

**VCB Board of Director's Meeting Minutes
Renaissance Resort at World Golf Village
St. Augustine, Florida
May 12, 2010 – 2:30 p.m.**

Meeting called to order by Charles Cox at 2:37 p.m.

Charles Cox called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

Roll Call: Barbara Golden called roll.

Present: Charles Cox, Mark Schwantner, Irving Kass, Bob O'Neill, Tina Puckett Klinkenberg, Virginia Whetstone, David Mariotti, St. Augustine Beach Commissioner Andrea Samuels, St. Johns County Commissioner Cindy Stevenson.

Staff Present: Richard Goldman, Evelyn Vazquez, Barbara Golden, Jay Humphreys, Rick Hensler

Others: Sandra Adkins, Phil McDaniel, John Johnson.

Approval of Minutes: Irving Kass made a motion to approve as presented the minutes from the Board of Director's meeting held on March 18, 2010. Motion was seconded by Mark Schwantner. **Approved unanimously.**

Treasurer's Report: Richard Goldman reported that there has been an infusion of cash to the VCB account, due mostly to the Birding and FotoFest. The VCB is solvent with a cash balance of \$71,854. The April 2010 income to the VCB was \$57,643, and monthly expenses were \$12,333. Funds from BOCC for April were \$134,899, reimbursement for expenses. Good news.

Approval of Treasurer's Report: Virginia Whetstone made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. The motion was seconded by Mark Schwantner. **Approved unanimously.**

Executive Committee Report:

New Partners

Charles Cox reported that the VCB Executive committee did vote by email to approve the following partners:

- Quality Inn St. Augustine (S.R. 16 & I-95), www.choicehotels.com/hotel/flb23
- St. Augustine Fun & Entertainment, www.ghosthearse.com
- St. Augustine Discount Card, www.staugustinediscount.com
- St. Augustine Beach Civic Association, www.thecivicasociation.com
- City Coffee Company, www.citycoffeeco.com

Director's Report:

Richard Goldman presented a report on VCB Department reports.

- The net Bed Tax collections for the month of March were \$505 K, 6.2% above March of 09.
- YTD, October – March \$2.13M, 4.3% higher than the same time as last year.
- The collections YTD by zip code demonstrate that Anastasia Island properties collected 31.2%, Ponte Vedra Beach collected 23.4% and St. Augustine/Vilano collected 31.1%. With the collections beginning in March, the percentages will begin to shift due to the seasonality of visitors.
- Collections by source indicate that collections by hotels/motels was 64.6%, up 4.3%, Condos are off slightly, but still strong, Apartments Campgrounds and B&B Inns.

The Smith Travel report provides a slightly different data set, mostly because it reports only on 5,800 of the counties rooms, and includes only selected properties. The report indicates that occupancy is up 2.7 points ahead of March a year ago, the highest occupancy since April 09. The ADR is the highest since July 09. The Comp set used to compare our destination was changed in March to reflect comparisons with other destinations that are more reflective of our true competition destinations.

Richard reported that the traffic to the VCB website is improving. Time spent on the sight is down from last month, but up from this time last year. The bounce rate is still a concern, but the overall visits are up over last year. Signals of intent to travel, viewers checking out detailed information, was up slightly. Web visits are coming primarily from Orlando, Atlanta, Washington DC, and Tampa/St. Pete. The number 1 International market web visits to the website were from Germany.

Inquiries to Phase V, the VCB's fulfillment house for phone calls-web-email inquiries, indicate that responses to advertising are down 69%. Web requests are flat. Otherwise there are not significant differences in all areas except the origin of our visitors.

Richard reported that the Sales team has had a 33.5% increase in lead generation over February. It was requested that specifics about the leads be reported. It was noted that the report is generated through IDSs and can be provided to appropriate properties.

It was reported that the Birding & FotoFest had 511 registered participants, a 31% increase over the previous year. 58% of the attendees were from out of the state or region. Revenue created for the VCB was more than \$24,000.

The Communications Department reported that there were 700 times more reported impressions over last year. The reason is that there is an increase in internet coverage, and the paid monetary values value is less than print media. VCB generated stories are up 12% over last year.

Richard also presented a matrix with the final report on the “Romance Lives Here” campaign. There were over 14,000 web hits delivered as a result. Results were that 7109 users clicked through to the offers and 1810 users clicked through to other offers. There were a total of 668 viewers of the YouTube video.

Evelyn Vazquez reported on the Sales Department activities included assisting the Airstream Group, Bethune Cookman, Order of Eastern Star, and the Marine Trawlers Association. Site visits from planners included a representative from AAA, Travel Trend (international), 4 supervisors from VF I-10 Welcome Centers. Staff attended Travel South in April where she met with 84 Operators. The department’s largest project was hosting a Meeting Planner FAM during THE PLAYERS that was attended by 8 planners, one which has already booked business as a result of the tour. The Hospitality House at THE PLAYERS was a useful tool for selling the destination to the planners and golf operators that attended. There is a potential of 3245 room nights to be booked and more than \$811,750.00 potential revenue for the destination as a result of the FAM. It was discussed that other areas outside the county were included in the tour. Regional participation is key in some cases, especially with meeting planners that cater to golf groups and airport access.

The Hospitality House presented opportunities for other partners to meet with wholesalers to meet with operators and include their products in their packaging. The Hospitality House was a partnership between the TPC Clubhouse, St. Johns County, Visit Jacksonville, Golf Digest and Florida’s First Coast of Golf.

Rick Hensler reported that the VCB is working with the City of St. Augustine to create a marketing plan for the 450/500th commemoration celebration. Staff is working with YPartnership to develop an Orlando-based radio and web promotion called “Choose Your own Getaway”. The promotion is set up to allow us to begin tracking segment interests of entries and determine the public’s interest in our destination.

Rick also announced there has been a promotions committee created and they will begin meeting in late May.

He also reminded the group that Peter Yesawich will be presenting a program on May 18th at the VCB’s tourism event at the Renaissance.

Jay Humphreys reported on the filming of the Red Coach Chronicle videos. Filming is going well and the crew is extremely professional. Participating partner venues have been extremely cooperative with filming.

Jay informed the Board that the St. Johns County Tourism Employee of the Year would be announced at the May 18th events. He also reported that the VCB is reacting to the unfortunate oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Staff is developing a website that will present a daily beach report and demonstrate that the oil spill has had no impact on our beaches.

Richard Goldman reported to the Board the state-wide initiatives regarding the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. He also reported that VISIT FLORIDA approved grants earlier in the week, one of which was awarded to the VCB to develop a destination specific application for iPad.

He also reported that the results of the Y Partnership email survey for the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra on Florida's Historic Coast moniker results indicated that nationwide 78% of the respondents were receptive to the moniker, and that in just Florida & Georgia the results were 90%. With 59% of the respondents rated the new logo was rated higher than the current application.

Rick Hensler delivered a branding presentation to the Board. He provided detail expressions of brands and the process of developing a successful brand identity. Examples of successful branding initiatives were presented and reviewed. It was further discussed how the VCB is on the right track with following a successful process.

There was a consensus by the Board to take a branding presentation to the VCB Partnership and community for buy in of the new moniker and logo.

Other Business

It was reported that staff met with St. Augustine Beach officials for input into marketing plans and to review past efforts. It was also noted the St. Augustine Beach Civic Association had become a VCB Partner.

Commissioner Stevenson reported that the St. Johns County BOCC will be making a Proclamation of tourism interest at their next meeting.

Irving Kass made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Virginia Whetstone. **The motion was approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Barbara Golden
Communications Manager