



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

Date: September 24, 2024
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

Board Members Present: Bill Bennett, Susan Boggs, Robert Craft, Penny Groux, Tony Kennon (arrived at 8:40), Ken Kichler, Bill Brett, Glen Kaiser, Frank Reed, Mark Stillings; (a quorum was met)

Board Members Absent: Karen Bobe, David Bodenhamer

GSOBT Staff Members Present: Kim Chapman, Beth Gendler, Crystal Hinds, Jo Phillips, Michelle Russ, Carlos Serrano, Philip Jones, Sydnie Lee

Visitors: Steve Meyer, Ford Handley, Sheila Hodges

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.

Beth Gendler introduced Carlos Serrano, the new Vice President of Finance and Administration.

Beth Gendler announced Crystal Hinds as the official Vice President of Marketing

Beth Gendler introduced staff guests, Sydnie Lee and Philip Jones.

Board Meeting Minutes

The meeting minutes from August 27, 2024 meeting were presented. Bill Brett made a motion to approve the minutes pending a change to the start time noted in the original minutes (correcting the start time to 8:30 a.m. vs. 8:00 a.m.). Robert Craft seconded the motion. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent in August abstained.

Consent Agenda Items

Beth Gendler summarized the September DGI (July/August data). For the month the following KPIs were up: Hotel Occupancy and RevPAR, and Vacation Rental ADR. The remaining KPIs were down comparing August 2024 to 2023. As for retail and lodging tax (July business), both were down for the month and year to date. She provided an explanation of a handout showing

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nights available and occupancy. There was a lengthy discussion about occupancy, number of visitors, retail spend, ADR, and sewer flushes.

Beth thanked the mayors for agreeing to serve another term as Board Members.

Crystal Hinds reviewed the Communications report. She noted the successful launch of the new brand on the website and the new ad campaign. She summarized KPIs, notably 20M+ ad impressions, and 6 articles reaching 45M. Crystal also noted StaySense by Amplify booking updates: 80 bookings, \$141K stay value, 53+ days booked ahead of stay, and 5k units listed.

Kim Chapman reviewed the Hospitality and Information report. She explained Total Guest Interactions were down 14%, a 4% decrease in welcome center traffic, but a 5% increase in first time guests. Kim also noted partner referrals were up 42%, and there were 65K guests who had subscribed to receive the Vacation Guide (up over 30k from the year prior).

Michelle Russ summarized the Sales and Sports report. She explained leads were up, meeting room nights were down, and sports room nights were up due to an event date change (Shark Run). Michelle also outlined 6,550 room nights were lost from meetings and 900 were lost from sports. She announced that the destination was recently awarded Men's NAIA soccer for 2025-2027. She also provided a recap of the Brett/Robinson triathlon event and highlighted the upcoming Freedom Festival and Shrimp Festival in October.

Carlos Serrano briefly outlined the July/August Financial Statements, most notably the new welcome center van and a few major expenses connected to marketing.

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

Action Items

Beth Gendler outlined the proposed constitutional amendment regarding Fort Morgan and the collection of a lodging tax. She explained that it should be introduced during the 2025 session. The group discussed the proposed legislation's negative implications and agreed to keep it on the radar without formally taking action.

Beth Gendler presented the item pertaining to renewing the farming land lease to Doug Lipscomb starting November 1, 2024. The Board agreed to renew the lease for another year. Susan Boggs made a motion, seconded by Bill Brett. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Items

Beth Gendler presented details about a proposed land swap with a property owner in Orange Beach (66 acres) for the land on Coastal Gateway Blvd. She asked if Board Members were open to considering this option.

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Mayor Kennon stated that Orange Beach would not support a restaurant assessment or tax to fund a portion of the sports complex project.

Mayor Craft indicated he had spoken to the council about proposed abatements for retail operations on the current property. He communicated that the Gulf Shores council would support options Orange Beach brought to the table if there was not a route forward to allow for retail tax abatements on the proposed Gulf Shores sportsplex property.

Jo Phillips announced her retirement, coming at the end of 2024.

Adjourned

Chairman Glen Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 9:53 am.