



Board of Directors  
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: September 26, 2023  
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

**Board Members Present:** Susan Boggs, Bill Brett, Robert Craft, Glen Kaiser, Ken Kichler, Mark Stillings, Bill Bennett, Karen Bobe, Penny Groux, Frank Reed; (a quorum was met)

**Board Members Absent:** David Bodenhamer, Tony Kennon

**GSOBT Staff Members Present:** Laura Beebe, Kim Chapman, Beth Gendler, David Greene, Jo Phillips, Michelle Russ, Todd Walton, Sally Westendorf

**Visitors:** Sheila Hodges (STARR, Meyer)

**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.

Glen Kaiser welcomed Ken Kichler as a new board member, representing Gulf Shores non-accommodations and congratulated Susan Boggs for being appointed for another term, representing Orange Beach non-accommodations.

**Board Meeting Minutes**

The meeting minutes from August 2022 were presented.

Robert Craft made a motion to approve the August 22, 2022 minutes, seconded by Bill Brett. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent from the August meeting abstained from voting.

**Consent Agenda Items**

The following Consent Agenda Items were reviewed and discussed:

Beth Gendler summarized the August DGI. Hotel KPIs were up comparing August 2023 with the 1- and 2-year comparisons, while 2022 vacation rental KPIs were slightly down. YTD for occupancy stats across both accommodation types, the destination was mostly down compared to 2022 and 2021. Monthly tax revenue comparisons were nearly flat compared to 2022 but up over 2021 and similar findings for the YTD comparisons. Beth briefly reviewed occupancy forecasts for hotels and vacation rentals.

Todd Walton reviewed the Communications Report. Website statistics were solid for the month of August: the bottom line is that individuals were engaging. From a PR perspective, views broke 2B which is record-breaking for the organization. Todd reported that GSOBT was

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presented with a campaign award Governor's Conference for the 'Book Today, Beach Tomorrow' campaign and he also gave kudos to the PR team for hosting the OWAA conference.

Kim Chapman outlined the Hospitality and Information report. August numbers for guest servicing continued pacing similar to prior month statistics, although there was a decrease in calls, there was an increase in emails. Also, there was an increase in welcome center traffic compared to the prior month as well as an increase in IP referrals. Events posted – a heavily engaged section of the website – saw heavy traffic (70%).

Michelle Russ summarized the Sales and Sports report. YTD sales activity was up, leads were slightly down, IP response to leads were up, convention servicing was down, meeting room nights generated were up, and sporting events room nights were down. Michelle mentioned incoming ACAE conference was to be held at PBR and would be at the Lodge in 2025. Michelle also mentioned the Parrot Head *Meeting of the Minds*, the Half Marathon, and NAIA Soccer (i.e., events taking place well into the fall).

David Greene briefly outlined the August Financial statements, David referenced September tax revenue, which was down in August by 1.7% from last year, and September was – so far – down 20.8%.

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

**Action Items**

Minute 37: David Greene briefly summarized *Resolution 23-14 – Renewal of CVB \$1,000,000 Line-of-Credit Loan with The First Bank*.

Bill Brett made a motion to approve Resolution 23-14, seconded by Penny Groux. After a brief discussion about interest rates, the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion Items**

Beth Gendler introduces CVB staff guests Susan Brush and Ally Dorrough.

Beth Gendler shared information about business polling for Business Insurance Coverage ease of accessibility. Beth plans to advocate with legislators for quick and easy funds (i.e., after disasters) for businesses. The cities and chambers will coordinate on this.

Todd Walton explained the details and successes behind the End of Season Thank You Campaign, including the City Appreciation Luncheons, and hand-delivering posters and thank-you words to most of the Industry Partners.

Beth Gendler outlined the *Economic Impact – 2022* handout, explaining the background of hiring Dr. Deravi for a GS/OB/FM-specific study and how this data is shown side-by-side with the Baldwin County data.

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Beth Gendler reintroduced details of the proposal to work with StaySense/Amplify (making the GSOBT site a booking engine). Beth explained the floor/ceiling revenues for StaySense and how the CVB can set and charge an additional commission. She explained how their platform and algorithm are built for maximum conversions, and that they are willing to “break the system” if our contraction requires they split their commission with the CVB, but they cannot promise the same results that they find with other clients. The Board requested Beth negotiate toward this path. Beth explained the implementation time will be 3-4 weeks.

Glen Kaiser provided a recap from the Facilities Taskforce Sports Complex Site Visit to the Birmingham area earlier in September. Bill Brett also provided his feedback from the trip and comments about the project as a whole; a combination of ideas, including utilizing the existing CVB budget, building a hotel on site (with a partner(s)), developing an RV site, and possibly attempting the establishment of a TID later for funding later phases (e.g., indoor facility).

Beth Gendler explained the *cost of inaction*: in 2022 sports room nights made up 5.5% of all rooms in destination, while YTD 2023 – even with existing occupancy declines – sports room nights make up 6% of all room nights. Sports tourists are a significant market segment.

Beth Gendler explained senior staff is working through the Board Retreat agenda and itinerary: November 30 through December 1. The retreat will be at the Battle House in Mobile, AL, starting with a Wednesday dinner, holding meeting sessions all day Thursday all day, and closing at lunchtime on Friday.

Penny Groux outlined the upcoming GUMBO Legislative Summit happening on 10/17 – 10/19. Fifty elected officials will be in attendance and will be fed and entertained within the destination during this time. The CVB and municipalities are co-sponsors of this event.

**Adjourned**

Chairman Glen Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 10:10 am.