



Board of Directors
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: August 23, 2022
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

Board Members Present: Bill Brett, Robert Craft, Glen Kaiser, Tony Kennon, Mark Stillings, David Bodenhamer, Penny Groux, Frank Reed, Gerald Tipton; (a quorum was met)

Board Members Absent: Bill Bennett, Susan Boggs, Karen Bobe

GSOBT Staff Members Present: Laura Beebe, Kim Chapman, Joanie Flynn, Beth Gendler, David Greene, Jo Phillips, Michelle Russ, Sally Westendorf, Sarah Cooper, Kay Maghan, Crystal Hinds

Visitors: Alex Lute (Sunset Properties)

Call to Order

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

Board Meeting Minutes

Bill Brett made a motion to approve the July 26, 2022 Board of Director's meeting minutes, seconded by Penny Groux. After no discussion, the motion passed.

Consent Agenda Items

The following Consent Agenda Items were reviewed and discussed:

Beth Gendler reviewed the Destination Growth Indicators (DGI) report: for the month of July, hotel and vacation rental occupancy rates were down from 2021, but up from 2019. The same with the average daily rate (ADR) for the month of July. Year-to-date, hotel and vacation rental occupancy are also behind 2021 figures, but up from 2019. Referencing figures from the month of June, taxable retail sales were up 12% and lodging sales were up 20% compared to 2021.

Joanie Flynn provided an overview of the Communications Report with a few key stats. She reported that meeting sessions were up (the highest we have ever seen); blog sessions produced 94,000 sessions; newsletter sign-ups were up 65% vs 2021, which may indicate some potential pent-up planning demand; Events produced nearly 47,000 sessions.

Page Two
Board of Directors Meeting
August 23, 2022

Joanie informed the board that there has been some chatter in the DMO world regarding Safari's privacy updates, which caused online sessions to be tied to the Chicago and New York time zones.

Next, Joanie reviewed the year-over-year volume measure of the Arrivalist Travel Index (page three of the communications report), which showed 2019, 2021, 2022 overnight stays essentially coincide. Lastly, for communications, Kay Maghan gave an overview of page eight of the communication report: for the first quarter of the year, GSOBT generated 39 articles and reached over 120 million potential guests.

Kim Chapman gave a brief overview of the H&I Report. Welcome center traffic continues to lead the way, with guests preferring to visit us in person for interactions. Guests continue to wish to receive vacation guides in the mail. Guests are opting into IP partner emails – there has been a slight uptick. As for year-over-year guest servicing results, the data show an increase of 777% over 2019 and 242% compared to 2021.

Michelle Russ reviewed the Sales & Sports Report, with a Dashboard overview, namely pointing out a decrease in meetings and sports room nights in July (i.e., due to movement to earlier or previous months for events, or loss of field usage). However, year-to-date total sales activity was up over 20% from 2021.

Michelle reported that NAIA track will be in a different location for the next two years but reassured the group that we will be rebidding for the future. The reason for the move was not because of the destination, but because the teams will be able to stay in dorm rooms at the new location.

David Greene provided a brief update from the Finance department. Referencing the Tax Revenue handout, there was an increase of 11.6% over 2021 figures (for June tax data), which leaves the organization 31.6% behind from last year. However, David reported that there was a window for more dollars to come in, and he expected another transmittal by the end of the week (8/26/22).

David pointed out that the organizations debt services had increased since 2021, influenced by land payment for the new property on County Road 8, Coastal Gateway Boulevard. Lastly, he reported that the refinance was successful for the three building mortgages during July.

Bill Brett made a motion to approve the consent agenda items, seconded by Mark Stillings. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Action Items

David Greene presented *Resolution 22-17 - Approval of Proposed 2nd Quarter Revised 2022 Special Events Funds Budget, Resolution 22-18 - Approval of Proposed 2nd Quarter Revised 2022 Sports Commission Fund Budget, and Resolution 22-19 - Approval of Proposed 2nd Quarter Revised 2022 Operating Fund Budget.*

Page Three
Board of Directors Meeting
August 23, 2022

Pertaining to the second quarter special events budget revisions: the most significant change was the cancellation of the oyster cookoff event. There was a thorough discussion during the finance committee meeting and Mark Stillings reported their recommendation to approve.

Mark Stillings made a motion to approve Resolution 22-17; Bill Brett made a second motion. With no additional discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Bill Brett made a motion to approve Resolution 22-18; Mark Stillings made a second motion. With no additional discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

There was a brief discussion about the operating fund budget adjustments (Resolution 22-19): David presented information recommended by staff and discussed during the most recent Finance Committee meeting about transferring funds into a to-be-created account for expenses related to the development of the future sports complex project. The board agreed to discuss this further at the Board Retreat in December.

Bill Brett made a motion to approve Resolution 22-19; Penny Groux made a second motion. With no additional discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Beth Gendler presented content from the Gateway Initiative, pertaining to the next 5-year cycle of a workforce development capital campaign. The organization's current annual contribution is \$30,000, with a request for an increase to \$40,000 (to initiate in 2023). Mayor Robert Craft commented that supporting workforce development and support programs is important in our community. The board expressed a desire for the Gateway team to present at the next board meeting and supply additional information to the members.

Discussion Items

Beth Gendler, Michelle Russ, and Kim Chapman provided a brief demonstration and overview of a proposed Dashboard view for future board report presentations. Beth reported that staff members spend an average of 30 hours per month developing the board report each month, often transferring from one system to another system.

The proposal is to utilize a single system to import and consume the board report data, as well as historical information. This change will allow a reduction in staff time and resources and allow board members live access (at any time during the month; between board meetings) to the key metrics reported by each department.

Joanie Flynn provided an overview of the most recent wave (64) of the American Travel Sentiment Survey. Joanie's key takeaway was that consumers appear to be calming in their concerns and decisions related to traveling with high costs (e.g., transportation and food).

Board members agreed to move the Board Retreat date to December 7th, 2022.

Page Four
Board of Directors Meeting
August 23, 2022

Beth reminded the Board that the organization's email domain is soon to change to @alabamabeaches.com. This will officially be changed in November. All stakeholders will receive communications well in advance.

Mayor Tony Kennon gave a brief update on the Bama Bayou property.

Mayor Robert Craft gave a brief update about the work on the Embassy Suites project.

Adjourned

Chairman Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 9:57am.

Next Regular Meeting Date:
September 27, 2022
Location: OBWC