



Board of Directors
Regular Meeting Minutes

Date: August 27, 2024
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

Board Members Present: Karen Bobe (9:10am arrival), David Bodenhamer, Susan Boggs, Robert Craft, Penny Groux, Ken Kichler, Bill Brett, Glen Kaiser, Frank Reed, Mark Stillings; (a quorum was met)

Board Members Absent: Bill Bennett, Tony Kennon

GSOBT Staff Members Present: Kim Chapman, Beth Gendler, Crystal Hinds, Jo Phillips, Michelle Russ, Regina Anderton

Visitors: Steve Meyer, Gabe DiCianni, John Walker, Gary Ellis, Ford Handley

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.

Board Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from the July 23, 2024 meeting were presented. Bill Brett made a motion to approve the minutes. Susan Boggs seconded the motion. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent in July abstained.

Consent Agenda Items

Beth Gendler summarized the August DGI (June/July data). All indicators were down for the month of June/July as well as for YTD, excluding YTD Hotel Occupancy (flat), YTD Vacation Rental ADR (0.9% up), June Lodging Sales (up 0.9%), and YTD lodging sales (0.8% up).

Crystal Hinds reviewed the Communications report: she played a teaser video announcing the new brand and campaign examples and gave an update about how the transition was flowing. Notable updates included 36 million advertising impressions and 8 articles with a reach of over 115M. She also gave an update on StaySense: notably an average stay duration of 4.4 nights. There was a question and discussion about the placement of the booking widget.

Kim Chapman reviewed the Hospitality and Information report. She summarized the following: guest interactions were down; welcome center traffic was down; guest servicing was up, and

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there was an increase in IP support. Kim explained the discontinuation of brochure mailing service and announced the new van had been delivered.

Michelle Russ summarized the Sales and Sports report. She summarized the following: leads sent were up 67%; meeting room nights were up, and sports room nights booked were down. Lost business: lost 17 meetings (i.e., over 4k room nights), 8 sporting events (i.e., over 3k room nights), and room night leakage for sports was over 4k room nights. Michelle reported there was a recent site visit with NAIA Men's Soccer for a proposed event in 2025 and 2026. She also mentioned a few upcoming events, namely the anticipation of over 800 participants in the Brett/Robinson Coastal Triathlon.

There was a lengthy discussion about the significant decrease in business and the connection to sports tourism and the proposed sportsplex project. Roughly, the destination was down nearly 40,000 room nights comparing July 2021 to July 2024 and down 8,000 room nights comparing July 2023 to July 2024.

Jo Phillips briefly outlined the May/June Financial Statements. Overall, she reported that all activities were in line with the budget and all expenses were on track. Beth announced Carlos Serrano as the new VP of Finance and Administration, starting 9/9.

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

Beth Gendler introduced Regina Anderton as a CVB staff guest.

Action Items

Beth Gendler outlined the details of the *Wage Scale Update*, which was originally presented during the July 2024 board meeting.

Karen Bobe made a motion to accept the proposed Wage Scale updates, seconded by Bill Brett. After no discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

Beth explained that *Resolution 24-18* was to increase the line of credit for the organization.

Bill Brett made a motion to approve *Resolution 24-18*, seconded by Ken Kichler. After no discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

Discussion Items

Beth explained that representatives from the city of Foley reached out to ask how the CVB could assist in advertising their hotels. The present board members agreed the focus should stay on properties in our tax district.

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Beth explained that municipal leaders requested business support for Hangout Music Festival. The present board members agreed there was a good business and economic case for the festival and that the group would informally support the event.

The Board tentatively agreed to participate in a one-day, local retreat in December. The date is to be determined via poll.

Beth explained that there were discussions ongoing across the County and in Montgomery about establishing a county occupancy tax.

City of Gulf Shores City Administrator Jon Walker gave an update on Jack Edwards Airport, including its terminal expansion, recruitment of commercial airlines, as well as FAA funding requirements.

Mayor Craft stated that the city council would not support rebating taxes on the retail frontage of the proposed sportsplex property.

Adjourned

Chairman Glen Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 10:04 am.