



Board of Directors
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: April 25, 2023
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

Board Members Present: Bill Bennett, Robert Craft, Penny Groux, Frank Reed, Karen Bobe, Susan Boggs, Mark Stillings, Gerald Tipton; (a quorum was met)

Board Members Absent: Bill Brett, David Bodenhamer, Glen Kaiser, Tony Kennon

GSOBT Staff Members Present: Laura Beebe, Beth Gendler, David Greene, Jo Phillips

Visitors: none

Call to Order

Acting Chairman Mark Stillings called the meeting to order at 8:31 am in the conference room at the Orange Beach Welcome Center in Orange Beach, AL.

Board Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from March 2022 were presented.

Penny Groux made a motion to approve the March 25, 2022 minutes, seconded by Gerald Tipton. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent from the March 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. March occupancy was down from March of 2022 for hotels and VRM units while ADR was up significantly up. Lodging and retail tax revenue (from February) were also up, month-to-month and year-to-date. Beth reviewed the past 30-day Actuals and May projections (what is on-the-books). Occupancy was projected to be down almost nine percentage points and the revenue was forecast to be \$10m off for the month of May. There was a brief discussion about paid and owner occupancy.

Laura Beebe and Beth Gendler outlined the Communications Report. Beth began with a review of the Arrivalist report. Laura reviewed the internet and social media marketing details from the month of March. Changing the IP buttons on the website revealed a conversion rate increase of 19%. Laura explained about a new TikTok experience study that was ongoing. As for the website, visitor sessions were up over 4.4%, users were up 4.84 %, but average time on the site and partner referrals were down. Lastly, Laura revealed that, from the PR standpoint, we were at over a billion and a half impressions.

Beth reported that the VP of Marketing Search was still underway.

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Beth Gendler gave a brief overview of the H&I Report on behalf of Kim Chapman. She outlined that Welcome Center traffic increased over the last month corresponding with events (e.g., Ballyhoo). There was a 38% increase in email opt-ins, an 18% increase in event postings and 23 new Industry Partners. There was a brief discussion about crafting elevator speeches for Board Members.

Beth Gendler reviewed the Sales & Sports Report on behalf of Michelle Russ. She reported that the data showed that convention business was back, as well as meetings (i.e., referencing the trends connected to Pandemic trends). Beth noted an expected room night decrease over the summer and reiterated excitement that the NCAA Beach Volleyball event was coming soon.

David Greene provided an update from the Finance department. March revenue was up 8.5% over 2022, February business, and YTD 3.7% ahead of 2022. David explained that all expenses in March were in line with expectations and there were no big items to review.

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

Action Items

Beth Gendler initiated the discussion of transferring funds from the opportunity fund to push for late spring and early summer bookings as well as a push for June and July advertising (i.e., “book today, beach tomorrow” campaign). Mark Stillings followed with a brief review of the Finance Committee meeting review from the week prior and handed the floor over to David Greene.

David Greene presented *Resolution 23-07- Approval of Proposed 1st Quarter Revised 2023 Special Events Fund Budget*. David reported that the fund balance had not changed, and the finance team simply moved some funds around due to canceled events and the movement to the opportunity fund.

David Greene presented *Resolution 23-08 - Approval of Proposed 1st Quarter Sports Commission Fund Budget*. He reported on various transfers for events and small changes for personnel, sales and marketing, and operations.

David Greene presented *Resolution 23-09 - Approval of Proposed 1st Quarter Operating Fund Budget*. The Finance Committee felt that the organization should decrease budgeted revenue to \$135K for the month of June (lodging revenue). David outlined that an additional \$400K from the opportunity fund would be allocated to the communications team for various advertising promotions. David concluded that the projected ending fund balance would be \$1.795M.

Gerald made a motion to approve *Resolution 23-07, Resolution 23-08, and Resolution 23-09*, seconded by Susan Boggs. With no discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

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Discussion Items

There was a question about CFO by Design presentation. Mark Stillings and Beth Gendler shared that this company was introduced to Beth, Glen, and Mark at a leadership conference, and was then brought to the Finance Committee. Beth explained that the consultants assess finance department processes and procedures, outside of typical, annual finance audit. The Finance Committee deemed the current year was not the right time considering the recent budget changes.

Beth Gendler informed the board that the vendor used for short-term rental data analysis, Key Data, would soon partner with another company, Amadeus, which will allow for similar assessments of hotel data. This will replace the need for the Smith Travel Research (STR) report.

Adjourned

Acting Chairman Mark Stillings adjourned the meeting at 9:48 am.