

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches
Visitors and Convention Bureau Board of Directors Meeting
2:30 p.m., Thursday, January 20, 2011
Hilton St. Augustine Historic Bayfront
32 Avenida Menendez, St. Augustine

Minutes

Present: John Fraser, David Mariotti, Tina Klinkenberg, Andrea Samuels, Virginia Whetstone, Irving Kass, Charles Cox, Kathy Fleming, Jeffrey Oliasami, Kirk Wendland, Bob O'Neil, and Errol Jones.

Not Present: Jay Morris.

Others Present: Barbara Golden, Richard Goldman, Rick Hensler, Evelyn Vazquez, John Johnson, Joe Finnegan, Lee Capitano, Conrad Matt, Michelle Reval.

Call to Order: Chairman John Fraser called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m.

Roll Call – Barbara Golden called roll and a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made by Charles Cox to approve the minutes from the VCB October 21, 2010 and December 20, 2010 meetings. The motion was seconded by Tina Klinkenberg. **Passed Unanimously**

Treasurer's Report – David Mariotti reported that for the first quarter the VCB is solvent. The VCB has a current balance of \$286,829 and outstanding payments in the amount of \$207,075. The VCB is operating off of an advance TDC balance of \$529,084. The private sector VCB monthly fund income activity for December was \$8910 and expenses totaled \$10,427, which shows a net-deficit of \$1,517 which will be recaptured as payments from partnerships come in.

David also reported that the Bed Tax collections were \$376,275 for the month of November 2010. He also referenced the collections for November 2010, shows a 47.4% increase over the same time period in 2009. Not counting the additional 4th penny, that increase is 11% which is the real increase.

Motion for approval: Irving Kass made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion was seconded by Jeffrey Oliasami. **Approved Unanimously**

Executive Committee Report

John Fraser reported that the Executive Committee met prior to the Board meeting and with a Board quorum, approved the following businesses as new VCB Partners:

- Yacht of Fun (Affordable Charter Boat)
- Flamingo Travel (Full service luxury travel agency)

He also informed the Board that the Executive Committee discussed changing the Board meeting dates to accommodate the attendance of Commissioner Morris. Currently, the Board meets the 3rd Thursday of each month. The 4th Wednesday or 4th Thursday of each month were discussed as options and it was determined that staff would conduct an email survey of Board members to determine the most feasible date to meet.

It was discussed that in the Partnership Report there was a substantial number of Partner Drops. It was noted that the deadline to renew VCB Partnership has passed. The Board was asked to approve drops so that the formal final notice of opportunity to renew, with a deadline, could be sent to all non-renewing Partners. It was asked when they are dropped from the Visitors Guide and Website. It was explained that unpaid Partners were not included in the printed Guide, and the next step is to remove the non-partner businesses from the website. Kathy Fleming made a motion to proceed with the drop process for unpaid partners. The motion was seconded by David Mariotti. **Approved Unanimously**

John Fraser also reported that the Advertising Committee was waiting for a list of potential billboards for advertising. John stated that there was a budget of approximately \$106,000 for outdoor advertising. He also stated that there would be an effort to tour the boards to assure the location was satisfactory.

He also reported that the TDC collections have exceeded the projected collections. He noted that the Executive Committee discussed having Richard pursue requesting that the TDC make those additional collected funds be used within this budget year, allowing the VCB to take advantage of marketing and advertising to a prime travel market.

John also informed the Board that there will be a meeting at the City of St. Augustine on January 24th regarding the Reconnecting the Castillo with the Bayfront project headed up by the Halback Group. There is an opportunity to make public comment regarding the alternative plans being considered for recommendation for the project. The VCB does not have an official position, but there was a workshop forum presented by the VCB to make Partners aware of the project options. Different traffic patterns and tourist visitation impacts were further discussed.

In order to make the Board aware of some of the impacts of the proposals on local businesses, Virginia Whetstone presented a letter stating several concerns about impacts the project may create.

Executive Director's Report

Richard Goldman reported that the Net Bed Tax Collection was up 11% for November and 9% year to date. This comparison is before the 4th penny that

began collection in April. Based on current collection reports by zip code, World Golf Village, I-95 corridor and Ponte Vedra Beach areas are showing an increase in collections.

STR

Richard presented data from the December STR report. For the 2nd consecutive month, the report indicates that there is an across-the-board growth in hotel occupancy (10th consecutive month upward trend); ADR (Average Daily Rate) first increase in 2 years; RevPar (revenue per average rate) a 9% growth, Supply - 1.3% increase, Revenue (7 months of growth) \$3.6 million more than 2009, and Demand.

Among destinations competitive set, St. Johns County ranked fifth in RevPar growth, and fifth in occupancy.

Website Analytics

The website analytics show that the VCB website bounce rate has reduced drastically. Part of the rate was being driven by advertising and relevancy.

In September and October, there was decline in website traffic which was anticipated.

The change in the URL from Getaway4Florida.com to FloridasHistoricCoast.com was planned to take place at off-peak season (September/October). Since the transfer of URL traffic is up 165% year to date.

The most requested pages included the Nights of Lights pages which were included in the advertising and marketing messages in December. The report indicates that there is a 7.8% increase in website visitors that signal intent to travel.

The number of inquiries are up 17% from within the US and 109% from International inquires. Canada and the UK are the strongest set of International visitors to the website. Advertising driven information requests are up 73%, indicating that the targeting by our agency has been very effective. The report also indicates that visitors are planning trips in short time periods. The top feeder markets are Florida, California, Texas, New York and Pennsylvania.

Department Reports

Richard reported that telemarketing calls are 40% ahead of goal while the total leads generated are down 37%. But the leads that are generated are quality viable leads. Overall the Department is 6% ahead of overall goal.

Evelyn Vazquez reported that the department will be participating in Florida Huddle, and there are a few pre and post tours of the destination. The

Department also hosted staff from Phase V to become more familiar with the destination. These participants were trainers for the call center.

She further reported that she recently attended American Bus Association Marketplace, where several VCB partners participated. Her next show is at Florida Huddle in Daytona. She will also be attending Receptive Services Show in New York. Other staff will be attending the Winter Festival at the I95 Welcome Center.

She also reported that staff has been updating content on the website. She requested that partners be sure to update their partner profiles on the website to assure that their information is included in the content on the Meetings and group travel website.

Richard Reported that the communications measures indicate that the impressions are down 6% from last year. Ad equivalency is up.

Barbara Golden reported that there is currently a group of editors and writers representing meeting publications touring the destination. The tour included the Renaissance Resort at World Golf Village, the resorts in Ponte Vedra Beach and a day tour in St. Augustine.

In early January there was a story in the Los Angeles Times about the Civil Rights Trail. She also reported that the Spring Events Calendar is in final layout for print and will be available in early February.

Rick Hensler reported that the Promotions Department's efforts are to supplement paid advertising. These efforts since March have doubled the media exposure of the paid advertising. He reported that the Michelob Ultra Golf Getaway just ended in December. Throughout Central Florida the promotion was to generate awareness of the Golf in our destination. The promotion produced more than 1,400 new contacts to the VCB consumer database. Michelob would like to expand the program state-wide in the future.

The Department also partnered with First Coast of Golf and participated in a wrap for Sports Illustrated. The program was to be in Florida, but the publishers liked the program to National. The magazine saw the opportunity to attract more golf interested readers.

Rick also presented some samples of ads and promotional programs that students at University of Florida students created as a class project. Next semester students will focus on event oriented projects.

The Communications Department worked with the Amphitheater to create new promotions. Most recently was a program with Radio Disney. The Amphitheater

was given a significant amount of on-air time in exchange for display and programming at Winter Wonderland.

Rick further reported that he is working with Scenic A1A to create programs. In the spring there will be a drive event and a promotion to push tours.

2011 radio promotional leverage programs are being planned at this time. Media buys are in place and promotions are being planned to time with them.

Finally Rick reported that the San Sebastian Winery hang tag program is launching in the next week. The tag promotes a one free night on for a romantic Getaway on Florida's Historic Coast. Consumers are directed to a special landing page where they can shop for one free night offers from partners.

Richard reported that the TDC has charged the VCB to work with administration and other TDC categories to come up with a research program. There was a proposal submitted by YPartnership, but it was beyond the budgetary capabilities. There are alternative programs being sought. The research conducted will be conducted with actual visitors to collect data about them.

Another research provider will be presenting some other programs for consideration in the near future. The research will be used for Cat I and Cat II programs.

Richard also reported that the Website redevelopment is underway. The agency and Miles Media conducted a task force workshop. The project is moving forward. The redeveloped site should be ready by early spring and the mobile website will be up and running in early summer. Site upgrades include video upload capabilities on partner profiles. A vendor will be made available to produce video for partners at a very reasonable rate.

The PLAYERS Championship Meeting Planner and press FAM tour is now in planning.

The VisitPonteVedr.com website is currently being updated with new content and more information about THE PLAYERS.

Also, the VCB has been working with the TOUR to create net rate tickets to include in packages. Historically, 95% of the attendance at the tournament is local and there is an effort to expand that reach to create more overnight visits during the tournament.

Richard reported that room nights and golf rounds generated by Florida's First Coast of Golf (FFCG) was off by about 6%. For 2010 calendar year, FFCG generated 21,275 room nights and golf 50,053 rounds of golf. This is a 9% decline from last year, but compared to other destinations golf packaging, this is

not so bad. Other destinations are seeing double digit declines. The response to FFCCG leads are up 87% and website visitation is up 6%.

Richard reported that the Florida's Birding and Photofest ticket marketing began on January 6. Participants in the 2010 event generated \$392,000 in direct spending.

Since January 6, there have been 1036 visits to the website and \$27,000 in ticket sales have already been generated.

The co-op advertising program offered 28 opportunities for partners to participate in. Only three were executed. The Weddings program had six participants. The Preservation Magazine had several attractions and Bed and Breakfasts participated. Arthur Frommer's Travel June issue has 5 participating partners. There was interest in the other, but not enough to pull the trigger. Other opportunities are being sought for the summer quarter.

Other Business

David Mariotti distributed a flyer about the Rose Awards, an awards program presented by the Northeast Florida Hospitality Association. The awards are to recognize outstanding hospitality employees. He encouraged Board members to nominate employees.

With no other business, John Fraser called to adjourn the meeting. Tina Klinkenberg made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by David Mariotti. **Passed Unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted on behalf of
Tina Klinkenberg, Board Secretary

Barbara Golden