



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

Date: November 19, 2024  
Recorded by Sally Westendorf

**Board Members Present:** Bill Bennett, David Bodenhamer, Bill Brett, Glen Kaiser, Ken Kichler, Frank Reed, Mark Stillings; (a quorum was met)

**Board Members Absent:** Karen Bobe, Susan Boggs, Robert Craft, Penny Groux, Tony Kennon

**GSOBT Staff Members Present:** Kim Chapman, Beth Gendler, Crystal Hinds, Jo Phillips, Michelle Russ, Carlos Serrano, Austen Bowman, Sandra Lopez

**Visitors:** Jennifer Guthrie (Sunset Properties), Steve Meyer (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.

### **Board Meeting Minutes**

The meeting minutes from October 22, 2024 meeting were presented. Bill Bennett made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mark Stillings. After no discussion, the motion passed. Members absent in October abstained.

### **Consent Agenda Items**

Beth Gendler summarized the November DGI (September/October data). Hotel KPIs were up for this report and mostly flat YTD. Vacation Rental KPIs were down for the month and YTD, excluding ADR (.9% YTD). Retail and Lodging sales were also down comparing September 2024 to 2023 and YTD. There was a lengthy discussion about available nights and increased inventory in the destination, comparing this and last year.

Crystal Hinds reviewed the Communications report. She gave an update on the booking widget test on the website [hero]. There were over 78+M impressions across media buys (excluding social media). There were 6 articles reaching 3.3M. StaySense: 43 bookings with a stay value of \$72K, 206 nights booked with an average length of stay of 4.79 days, and an average stay value

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of \$1,691. So far there are 26 partners, and 5806 units distributed. Crystal explained the Homepage hero booking widget test result (i.e., site engagement was reduced).

Kim Chapman reviewed the Hospitality and Information report. There was a 13% decrease in total guest interactions compared to October 2023 and a 9% decrease in Welcome Center Traffic. During the month of October, guests visited from all 50 states. Kim explained that questions about StaySense have entered the top five list of guest question topics. She also reported an 8% 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 up (19%), and sports room nights were up (42%). Lost Business: 22 meetings (8,345 room nights) and 5 sporting events (8,550 room nights) were lost in October. Michelle mentioned visits of the team for USSSA convention (area is being named Park of the Year) and TSAE. She also highlighted the Coastal Half Marathon event.

Carlos Serrano briefly outlined the October Financial Statements. He reported that October actuals were up 8.8% above budget and up 2.2% YTD.

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

Beth introduced the two staff guests: Austen Bowman and Sandra Lopez.

**Action Items**

Carlos Serrano reviewed the Employee Handbook Update Summary sheet. The board requested that voting on approval be postponed until January 2025.

Glen covered the 2024 Board Meeting Dates and commented on the importance of attendance and engagement. Bill Brett moved for approval, seconded by Mark Stillings. With no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

**Discussion Items**

Beth Gendler reminded the group of the upcoming Board of Directors' Retreat, to be held on Wednesday, 12/4, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Orange Beach Welcome Center conference room.

The present board members commended Jo for her service at the CVB, congratulating her on her retirement.

**Adjourned**

Chairman Glen Kaiser adjourned the meeting at 9:10 am.