IDSS training session was held for the meetings properties. Staff has met twice with the Museum to discuss additional promotions as well as the specific information the VCB needs from the Museum in order to help promote their programs. Go West Summit was very successful with 20 pre-scheduled appointments and 16 additional appointments booked on-site.

Visitor Center Melanie Wiseman reported that the exhibit refurbishing project is proceeding on schedule. Most of the old display fixtures were donated to Dinosaur Journey, the Museum and Two Rivers Convention Center. Two local artists are working on the Grand Mesa wall mural. The Visitor Center will be closed the entire week of February 23 for painting and exhibit installation; the sculpture will be installed late that week. An open house will be held March 13 from 3pm-6pm for the Board, Council, City employees and tourism partners. The public will be invited to an open house Saturday, March 14 from 1pm-4 pm.

Volunteers who work from 5pm-8pm have expressed their frustration at working the evening shift because of the very low number of visitors during those hours; some volunteers have indicated that they will not sign up for that time period this summer. (The current hours of operation are 8:30am-5pm, 7 days a week, October-April, until 8pm May-September.) Melanie surveyed 11 visitor centers and Welcome Centers and found that the standard closing hour is 5pm September-May, 6pm June-August. The centers that were surveyed reported that visitors who arrive late don't expect the visitor center to be open but do pick up materials that are available outside the building. (Before closing each day the Fruita Welcome Center volunteers count the number of maps and brochures left outside, and they count those materials again the next morning.) Based on feedback from the volunteers and the visitor center surveys, Melanie recommends that the Visitor Center hours be changed to 8:30am-5pm October-May and 8:30am-6pm June-September. Rick Martindale stated that the majority of guests who check in during evening hours are fine when they are told that the Visitor Center opens at 8:30 am. Debbie Kovalik said she wants to discuss the proposed new hours at the hotel general managers' meeting February 11 before taking action.

Marketing/Promotions Jennifer Grossheim-Harris distributed the Arts, Hearts & Tarts calendars and reported the website click-throughs: 13 on the promotion, 204 on February specials, 41 on Arts, Hearts & Tarts lodging. Overall website activity was up

30% over last month. The VCB had a booth at the Denver Golf Expo; approximately 10,000 people attended the show, which is down slightly from 2008.

Jennifer distributed the 2009 Marketing Plan which has been trimmed down to more specifics and less narrative. National advertising has been cut back; those publications that couldn't be tracked were dropped. The contract amounts for both Hill & Company and Miles Media are the same as 2008.

OTHER BUSINESS: Barbara Bowman and Irene Carlow, along with Grand Junction Regional Airport staff, will visit the American Airlines Dallas reservation office February 12. Meetings are scheduled with sales, marketing and AA Vacations representatives.

Allegiant Airlines will hold a press conference at the airport at 10:30 am February 18 to announce service to a new destination.

March Regular Monthly Meeting Deborah Hoefer moved that the next monthly meeting be rescheduled from March 10 to March 3, Rick Martindale seconded, passed unanimously. The meeting will be held at Shaw Construction, 760 Horizon Drive.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm on motion of Deborah Hoefer and second of Brian Barry.