



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

Date: October 22, 2024
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

Board Members Present: Bill Bennett, David Bodenhamer, Bill Brett, Robert Craft (departed at 9:05am), Penny Groux, Glen Kaiser, Ken Kichler, Frank Reed, Mark Stillings; (a quorum was met)

Board Members Absent: Karen Bobe, Susan Boggs, Tony Kennon

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

Visitors: Greg Alexander (Coastal Alabama Business Chamber), Courtney Dombrowski (Eco Clean Marine), Jennifer Guthrie (Sunset Properties), Sheila Hodges (Starr/Meyer), Steve Meyer (Innisfree Hotels),

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 September 24, 2024 meeting were presented. Bill Brett made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Penny Groux. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent in September abstained (David Bodenhamer).

Consent Agenda Items

Beth Gendler summarized the October DGI (August/September data). Taxable Lodging Rentals were the only KPI up for this report (i.e., August business). The remaining KPIs were down, comparing September 2024 to 2023. She provided an explanation of a handout showing nights available, guest nights, revenue and occupancy.

Crystal Hinds reviewed the Communications report. There were over 74M impressions across media buys (excluding social media). There were 20 articles reaching 180M. StaySense: 50 bookings with a stay value of \$140K, 292 nights booked with an average length of stay of 5.61 days, and an average stay value of \$2744. To date, there were 25 partners and 5012 units

Page Two
Board of Directors Meeting
October 22, 2024

distributed. Crystal indicated that a booking widget testing update would be available next month and that the team is testing paid search in TikTok.

Kim Chapman reviewed the Hospitality and Information report. There was a 14% decrease in total guest interactions compared to September of 2023 and a 20% decrease in Welcome Center Traffic. There was a 6% increase in first-time guests. Kim explained that questions about StaySense have entered the top 5 list of guest question topics. She also reported that there was a 15% YTD increase in industry partner support.

Michelle Russ summarized the Sales and Sports report. Leads sent for the month were down, but flat YTD; Meeting room nights booked were down (52%), and sports room nights were up (19%). Lost Business: 18 meetings (4473 room nights) and 8 sporting events (2827 room nights) were lost in September. Michelle mentioned the Lodge as the host destination for the 2025 Governor's Conference on Tourism (August). There was a brief discussion about the new Boots in the Sand festival with positive sentiments.

Carlos Serrano briefly outlined the August/September Financial Statements. He reported that September actuals were up, 1.6% above budget, although down YTD. He noted that more details would be covered in the Action Item section of the meeting agenda, during approval of Q4 budgets and preliminary 2025 budgets.

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

Action Items

Carlos Serrano reviewed the October 17th Finance Committee Meeting Minutes and outlined key points for the V5 2024 budgets and 2025 preliminary budgets.

Carlos Serrano outlined details of *Resolution 24-19 - 2024 Special Events Fund Budget V5.0 & 2025 Preliminary Special Events Fund Budget V6.0*. He noted the following significant budgetary changes: NCAA Beach Volleyball event, the Opportunity Fund, cultural enhancement grants, and admin expenses. The same events and expenses were noted for their significance in the 2025 preliminary budget as the V5 2024 budget were noted.

Mark Stillings recommended approval of Resolution 24-19, seconded by Bill Bennett. After no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Carlos Serrano outlined details of *Resolution 24-20 - 2024 Sports Commission Budget V5.0 & 2025 Preliminary Sports Commission Budget V6.0*. He noted a few small changes in the 2024 V5 adjustments (e.g., Perfect Game and USSSA event expenses). The 2025 budget significant notes Carlos outlined related to the following categories: annual sponsorships and NAIA Men's Soccer.

Page Three
Board of Directors Meeting
October 22, 2024

Mark Stillings recommended approval of Resolution 24-20, seconded by Bill Brett. With no discussion, the motion was passed unanimously.

Carlos Serrano outlined details of *Resolution 24-21- 2024 Operating Fund Budget V5.0 & 2025 Preliminary Operating Fund Budget VI.0*. He noted various changes for categories, such as lodging tax revenue, various sales and marketing expenditures as well as advertising and promotion expenses, vacation guide fulfillment, pay roll, and the board retreat.

Carlos Serrano reviewed a few key changes to the preliminary 2025 budget, including: StaySense ‘marketing revenue’, Chamber/Gateway investment, and bulk Vacation Guide shipping. Also, he noted that the goal of the Finance Committee was to increase the budget compared to the savings reported at the June retreat (i.e., reducing budget by nearly \$5M for the Sports Complex project), while still putting funds aside for the capital project.

Mark Stillings made a motion to approve Resolution 24-21, seconded by Bill Brett. With no discussion the motion passed unanimously.

There was a discussion about the Sports Complex project, including ideas about selling the Welcome Centers and meetings with the Gulf Shores City Council members for tax abatement options.

Carlos Serrano summarized *Resolution 24-22 Proposed Trustee Update for CVB Profit Sharing Plan*. The key change was to add Carlos Serrano to the list of trustees and remove Jo Phillips.

Bill Bennett made a motion to approve Resolution 24-22, seconded by Bill Brett. There was no discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Items

Beth Gendler reminded the group of the upcoming Board of Director’s Retreat on Wednesday, 12/4, 8:00am – 5:00pm at the Orange Beach Welcome Center conference room.

The present board members decided to officially cancel the December 2024 Board meeting.

Beth Gendler explained about her involvement in the Airline X requests for marketing reimbursement dollars. The Board expressed a desire to understand Airline X oversight strategies, ROI explanation, and more. Beth indicated that she will communicate the wishes of the Board and report back.

Greg Alexander gave an update on the 2024 Shrimp Festival.

Adjourned

Chairman Glen Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 10:03 am.