



Board of Directors  
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: May 23, 2023  
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

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

**Board Members Absent:** Susan Boggs, Robert Craft, Tony Kennon, Gerald Tipton

**GSOBT Staff Members Present:** Laura Beebe, Kim Chapman, Beth Gendler, David Greene, Jo Phillips, Michelle Russ, Austin Simmons, Claire Blackwell

**Visitors:** Sheila Hodges

**Call to Order**

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

**Presentation**

Matt Taylor (Grant, Sanders, and Taylor) reviewed the 2022 Audited Financial Statements. Mark Stillings, Secretary and Treasurer and Finance Committee member recommended, on behalf of the finance committee, approval of the 2022 Audited Financial Statements.

Mark Stillings made a motion to approve the 2022 Audited Financial Statements, seconded by Penny Groux. After no discussion, the motion passed.

Beth introduced Claire Blackwell and Austin Simmons, both members of the communications team, as staff guests.

**Board Meeting Minutes**

The meeting minutes from April 2022 were presented.

Karen Bobe made a motion to approve the April 28, 2022 minutes, seconded by Penny Groux. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent from the April meeting abstained from voting.

**Consent Agenda Items**

The following Consent Agenda Items were reviewed and discussed.

**Page Two**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**May 23, 2023**

Beth Gendler reviewed the Destination Growth Indicators (DGI) report. She reported that tax revenues were up over 2022, while occupancy was down, and that ADR drove overall revenue up. There was a brief discussion about demand being down for the destination as well as for competitive markets, with increases in demand happening throughout the rest of the world. Beth explained that over 60% of local VRM companies are reporting to KDD.

Beth pointed to page 10 of the DGI packet, showing 2023 vs 2019 90-day occupancy comparisons. She explained additional data showing the Florida panhandle was experiencing similar downward trends.

Laura Beebe and Beth Gendler outlined the Communications Report. YouTube views were up 27%, TikTok views were at 2.6M. Laura explained some highlights from the website report: sessions and users were up 16%, seven percent of which can be directly attributed to spring/summer additional campaigns. On behalf of the PR team, Laura relayed that there were a high number of impressions with articles that ran in the first quarter, some of which were picked up by the AP. Beth reviewed the Arrivalist sample and mentioned that the organization is looking at new options for these types of data sources.

Beth provided an update on the VP of Marketing Search.

Kim Chapman gave an overview of the H&I Report. She reported that H&I information specialists were present and servicing guests at events such as Zydeco and Coastal Cruising. Kim explained that guests continue to want items mailed through specialty fulfillment. Kim explained the IP Servicing decrease may be due to the development of the vacation guide.

Michelle Russ reviewed the Sales & Sports Report. She explained that YTD sales activities were up, leads were down, IP response to leads were up; convention servicing was down and correlated to meeting room nights and meeting events being down; welcome books delivered were up, and sporting events and room nights generated were up. Michelle outlined that meetings room nights will increase in May, but expect sports room nights to decrease in June/July. As well, NCAA Beach Volley had record attendance: 11,722 up from 10,000 in 2022.

David Greene provided an update from the Finance department. April revenue (March business) was 2% ahead of 2022 and ahead of budget (2.9%). He explained all expenses were in line with no abnormal concerns or issues to report.

David Bodenhamer made a motion to approve the consent agenda items, seconded by Mark Stillings. With no discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

**Discussion Items**

Beth Gendler briefly summarized the contents of the SMARI Winter Profile report. She explained that the report was unsurprising and commented that the SMARI analysts recommended not conducting these studies each year, and instead do them every 3-4 years.

Beth Gendler provided some background for this agenda item (i.e., the mayors requested this information at the 2022 Board Retreat). She explained the feedback compiled and shown in the

**Page Three**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**May 23, 2023**

word cloud image (gathered from Tourism Summit attendees) as well as the SMARI Winter 2022 guest feedback in chart form.

Beth Gendler gave a brief overview of the NOAA Rice's Whale proposal, which was also shared with Susan Boggs. Beth explained that Susan had plans to discuss with a variety of legislators and industry experts and planned to report back to the board at the July meeting.

Beth Gendler and Michelle Russ provided an update on the Sports Tourism Complex study. They requested additional updates from Sports Facilities Companies (SFC) and would then present the information to the facilities task force. Beth provided a summary of the proposal, which would include convertible fields and an indoor facility and \$90M. Beth and Michelle will present revenue generation ideas, including examples from competitive markets and other facilities around the country. The Board requested a presentation at the next board meeting.

**Adjourned**

Chairman Glen Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 9:47 am.