



Board of Directors
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: March 28, 2023
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

Board Members Present: Bill Bennett, Bill Brett, Penny Groux, Glen Kaiser, Tony Kennon, Frank Reed, Karen Bobe, Susan Boggs, Mark Stillings, Gerald Tipton; (a quorum was met)

Board Members Absent: Robert Craft, David Bodenhamer

GSOBT Staff Members Present: Kim Chapman, Beth Gendler, David Greene, Laura Beebe, Michelle Russ, Helen White, Janna Nelson

Visitors: none

Call to Order

Chairman Glen Kaiser called the meeting to order at 8:32 am in the conference room at the Orange Beach Welcome Center in Orange Beach, AL.

Board Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from February 2022 were presented.

Bill Brett made a motion to approve the February 28, 2022 minutes, seconded by Mark Stillings. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent from the February 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. During the month of February, Hotel Occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR were up over 2022 and 2021; YTD figures were up as well. As for VRM: Occupancy was down a little over 2022 for the month of February as well as YTD, but up over 2021 for the month and YTD. Beth explained Taxable Retail Sales for the month of January were down over 2022, but up over 2021. Taxable Lodging Sales were up over 2022 and 2021.

The group briefly discussed the Accommodations Inventory document on page 19. 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, 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.

Page Two
Board of Directors Meeting
March 28, 2023

Laura Beebe provided an overview of the Communications Report. She explained the efforts to increase the size and brighten the color of the IP site buttons, which increased engagement (i.e., clicks) by 14% over the past 2 weeks. Laura outlined high-level stats from the website (e.g., average time on the site was up 26% and new users in March were up 6.6%).

Laura explained that, through the new influencer program, in January, one influencer published 40 stories, for example. More influencers are being vetted. On page two, the PR report showed that total article circulation for 2022 (January and February) was 1.8 billion, compared to only 113M during the same time in 2022). As for the Arrivalist report (starting on page 4), Laura explained that January and February reports were provided in the packet.

Kim Chapman gave a brief overview of the H&I Report. H&I saw significant increases in the YOY guest servicing activity as well as Welcome Center traffic, including the Mobile Welcome Center, which made up most of the traffic, up over 47%. Kim noted the presence of Janna Nelson and gave a nod to her work on the Showcase Series. The events included 33 presentations (16 new from the prior year); attendance increased by 59%; total attendance was over 3k; with record attendance in a single day being 186 people. Guest reviews were solid: 90% would recommend, 73% visited an IP due to attendance, and 91% indicated they were coming back in 2024.

Michelle Russ reviewed the Sales & Sports Report. Starting with Sales Metrics, which for YTD almost all activities were up or catching up, although sports room nights were off slightly. Michelle mentioned softball and baseball events and team signups were pacing to be very strong in April. She noted upcoming events, such as a ‘cubing’ event (a Rubik’s cube competition) and Zydeco, baseball, softball, track and NCAA beach volleyball.

David Greene provided an update from the Finance department. He pointed to March revenue being at \$802k (\$60k more from 2022). At this point, David noted that revenue was ahead 3.5% YTD and 3.5% ahead of budget.

Penny Groux made a motion to approve the consent agenda items, seconded by Susan Boggs. With no discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

Action Items

David Greene presented *Resolution 23-06 – Designation of Check Signers*. He explained the attached bylaws showing a specific section about the rule, and the listing of historical check signers. David and Beth Gendler explained there were not VP of Sports or Finance when the bylaws were originally written and enacted, and who the proposed new check signers were, staff and board members alike: Gerald Tipton, Michelle Russ, and David Greene.

Bill Bennett made a motion to approve *Resolution 23-06*, seconded by Susan Boggs. With no discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

Page Three
Board of Directors Meeting
March 28, 2023

Discussion Items

Michelle Russ provided a brief update on the status of the sports feasibility study. She explained that SFC provided an update and made some recommendations and are currently working a proforma and an economic impact report, coming soon. She reminded the board of the site visit to Panama City Beach, which was to include representatives from both cities, members of the task force/board members and staff. Beth summarized the most recent recommendations of SFC.

Beth Gendler explained the gifts/ethics rules for members of the CVB staff.

Beth Gendler introduced Helen White from the Finance department, a staff visitor.

Susan Boggs provided an update from the fisheries council, particularly the start of Red Snapper season (which opens May 27) and updates about a number of threatened species seen in Gulf of Mexico waters.

Penny Groux mentioned staffing challenges across the destination; other board members expressed similar concerns.

Adjourned

Chairman Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 9:35 am.