

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

MAY 10, 2011

PRESIDING: Per Nilsson, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Williams, Paul Petersen, Jessica Stimmel, Nathan Knoll, Glen Gallegos, Ron Beach, Lynne Sorlye

MEMBERS ABSENT: Renae Phillips

STAFF PRESENT: Debbie Kovalik, Jennifer Grossheim-Harris, Irene Carlow

GUEST: Odette Phelps, City of Fruita HR Manager and staff liaison to Tourism Advisory Council

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

MINUTES OF APRIL 12, 2011: Ron Beach moved to approve the minutes as written, Lynne Sorlye seconded, approved unanimously.

HOST REMARKS: Odette Phelps welcomed the Board and thanked them for holding their meeting in Fruita. She discussed the summer event schedule including Mike the Headless Chicken, Thursday Night Free Concert Series, Dinosaur Days and Farmers' Market. Fruita's 3% lodging tax goes to a tourism fund to market and advertise the City; 2010 lodging tax collections were down 3%.

Cobb & Associations handles all the advertising as well as the website. Tourism website visits are up 6% with overall site traffic up 23% from last month. The #1 interest is mountain biking followed by lodging. Advertising efforts are mostly regional with focus on the Front Range, which is Fruita's #1 market.

In response to questions from the Board, Odette stated that Fruita gets a lot of support from the VCB; partnership between the two entities is very common; the VCB includes Fruita as much as possible. For example, the VCB worked to coordinate a stop-over in Fruita for the World Automobile Race participants. Unfortunately, that stop-over could not be incorporated into the schedule but the VCB took the lead in trying to include Fruita in the itinerary. The VCB promotes and, in some cases, funds events in Fruita but Fruita does not contribute financially to the VCB.

BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS: JUCO Sponsorship Jamie Hamilton thanked the Board for their continued sponsorship of the Hall of Fame Banquet. The \$10,000 sponsorship also includes recognition at the American Baseball Coaches Association Convention, Athletic Directors' meetings and streaming commercials with Panhandle Sports

Broadcasting. Live TV broadcasts, which the VCB's sponsorship helped fund, were dropped for financial reasons. Gate receipts for the Saturday night championship game declined \$18,000 and production costs were \$5,000 – streaming is free and the VCB's commercials will be included.

Bernie Williams, who played 16 years for the Yankees and is a Grammy-nominated jazz musician, will be the banquet speaker. Thanks to the VCB's strong relationship with American Airlines, the airline is providing two complimentary tickets for Bernie Williams to travel from New York to Grand Junction for this speaking engagement. Thanks also to the Clarion Inn, headquarters hotel, for hosting the tournament umpires.

Construction on the stadium improvements actually starts two weeks before JUCO, when the east side football bleachers will be removed; work on the stadium will begin as soon as the tournament is over. The upgrades and improvements were required by the NJCAA in order to secure a 25-year commitment to keep the JUCO tournament in Grand Junction. Improvements include a state-of-the-art working press box which will also have a large open area for fans in wheelchairs and those with other physical needs.

The total project cost is \$8.3 million. No tax dollars and no General Fund dollars will be spent on the stadium improvements. The \$7.3 million bonded indebtedness is all JUCO cash flow, some lottery funds (which can only be used for capital projects) and some funds from the Parks Improvement Advisory Board. The bonds were sold in 27 minutes and the total amount raised to date is within \$256,000 of the total cost. We have been advised that this project is a finalist for El Pomar and Boettcher grants. FCI was awarded the contract and 86% of the subcontractors are in Mesa County. A Denver-area firm will do the vertical concrete work because that expertise is not available locally. (Mr. Hamilton left the meeting.)

Debbie Kovalik stated that 10 tournament passes for use by the Board are also included as part of this sponsorship. Staff will send a reminder email to the Board asking which games they would like to attend so the tickets can be rotated among everyone who would like to go.

Special Events Nathan Knoll reported on one application reviewed by the committee:

"The Language of This Land" Writers' Conference - \$1,990 requested This new event scheduled for October 7-9 is sponsored by the Western Colorado Writers' Forum. The conference features workshops (both paid and free), a community banquet and a free community breakfast with writers/speakers. While this event is new to Grand Junction, the organizer has done several other similar events elsewhere. Funding is requested for posters that will be distributed in libraries and bookstores on the Front Range, Salt Lake City, Taos; magazine ads; promotions via their 900+ email list; postcards to mailing lists from Readers' Fest and other writing organizations in the region. The application lists several other sponsors, including Colorado Humanities and

private donors. The committee recommends full funding. Jessica Stimmel moved to award "The Language of This Land" Writers' Conference \$1,990 in Special Events marketing assistance, Glen Gallegos seconded, passed unanimously.

Nathan Knoll reported there is approximately \$14,000 remaining in the Special Events budget. The committee expects to receive applications from the Downtown Car Show and the Kennel Club and there could be other applications as well. Based on this year's average funding award, it is possible that the full budgeted amount will not be awarded. The Chair led a discussion about spending the entire budgeted amount to promote these events. He suggested the Board could direct additional marketing dollars to those events that were not fully funded. Alternatively, the VCB could directly place ads for those events and charge the expense to the Special Events budget.

Glen Gallegos said he prefers to hold on to any unspent funds, not spend/award additional amounts over and above the initial awards. Nathan Knoll stated that additional spending on an event isn't likely to substantially impact attendance. If the Board chooses to make additional expenditures, perhaps a media blitz promoting the overall calendar of events would offer a better return. Jennifer Grossheim-Harris said that Miles Media could send our entire database an email promoting all the big summer events for approximately \$1,500. The consensus of the Board is to hold off on any additional expenditures over and above specific award amounts.

Debbie Kovalik asked if the members want to "adopt an event", i.e., touch base with the organizer and attend the event, as discussed at the annual retreat. The Board volunteered as follows:

Open Studio Tours (October)	Lynne Sorlye
Palisade Bluegrass Fest	Jessica Stimmel, Per Nilsson, John Williams
Lavender Festival	Glen Gallegos
Peach Fest	Ron Beach, Per Nilsson
Tour of the Valley	Per Nilsson
Flyin' Miata	Ron Beach
Pro Rodeo Finals	Glen Gallegos
Rim Rock Marathon	John Williams
Writers' Conference	Glen Gallegos
Winefest	Per Nilsson (and others TBD)

Throughout the year, many events offer complimentary tickets to the VCB. Debbie noted that, when event organizers provide complimentary admission, it is for VCB Board members only. If a Board member will not attend the event, the ticket should not be passed on to anyone else.

STAFF REPORTS Debbie Kovalik reviewed the monthly statistics:

- April lodging tax +12.7%, YTD +1.5%
- Website unique users +10%

- Visitor Center -10%; declining numbers are expected to continue as travelers get information on the Internet and have less need for visitor centers
- Sales leads are at 46% to goal; contract sales rep's leads at 50% to goal

Barb Bowman and a representative of Gateway Canyons traveled on Continental Airlines' inaugural flight to Houston to attend Collaborate trade show where they made contact with 40 corporate prospects. In addition, they made personal sales calls to several energy companies.

Barb Bowman, Debbie Kovalik and representatives of the Doubletree and Grand Vista will attend US Travel Association's International Pow Wow trade show in San Francisco later this month.

Jennifer Grossheim-Harris gave an update on marketing activities:

- National Travel & Tourism Week (May 7-15) – staff developed a YouTube video; storefront signs; lapel stickers for Visitor Center volunteers and tourism partners' front desk personnel; street banners; electronic signage; local media coverage
- Front Range radio buy is nearly complete
- Social media icons are being added to our website listings that have social media sites
- During May, 11 travel writers will be hosted; all are on assignment and the majority are international

CITY ADMINISTRATION UPDATE: Debbie Kovalik discussed City policy on employees' use of the Internet and of email. Communication through City email accounts is restricted to business use only – personal use is specifically prohibited. Additionally, any email to/from a City address is subject to open records requests. Board members are asked to honor the City policy and refrain from sending staff any emails that are not specifically related to VCB business. Any non-business emails should be sent to a personal address to avoid the potential of putting an employee in violation of the policy.

OTHER BUSINESS: The Board reviewed a draft letter of support requested by a local group, Steadfast Steeds. The group is applying to the BLM through the existing Wild Horse and Burro Program for development funds for a wild horse eco-sanctuary on Glade Park. Lynne Sorlye moved to approve the letter of support, John Williams seconded, passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm on motion of Jessica Stimmel and second of John Williams.