



Alabama Gulf Coast Convention & Visitor's Bureau  
Board of Directors  
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: April 22, 2025

Recorded by Sally Westendorf

**Board Members Present:** Bill Bennett, Susan Boggs, Bill Brett, Penny Groux, Glen Kaiser, Tony Kennon (arrived 8:50am), Ken Kichler, Frank Reed, Mark Stillings (a quorum was met)

**Board Members Absent:** Robert Craft, David Bodenhamer, Karen Bobeer

**GSOBT Staff Members Present:** Kim Chapman, Beth Gendler, Kellie Herrod, Michelle Russ, Carlos Serrano

**Visitors:** Billy Widner, Jon Walker, Ford Handley, Steve Meyer, Gary Ellis, Tabitha Williams, Ryan Patel, Hunter Harrelson, Gabe DiCianni, Matt Taylor, and Hanna Burkhardt

### **Call to Order**

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

Guests introduced themselves.

### **Presentation**

Matt Taylor presented the *2024 Financial Audit* and provided a summary of the report.

Bill Brett made a motion to approve the *2024 Financial Audit*, which was seconded by Mark Stillings. With no opposition, the motion passed unanimously.

### **Board Meeting Minutes**

The meeting minutes from the March 25, 2025 meeting were presented. Bill Brett made a motion to approve the minutes, which Penny Groux seconded. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent in March abstained.

Guests were asked to introduce themselves.

**Action Items**

Beth Gendler presented the revised *2025-2027 Strategic Plan*; changes were highlighted in the packet handout. Beth announced that the plan would be displayed during each board meeting and that Senior Staff kept it as a recurring item on meeting agendas. The new version will be available on the Board Report SharePoint site for public consumption.

Carlos Serrano presented the *April 15 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes*, as well as *Resolution 25-06*, *Resolution 25-07*, and *Resolution 25-08*.

Carlos reviewed *Resolution 25-06 – 2025 Operating Fund Budget V3*, key items noted included: net changes to the budget were an increase of \$2,634; Lodging Tax Revenue increased by \$49,629 for January-March to match actual receipts; Sales & Marketing had net proposed adjustments for an increase of \$2,000; Advertising & Promotion had a net decrease in proposed adjustments of \$2,000; \$38,423 was moved from Spring Beach to Summer Beach; \$45,000 was moved from the Opportunity Fund to Fishing; Research increased by \$17,500; Payrolls revised estimate caused an increase of \$28,000.

Carlos presented the following key updates from *Resolution 25-07 – 2025 Sports Commission Fund Budget V3*: The net change to the budget was a decrease of \$24,328 in Cash & a decrease of \$3,251 in In-Kind; a \$4,125 increase in cash due to a new sponsorship; a \$23,109 decrease in cash & \$3,251 in in-kind for event expenditures; a \$5,000 decrease in advertising & marketing based on an updated contract.

Carlos summarized the following highlights for *Resolution 25-08 – 2025 Special Events Fund Budget V3*: The net change was \$0.00; Opportunity funds decreased by \$13,500 to fund two additional events (\$4,500 for the L.O.L. Fest and \$9,000 for the Orange Beach Billfish Tournament).

Mark Stillings made a motion to approve *April 15 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes* as well as *Resolution 25-06*, *Resolution 25-07*, and *Resolution 25-08*, which Bill Bennett seconded. With no additional discussion or opposition, the motion passed unanimously.

Carlos also noted the development of a departmental procedural manual. He also mentioned the impending NetSuite implementation. Beth Gendler noted that all departments are being tasked with developing drafted procedures for succession planning purposes (as outlined in the Strategic Plan).

**Consent Agenda**

Beth Gendler summarized the Destination Growth Indicators Dashboard and Reports. She mentioned the likely connection with decreases in various KPIs and late Easter holiday, but estimated that Spring as a whole (March and April) are likely to be flat compared to last year as a result. There were discussions about data sources and calculations for the various accommodations counts (i.e., Granicus, business licenses, etc.)

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Beth Gendler provided an update on behalf of Crystal Hinds for the *Communications Report*. She outlined that website data and organic and paid search were up, and she mentioned recent issues with StaySense and ongoing improvements to the platform. Beth explained the inclusion of stats surrounding Canadian visitors and upcoming winter visitation. She also noted updates on collaborations for the incoming Allegiant Air Service.

Kim Chapman briefly reviewed the *Visitor & Partner Services Report*, highlighting that BEV (Beach Engagement Vehicle; fka the “WOW”) continues to be a great tool. Ken Kichler noted his support for the vehicle and thoughts about enhancing engagement.

Michelle Russ outlined the *Sales and Sports Report*. She noted the following: definite meeting room nights for March were up 139%, but down by 11% first quarter; Definite sports room nights for March were down by 9% and down 5% for the first quarter. Michelle also highlighted that NCAA had formally announced that Gulf Shores would be the host for the 2026 National Collegiate Beach Volleyball Championship, making Gulf Shores the home of the championship from 2016 to 2031. Michelle also noted that leads and sales activity KPIs were down compared to last year, with one less salesperson and adjusted measurements. Lastly, she pointed to an article spotlighting a waterpark and athletic center being developed in Mobile by a development group.

Carlos outlined the *March Financial Statements*, noting the destination was up 2.6% in tax receipts. He then provided a snapshot of cash, CDs, money market, and commented that most pivotal items were previously noted in either the audit report or the finance committee and budget presentations.

Bill Brett made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda Items, seconded by Susan Boggs. With no opposition the motion carried unanimously.

**Announcements & Discussion Items**

Beth provided an update regarding the *Municipal Revenue Share Requests*, which were a revenue share of 3% of the 10% of lodging taxes collected on business created by the proposed sportsplex. Beth and members of the task force have presented or met with representatives from both cities. There was a lengthy discussion about the sports complex zoning requirements, negotiations with the municipalities.

There was a mention of the *Shark Alert Bill* passing and there was a lengthy discussion about the *Tourism Protection Act*. Guest, Hunter Harrelson, explained the ongoing fight against Airbnb alongside other states.

Greg Alexander provided an update on the Airport Open House event the week of May 19<sup>th</sup>.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 27, 8:30 am, Orange Beach Welcome Center

**Adjourned**

Chairman Glen Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 9:52 am.