



Board of Directors  
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: February 22, 2022  
Recorded by Aletza Boucher

**Board Members Present:**

Bill Bennett  
Karen Bobe  
David Bodenhamer  
Susan Boggs  
Bill Brett  
Robert Craft (virtual)  
Penny Groux  
Tony Kennon  
Glen Kaiser  
Frank Reed  
Mark Stillings  
**\*a quorum was met**

**Board Members Absent:**

Mac McAleer

**Staff Members Present:**

Laura Beebe  
Aletza Boucher  
Kim Chapman  
Joanie Flynn  
Beth Gendler  
David Greene  
Crystal Hinds  
Jo Phillips  
Michelle Russ  
Cheryl Vickers

**Call to Order**

Chairman Glen Kaiser called the meeting to order at 8:30am in the conference room at the Orange Beach Welcome Center in Orange Beach, AL and via Zoom.

**Opening Discussion**

Chairman Kaiser opened the meeting by welcoming those in attendance. He introduced Aletza Boucher, the new Executive Assistant for Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism. Beth Gendler reported that Chris Blankenship, Commissioner of ADCNR was unable to attend today's meeting, but plans to be at the March meeting.

**Board Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Kaiser asked for a motion to approve the January 2022 board meeting minutes. Bill Brett made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mark Stillings. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

### **Consent Agenda Items**

The following reports were included in this month's meeting packet as agenda items: Destination Growth Indicators, Communications, H & I Report, Sales and Sports Report, and Financial Statements.

Beth Gendler reviewed the Destination Growth Indicators. The Hotel Occupancy Rate for January 2022 was down considerably compared to last year, with a variance of -22.6%. The Hotel Average Daily Rate (ADR) was up 5.1% over January 2021. Hotel RevPar was also down - 11.7%. In comparison to January 2021, Vacation Rentals were up this year with the Occupancy Rate up 6.4%, the Average Daily Rate up 4.5% and the RevPar up 36.4%. Taxable Retail Sales for December 2021 increased 24.2% over last year and the Taxable Lodging Rentals were up 60.8%.

Joanie Flynn reviewed highlights in the Communications Report. She invited board members to attend the Annual Tourism Summit event at Perdido Beach Resort on March 29th from 8:00am – 11:30am. She noted that paper shortages may force traditional publications to combine two months into one issue (ex: March/April), which may impact our advertising plan and vacation guide orders.

Crystal Hinds, Digital Operations Manager at GSOBT, discussed the implementation of the Chat Bot to the website. There was discussion comparing the use of the Chat Bot with a live chat. She also talked about the recent launch of TikTok, which offers a new opportunity to expand video consumption to over 80 million active monthly users. TikTok videos, which can be found on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Amazon Fire TV, enable us to get in front of a new and existing qualified audience with a desire to travel. Since the launch a few weeks ago, TikTok@visitalabamabeaches has over 38,000 views.

Kim Chapman reviewed the Hospitality & Information Report. She advised that January numbers are up as Snowbirds have come back in a big way. The Remote Welcome Centers *Showcase Series*, has doubled in participation over January 2021. Welcome Center traffic is up and 80% of guests were first-time visitors. She noted that Guest Texting was launched at the end of last year, allowing guests to text 800-745-SAND and receive a live customized response from a staff member.

Michelle Russ reviewed the Sales and Sports Dashboard advising that numbers are up and should continue strong into the spring. She stated that some meeting business has been lost due to lack of availability.

David Greene provided an overview of the Finance Report. He noted that the tax receipts for the month of January (December business) is up 61.2% compared to 2021, which is almost 90% above budget. We did file on our EDA grant (\$800,000) and received about 2/3 of the money. As soon as we get together the remaining documents, we will file for the remainder.

Chairman Kaiser called for a motion to approve the consent agenda items. Susan Boggs made a motion to accept the consent agenda items, seconded by Karen Bobe. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

### **Action Items**

The updated recommendations to the Vacation Policy, as discussed at the January 2022 Board meeting were presented. Chairman Kaiser noted that the objective of the change is to remain competitive in recruiting and retaining staff. When preparing the proposed vacation policy, a Compensation and Benefits Study from Destinations International was used to analyze and compare paid time off for approximately 190 CVB organizations. In addition, policy information for both city governments were used for comparison.

The proposed policy includes 2 weeks paid vacation from date of hire through the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of employment, 3 weeks paid vacation from the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary – 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of employment, and 4 weeks paid vacation from the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary forward. Paid vacation is accrued and earned by the payroll period.

There was discussion regarding the accrual of sick leave. David Greene explained that employees receive ½ day of sick leave per pay period, up to a maximum of 60 days. Employees who leave the organization are not paid for their unused sick days.

Bill Brett suggested adding to the proposed policy “the maximum amount of accrued and earned paid vacation can be adjusted at the President/CEO’s discretion” and made a motion to approve the proposed policy with that modification to the statement. Bill Bennett seconded the motion and after no further discussion, the vote to approve was unanimous.

The Profit-Sharing Contribution recommendation was tabled due to our current administrator having been sold. The recommendation will be presented to the board at later date.

### **Discussion Items**

#### **Land Purchase**

Beth provided an update on the possible land purchase located at County Road 8 and Foley Beach Express. There was discussion regarding a proposed road share that provides access to the land, which will be located at the south side of the Foley property and the north side of the Gulf Shores property. Mayor Craft will work with the City of Foley on the shared cost of the maintenance for the road, once completed.

The property owners are replacing the Letter of Intent with a purchase agreement which will be brought to the Board. Beth contacted Jay Dickson with Volkert, the engineering firm used by the City of Foley, to discuss whether the land is viable for the intended facilities and if it makes sense to move forward with the purchase. Concern was expressed regarding a power line that runs through the property. A recommendation was made to research the right-of-way easement and how to best work around.

Mayor Craft advised that there is a 23-acre site to the north of the Auburn campus and west of the property being considered by the CVB. The City of Gulf Shores is currently working with developers regarding the right of way back to Hwy. 59 for this property.

Bill Brett suggested giving the Executive Committee the authority to enter into a purchase agreement, without finalizing the deal. He recommended a 90-day window to negotiate. Chairman Kaiser stated that the initial purchase agreement should be considered a draft and the CVB should be able to address contingencies as needed. Once the purchase agreement is received, it will be forwarded to the Executive Committee for review.

#### Beach Safety Campaign

Joanie reported that materials are being produced for a beach safety campaign. We are currently working with Baldwin County EMA and the cities' fire chief (Ft. Morgan, Gulf Shores, Orange Beach) to coordinate the new program and to provide a unified message for visitors. Beth stated that the goal is to have an impactful program that not only promotes safety and saves lives, but relies on the experts to guide the messaging and the flag systems. The Fire Chief from Gulf Shores and Orange Beach will present at the Tourism Summit at the end of March.

#### Adjourned

Chairman Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 10:10am.