



Board of Directors
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: March 26, 2024
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

Board Members Present: Bill Bennet, David Bodenhamer, Susan Boggs, Bill Brett, Robert Craft, Penny Groux, Glen Kaiser, Tony Kennon, Ken Kichler, Frank Reed, Mark Stillings; (a quorum was met)

Board Members Absent: Karen Bobe

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

Visitors: Steve Meyer and Gabe DiCianni (Innisfree Hotels); Ford Handley (City of Orange Beach)

Call to Order

Chairman Glen Kaiser called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. in the conference room at the Orange Beach Welcome Center in Orange Beach, AL.

Glen welcomes Steve and Gabe with Innisfree Hotels.

Board Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from February 27, 2024 were presented. Bill Brett made a motion to approve the minutes. Penny Groux seconded the motion. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent in February abstained.

Consent Agenda Items

Beth summarized the March DGI (January/February data). Occupancy, ADR, and RevPAR for hotels were down from last year. VRM data also appeared down, because Vacasa data has not yet been restated. Representatives reported a retail tax decrease across several businesses.

There was a brief discussion about hotel versus VRM occupancy decreases observed.

Todd Walton reviewed the Communications report. The use of SEO initiated on 2/6, so only partial data had been gathered at the time of the report being developed. Todd reported that Tourism Summit was a success. He also gave an update from the PR realm, mainly to encourage business leaders to consider hosting bloggers and/or providing discount code, etc. when the CVB presents those opportunities.

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Kim Chapman reviewed the Hospitality and Information report. Kim reported that Mobile Welcome Center traffic was up (viz., due to the lecture series, whose popularity has grown significantly, and the survey results show attendees were satisfied).

Michelle Russ summarized the Sales and Sports report. Michelle applauded PBR and The Lodge for being Convention South winners! She reported a significant meeting event increase compared to 2023 (9 vs 17). Michelle pointed to two updates on page 3 of the report (12 vs 22 sports events hosted; leads should be 54 vs 52). Finally, she pointed out a few upcoming events, such as Track, Baseball/Softball, etc.

David Greene briefly outlined the February Financial Statements. He explained that the YTD figure was a positive one (2.7% up). David also reported that the organization had to tap into the LOC for a few expenses and may need to again, coming soon.

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

David Greene reviewed the Revised Weapons Policy. Penny Groux made a motion to approve the minutes. Ken Kichler seconded the motion. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Items

HB 220 – Tourism Protection Act: Beth Gendler explained that, through this bill, properties that hire property managers would now be required to be the *merchant of record*, but DMOs are excluded. This was initiated by representatives in North Alabama for the benefit of STRs in North Alabama. Beth explained that when the Revenue Department and other stakeholders connected with representatives from GSOBT and other local tourism representatives, they realized there had been an oversight.

Beth Gendler explained that staff are looking at how to reallocate budget dollars for the ‘new marketing project’ (i.e., the Sportsplex project). Proposals will be ready for the April Finance Committee meeting.

Beth Gendler and Michelle Russ reviewed the updated SFC document: a site proposal.

Both cities provided updates on spring break visitors.

Adjourned

Chairman Glen Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 9:40am.