



Board of Directors  
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: February 28, 2023  
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

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

**Board Members Absent:** Karen Bobe, Susan Boggs, Robert Craft, Tony Kennon

**GSOBT Staff Members Present:** Kim Chapman, Beth Gendler, David Greene Michelle Russ, Brittany Roh, Deb Langston

**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**

The meeting minutes from January 2022 were presented.

Bill Brett made a motion to approve the January 24, 2022 minutes, seconded by Penny Groux. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent from the January meeting abstained from voting.

### **Consent Agenda Items**

The following Consent Agenda Items were reviewed and discussed:

Beth Gendler reviewed the Destination Growth Indicators (DGI) report. January hotel occupancy was up over 2022 and down from 2021. YTD, the hotel occupancy was down from 2022 and 2021, however, ADR was up considerably. As for VRM/short-term rentals, slightly off from 2022 and even with 2021. December taxable retail revenue was up 7% over 2022 and up 64.5% over 2019. December taxable lodging 2022 versus 2021 was down -3%, but up 60% over 2019.

Beth Gendler reviewed the occupancy forecasts, calling special note page 11: 2023 OTB was slightly below 2022 OTB, but well below 2022 Actuals. The comparison to 2021 OTB and Actuals, on page 12, showed 2023 pacing with OTB, but well below 2021 Actuals

Beth Gendler reviewed the Granicus statistics on the last page of the DGI. The Accommodations Inventory is a count of hotels and condos in the destination that was developed over the years by GSOBT staff and reports from the cities. Granicus is a vendor of the State Tourism Department,

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which has been tasked with calculating the number of short-term rentals throughout the State, in an effort to understand losses on rental tax collections. Granicus collects data on any listing on hundreds of sites, including RV lots, and boat slips.

Beth Gendler provided an overview of the Communications Report. The summary page provided an overview of the extra monies allotted to June and August ad deployment. Beth reported that the SMARI team advised alternative options for research and they will make further recommendations for providing new market research moving forward. The Key Data Dashboard report included length-of-stay and origin market data. Website/social traffic was down, which was attributed to the budget being lower from a loss of EDA spend from the previous year.

Kim Chapman gave a brief overview of the H&I Report. She reported that January was a good month. Welcome Center traffic was up 4% over 2022. Vacation Specialists noted visitors staying a shorter amount of time (i.e., two weeks versus 30 days). Kim reported a significant increase in attendance at the Winter Showcase series, hosted at the Learning Campus. Kim reported a decrease in texting and emails; likely attributed to the visitor demographic (i.e., snowbirds). She also pointed out that the top five guest question topics included lots of *first-time* questions.

Michelle Russ reviewed the Sales & Sports Report for January data. Sales activities were steady compared to last year. She noted IP response to leads were down 43%, which is likely due to the response due date compared to the run-date of the board report data. Sponsorship sales and activities have been steady. Michelle summarized upcoming events, namely Ballyhoo, which was set to be a huge event. Michelle also noted volleyball, softball, and golf are coming in the spring.

David Greene provided an update from the Finance department. He reported January revenue was down 3.2% against last year, but that February receipts had been better. David noted that many one-time expenses occur in January (e.g., subscriptions, etc.). He reported that campaigns, like golf, were getting kicked off and all was moving smoothly.

Bill Bennett made a motion to approve the consent agenda items, seconded by Gerald Tipton. With no further discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

**Discussion Items**

Beth Gendler introduced two staff visitors: Brittany Roh, with the sports and events team, and Debra Langston, with Human Resources.

Beth Gendler summarized the newly formed organizational Core Values: *Take Care of One Another; Bring Your A-Game; Move the Needle; Get It Done; Keep It Smooth.*

Beth Gendler and David Greene reported that there are two candidates for a requested compensation study and proposals will be coming in soon.

Michelle Russ provided a brief update on the status of the sports feasibility study with Sports Facilities Companies (SFC), who were in town January 24-25. The consultants met with event planners, representatives from the High Schools, municipal representatives and others. Michelle

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reported that the consultants are having continual convos and working on a market analysis, which will be presented on 3/9. Site visits to Birmingham and Panama City Beach are being planned; all board members are invited to join the meetings and site visits.

Beth Gendler provided an update on the VP of Marketing search. The job description has been updated and will be posted internally then will be shared externally through national outlets (e.g., Destinations International and LinkedIn).

**Adjourned**

Chairman Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 9:19 am.

DRAFT