

VISIT GRAND JUNCTION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING  
July 17, 2018

Fairfield Inn and Suites  
225 Main St.  
Grand Junction, CO

**Presiding:** Julie Shafer, Chair

**Visit Grand Junction Board Members Present:** Kevin Reimer, Tammy Anderson, Elizabeth Hallgren, Josh Niernberg, Britt Mathwich, Paul Petersen

**Board Members Absent:** Brad Taylor, Susie Kiger

**Grand Junction City Council Members Present:** Phyllis Norris

**Staff Present:** Elizabeth Fogarty, Kim Machado

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m.

**Special Event Funding Program**

Elizabeth Fogarty provided a historical summary of the special events funding program. She explained that progression toward modern initiatives and programming has created an opportunity to provide greater value to special events versus awarding funding through marketing grants. These new initiatives include tools and data that event coordinators would not normally have access to. Elizabeth has met with the City Manager and the Special Events Committee to discuss the shift in strategy for special events and they agree with this new approach. For the 2019 budget, \$45,000 has been allocated to special events.

Visit Grand Junction (VGJ) staff is drafting a new application for assistance. New questions will be developed that will address how the event supports the brand and how attendance is being tracked. Like an internal report card, it will outline the expectations for assistance and will help VGJ determine what level of support is needed. The goal is to increase attendance at each event and help events improve over time to support the community brand. Once an event nears capacity and has had time to build up their own marketing budget, assistance will shift to other events. Elizabeth will share the new application at the next board meeting.

Councilmember Phyllis Norris asked if all sporting events will move over to the Greater Grand Junction Sports Commission (GGJSC). Elizabeth replied that it is an ongoing conversation, but that is the intent especially if the lodging ballot passes.

Elizabeth explained the difference between event promotion and destination marketing. Event promotion is the responsibility of the event coordinator and focuses on growing the event. Destination marketing promotes the development and marketing of a destination with the intent of impacting economic growth and quality of life through a travel and tourism strategy. VGJ will support events, but the differentiation is important. VGJ can provide greater value with marketing expertise and services, such as data analysis, to help events and businesses become more successful. As our brand evolves, special event marketing as well as all of our other initiatives will also evolve.

All the board members expressed agreement with the new strategy.

### **Lodging Tax Ballot Update**

Julie thanked the board members for their support of the lodging tax ballot and encouraged them to attend the July 18 City Council meeting where Council will consider whether to refer this ballot measure to the voters at a Special Municipal Election on November 6. She also encouraged them to attend a press conference on Thursday, July 19 at 11:15 am to announce the formation of a committee called, "The Tax You Don't Pay" to inform voters about the benefits of an increase in the lodging tax. Julie will represent Visit Grand Junction at the press conference. The committee's goal is to raise \$50,000 for marketing the campaign. A fact sheet created by the committee was distributed to the board members.

There was concern expressed with regard to one of the talking points stating it's time Denver paid their fair share when visiting Grand Junction, just as the local GJ community pays when staying in Denver. It was shared that we are marketing to the Denver and Front Range to welcome them to this community, so having such a talking point is not helpful and unnecessary. The Board were all in agreement, so Julie stated she would share that with the committee.

Phyllis thanked Julie for her hard work and support of this ballot measure.

### **Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)**

Elizabeth updated the board on the status of the MOUs between VGJ, the Grand Junction Air Service Alliance (GJASA) and the Greater Grand Junction Sports Commission (GGJSC). The MOUs will come from the Visit Grand Junction Board of Directors and it will outline the expectations for each organization including responsibility for their own marketing and promotion to support their mission. VGJ is willing to provide expertise and data to back up the marketing decisions of GJASA and GGJSC.

### **Visit Grand Junction Reorganization Update**

Elizabeth mentioned that the Marketing and Communications Manager, Data Analytics and Research Analyst and Administrative/Financial Analyst positions have been posted and the applications will be reviewed. The remaining positions are scheduled to be posted soon. Kevin Reimer asked for the position descriptions and Elizabeth will send them to the board once they are finalized by the City's Human Resources department and the jobs have been posted. Barbara Bowman retired July 6. There was a private celebration with staff. There will also be an Open House at the Visitor Center and she will be honored at the next Visit Grand Junction Tourism Summit. She may assist VGJ with future familiarization tours (FAMs) as needed.

### **Visit Grand Junction Communications**

Elizabeth summarized the recent community communications that have been sent out to the board and community members. The goal of these communications is to share what is being accomplished within the department, announce media coverage and provide opportunities for residents and businesses to participate in VGJ's programs. Feedback from the community has been very positive.

### **New Initiatives**

Elizabeth shared the initiatives, tools and technology to support the reorganization of VGJ. These include:

- CrowdRiff – an AI-powered, user-generated content (UGC) platform that will allow VGJ to discover and deliver performing visuals across all social channels.
- RootsRated – a content media platform that connects users with the best local experiences, through written, photo and video content.
- Arrivalist – technology that measures the effectiveness of marketing campaigns by measuring, in aggregate, which messages are most effective at influencing users to visit the destination.

- Tableau – a business intelligence software that will help VGJ understand the data from all sources, including Arrivalist, social media, website, etc. and provide actionable insights.
- Knowland – group data and innovative technology that will help VGJ drive revenue with meetings market intelligence. It is the largest source of historical data on actualized events across all group segments available to the hospitality industry.

A supplemental appropriation to the 2018 VGJ budget will be requested from City Council to fund these platforms. Because of the time and resources involved with destination branding, this initiative will take place in 2019.

### **Other Business**

- Julie asked the board members if they have visited with prospective board candidates. Several replied that they have. She encouraged everyone to continue seeking out candidates and encourage them to apply.
- Elizabeth mentioned there have been some small group conversations in the community about how travel jobs are viewed as low-paying. She further shared that based on research, travel employment continues to grow faster than the rest of the private sector and nearly 40% of workers whose first job was in the travel industry reached an annual career salary of more than \$100,000 and the overall average career salary of Americans whose first job was in travel is \$82,000. Over 52% earn a middle-class wage or higher. Workers with high school degrees or less, women and minorities, who began their career in the travel industry achieved salaries that are 5% - 6% higher than workers who started off in other industries.
- Elizabeth reported that she met with Gateway Canyons recently to discuss future partnerships and their participation in VGJ's marketing services program, "Expand the Tent". VGJ recently sent Gateway Canyons a conference lead that will result in a significant profit for the property and they expressed their appreciation for the lead. Elizabeth added that the parameters of the lead could not be met by any Grand Junction hotel property. She will meet with their new Director of Sales and General Manager at a future date to continue the discussion.

Elizabeth thanked the board for their support and assistance so far this year and recognized the significant developments that are already being implemented.

There being no further business, Britt Mathwich motioned to adjourn the meeting; Paul Petersen seconded. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 4:36 pm.