

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches
Visitors and Convention Bureau Board of Directors Meeting
2:00 p.m., Thursday, June 16, 2011
Hampton Inn and Suites,
95 Vilano Road,
St. Augustine (Vilano Beach), FL

Minutes

Call to Order: Chairman John Fraser called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

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

Present: John Fraser, Bob O'Neill, Irving Kass, Tina Klinkenberg, David Mariotti, Charles Cox, Virginia Whetstone, Vice Mayor Andrea Samuels, Commissioner Jay Morris.

Not Present: Jeffrey Oliasami, Kathy Fleming, Commissioner Errol Jones, Kirk Wendland.

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

Others Present: Paul Williamson, Beau Phillips, Michael Cunningham

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Irving Kass to approve the May 19, 2011 VCB Board Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Bob O'Neill. **Passed**

Unanimously

Treasurer's Report – David Mariotti reported that the VCB checking account balance at the end of May was \$394,338. Outstanding checks total \$24,741. The BOCC funds available are \$529,084 and the VCB liabilities are \$272,368. The VCB private sector fund balance as of June 1 was \$44,295. May income was \$100,978 (94% from PhotoFest income) and expenses were \$89,278 (95% was PhotoFest Expenses). There was an \$11,000 surplus for the month of May.

David also reported that Bed Tax Collections for the month of April totaled \$640,509. Collections were down 11 % from March, but 15% higher than February. There is currently a \$114,000 gain for the year in Bed Tax Collections.

Motion for approval:

Tina Klinkenberg made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. The motion was seconded by Irving Kass. **Approved Unanimously**

Executive Committee Report

John Fraser reported that the Executive Committee reviewed the list of new partner applications. He presented the following list for Board approval:

Sara's Crepes Café
Solantic Baptist Urgent Care
St. Augustine Beach House (AKA Ocean Blue Motel)
St. Augustine TidBits (Information and advertising publication)
Where Visitor Publications
Sysco Jacksonville (Food Distributor)

New Partners Approval: Charles Cox made a motion to approve the slate presented for VCB Partnership. The motion was seconded by Bob O'Neill.
Approved Unanimously.

The Executive Committee also discussed a request from United Way for \$5,000 to further the work of the Homeless Coalition. Two years ago a request was made and the VCB contributed \$5,000. It was determined at that time that if the United Way came back with another request for additional funds and that a report on the funds used must be presented along with a formal request for additional funds. The Executive Committee discussed that they would like to have United Way make a presentation to the Board on the program's progress.

Chairman Fraser also informed the Board that the VCB is being proactive in keeping the public informed about the local situation regarding wildfires. He commented that it is important to keep the public aware that we are not on fire so that there is not a repeat of the news that Florida is on Fire like in 1998.

Richard Goldman presented the summary of the VCB 2012 Marketing Plan. He informed the Board that the Marketing Plan is a working document. The 2011 Plan is 95% complete. His presentation included an overview of Strategies and Goals of the plan.

Approval of Marketing Plan Process: Bob O'Neill made a motion to proceed with the completion of the plan and submit it to the Tourist Development Council and the Board of County Commissioners for approval. The motion was seconded by Irving Kass. **Approved Unanimously**

Further discussion about the Marketing Plan: David Mariotti inquired about funding for closing cost for luring conferences. He requested that this program be reviewed for effectiveness. It was assured that the program was not a cash for contracts program but an incentive program and that there will be strict guidelines for applicants to use it for meeting services within the destination.

Executive Director's Report

Richard Goldman introduced Terri Wanscott, representative from Book Direct, Jack Rabbit online booking engine. Ms. Wanscott presented the tiered service booking engine that can be made available for all lodging partners on the VCB website. The costs would be absorbed in the VCB budget and VCB partners will not be charged for using the service from the VCB website.

The presentation included an overview of the basic Book Direct Core Lodging Services and additional services that include Facebook and Mobile applications. Following the presentation, Virginia Whetstone requested that the VCB pursue the full package offered, including Facebook and mobile capabilities, so that all technologies available are taken advantage of.

Irving Kass inquired if the 2012 Budget allowed for the additional expense. Richard Goldman informed the Board that the Budget did allow for the full services.

Action: Virginia Whetstone made a motion that the VCB enter into an agreement for online booking services with Book Direct for a three year option, including additional services in the amount of \$29,735 to include the social media and mobile phone services. The motion was seconded by Bob O'Neill. **Approved Unanimously**

Richard Goldman informed the Board of the VCB's continued support of the Superior Small Lodging program. The VCB role is to fund inspections for the properties that are eligible to be a part of the program. Richard presented Virginia Whetstone with a Superior Small Lodging "White Glove Award" plaque recognizing the high rating of cleanliness and customer service at the Bayfront Inn.

VCB Reports

Richard Goldman reported that the Bed Tax collections for April 2011 were up 6% and that collections from October through April are up 6% over last year.

The STR report indicates that May occupancy rate was down 3.7%, but up 4.2% for the year. The ADR is up 5.3% for April and 2.1% October through April. RevPAR was up 6.4% for the year and Demand is up 5.6%.

Richard reported that visitation to the VCB website was up 60% in May, likely a result of advertising placement. Search engines are accounting for 44% of the traffic to the website.

Visitor Inquiries

Data presented from the inquiry report included stats on planning time and feeder markets. Campaigns and marketing efforts have been launched to accommodate visitors planning cycle.

Department Reports

Richard congratulated the sales team for exceeding their telemarketing goals by 28%.

Evelyn Vazquez reported that the Sales Team has been working with numerous tour operators and Gator Tours, which brings in two groups a week to St. Augustine. They will be bringing a group of Orlando based concierge service personal for a St. Augustine FAM in July.

She reported that Jaya is currently providing a series of IdSS workshops to assist our partners with taking advantage of the leads offered through that system.

Jay Humphreys reported on Communications Department initiatives. Total media impressions are up as are the advertising equivalent values.

Jay also reported that the Florida's Historic Coast iPad Application is live and that it could be downloaded for free from the iTunes store.

Jay informed the Board that the VCB Facebook Fan Page had added 1,355 new fans for a total of 33,153 Fans.

Barbara Golden reported that she had recently attended International Pow Wow with Evelyn Vazquez. She reported that she had met with more than 48 journalists at the Media Marketplace and in the VCB booth. Several of the journalists she met with plan to come to Florida's Historic Coast over the next year to cover THE PLAYERS, the 500th Commemoration of Ponce's discovery of Florida, the city's 450th and other topics. She also reported that she interviewed with Meetings Focus for a June feature.

Barbara also reported on some of the recent news about Florida's Historic Coast and thanked partners that contributed to hosting media. Samples of the printed stories were shared with Board members.

Richard Goldman reported that Florida's First Coast of Golf (FFCG) bookings in May were up significantly. Hotel rooms and golf rounds booked by FFCG realized a 15.5% increase over May 2010. FFCG advertising responses are up 285% YTD over 2010.

Other Business:

John Fraser asked to go on record in congratulating the VCB staff for the success and content presented at the State of the Tourism Industry with Peter Yesawich on June 13.

John also thanked those in the meeting audience for attending. And thanked Tina Klinkenberg and the Hampton Inn & Suites for hosting the meeting.

Charles Cox requested a brief update on the First America Foundation. Richard Goldman reported that the Foundation was disbanding and he will, as directed by the Board, continue to work with other organizations and Boards to assure that the commemorative planning moves forward and that there will be delivery on events.

Paul Williamson, who has been acting as liaison between the City and the Federal Commission will, for now, continue to play a role. He also commented that the City will take back the lead role of the commemorative planning efforts.

Bob O'Neil made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by David Mariotti. **Approved Unanimously.**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Secretary Tina Klinkenberg.

Barbara Golden