

**St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches
Visitors and Convention Bureau
Board of Directors Meeting
2:30 p.m., Thursday, October 20, 2011
Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites
1302N. Ponce De Leon Blvd., St. Augustine
Board Meeting Minutes**

Call to Order – Chairman Bob O’Neill called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m. He informed the Board that the VCB Executive Director Richard Goldman would not be present for this meeting because he was attending a conference where he will be addressing some potential tourism tax funding issues. He also informed the Board that he has asked the VCB staff to be brief and concise in delivering their reports. And, that if anyone felt that they needed information to be further explained or if they felt the need to have discussion to please request such.

Roll Call – Barbara Golden called roll and informed Chairman O’Neill that there was a quorum present.

Board Members Present: Bob O’Neill, John Fraser, Tina Klinkenberg, Charles Cox, Irving Kass, Kathy Fleming, Virginia Whetstone, Jeffrey Oliasami.

Board Members Absent: David Mariotti, Kirk Wendland, Commissioner Errol Jones, Vice Mayor Andrea Samuels, and County Commissioner Jay Morris.

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

Other Present: Sandra Atkins, Mike Cunningham, John Johnson, Felicia Fink

Approval of Minutes:

Charles Cox made a motion for approval of the August 25, 2011 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes and the September 28 Annual Meeting Minutes. Irving Kass seconded the motion.

Approved Unanimously

Treasurer’s Report:

Bob O’Neill told the Board that since the Treasurer’s report included information about year end finances and that neither David Mariotti or Richard Goldman were present to explain the details, the approval of the September 2011 Treasurers Report would be tabled for the November 2011 VCB Board meeting.

Executive Committee Report:

Bob O’Neill reported that the Executive Committee also reviewed and approved the Phase V renewal contract with a .05% increase in fees; the YPartnership Renewal with a 5% fee increase that would go into effect after a TDT increase of 2.5% was realized. He further noted that the Treasurer’s report was presented and approved at that time, but that the detail for year-end is a little more complicated and approval by the full Board would wait.

He also reported that the Executive Committee reviewed VCB partnership applications from two businesses, Hilton Garden Inn Palm Coast/Town Center and Bagan & Company, a video and photography service. The Executive Committee recommended Bagan & Company for VCB Partnership approval and that because Hilton Garden Inn Palm Coast would not be generating business for St. Johns County, that they not be approved at this time.

It was further explained to the Board that there was a concern that this property does not collect or contribute to St. Johns County Bed Tax. It was noted that there was an additional \$5 per room fee for out-of-county lodging businesses incorporated into the annual membership fee. There were questions about the history of out-of-county lodging partners. It was noted that Hammock

Dunes, a resort hotel close to the county line offers meetings and group activities with attractions and services located in St. Johns County.

The VCB Bylaws Partnership Section was reviewed. It was noted that Hilton Garden Inn may be eligible for Associate Partnership but that there was no determination of the benefits associated. It was requested that VCB staff research policy history of non-county businesses that have previously been approved for partnership and bring it to the next Board meeting to address this policy to provide clear rules for non-county lodging and attraction partners.

After reviewing the Bylaws, it was further discussed that new policy needs to be addressed for Associate Partners.

Charles Cox made a motion to accept Bagan & Company as a new VCB Partner. The motion was seconded by Irving Kass. **Approved Unanimously**

Chairman O'Neill presented a slate of VCB Executive Committee Officers for the Board to vote on. The slate was as follows:

Bob O'Neill, Chairman (Previously elected)
David Mariotti, Incoming Chairman
John Fraser, Immediate Past Chairman
Tina Klinkenberg, Treasurer
Jeffrey Oliasami, Secretary

John Fraser made a motion to accept the Chairman's officer Slate. The motion was seconded by Charles Cox. **Approved Unanimously**

Executive Director's Report:

Barbara Golden presented the Executive Director's report in Richard Goldman's absence.

She reported that the STR indicates that the September occupancy was up 1.2%, an 8.2% over 2009 and that for August, ADR was up 4% and REVPAR was up 5.2%. She also reported that Bed Tax collections for August were more than \$450K, a 4.6% increase.

Barbara reported that the website analytics for August indicate little change to traffic. However, there are early reports generating that with the change to a new website there is an increase in website visitation. The next reporting period should include that information.

Barbara reported that visitation to the VCB Facebook Fan Page continues to increase, an average of 40 new fans daily.

Jay Humphreys reported that some of the postings are getting great review. He also reported that the VCB YouTube Channel has over 50 videos and hi viewership. He reported that the VCB has times postings on all Social media outlets so that they are being viewed at peak times.

Barbara reported that the inquiry reports are demonstrating that our advertising are effectively directing consumers to Phase V and that there is a decrease in inquiries from our website because it is believed consumers are getting the information they seek from the site. She also reported that visitors continue to plan vacations in shorter times and that the report also indicates that visitor inquiries are coming from more traditional feeder markets like Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York. Whereas for this time period last year, because of the oil spill in the Gulf, inquiries were coming mostly from Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and Texas, the origin states of traditional visitors to the Gulf Coast.

Visitor centers in St. Johns County had a total of 32,924 walk in visitors in August 2011. Barbara also reported that the VCB ended the year with 280 active partners.

She reported that the Sales Team has surpassed their goals of telemarketing calls by 14% and lead room nights by 12%.

Evelyn Vazquez informed the Board that the Sales Team has been very active, reporting on recent and upcoming activities. She referred them to the Sales Report in the Board Packet for a full accounting. She told the Board that there is an Orlando Concierge FAM planned for November, that the VCB has just signed the contract to host Florida Huddle in January 2013 at Renaissance World Golf Village Resort, and that the Fifteen and Forever Expo will be take place in two weeks on November 4 – 6.

Barbara stated that the communications department reported that the Impressions for the year were up 124% over the previous year, advertising equivalency was up 64% and VCB generated stories were up 1%.

Jay informed the Board that the full Communications Department report is included in the Board Packet. He also informed them that the Flavors dining promotion for October is in full swing and getting lots of attention. He also reported that in August, he, Rick and Richard met with the editorial staff at the Record regarding an editorial that the tourism industry was not reaching as far as it should about the significance of the city. As a result, the Communications Department has been sharing with the Record international travel stories including recent coverage that the VCB assisted with in Brazilian and Australian publications.

Jay also reported that there are several broadcast initiatives that the Communications Department has been working on, including Univision's Sabada Gigante and Despierta America. The audiences for these programs exceed 90 million Hispanic viewers. In addition, there will be a great deal of coverage in domestic publications about Nights of Lights, including a Southern Living feature, National Geographic Traveler and many others. All of this coverage exemplifies the city's Hispanic heritage and the fact that this is the oldest city in the Nation.

Barbara presented the Florida's First Coast of Golf report, indicating that tear-to-date, there is an increase of more than 10.5% in room bookings and rounds of golf. Golf group travel is one of the luxury segments that is slowest to recover from an economic downturn and it is apparent that recovery in that segment is under way.

Ms. Golden encouraged the Board to visit the new website in Beta form to review content and functionality. She provided the correct URL to review since currently 50% of the viewers are still presented with the old the site. The Website Task force and staff are reviewing functionality and content of the site and once they are all pleased the site would go fully live.

She also reminded all present lodging partners that it is important to keep profile content up to date since that is where Jack Rabbit is pulling property information from for the online booking engine. Irving Kass noted that while looking at the booking system it was pulling only twelve properties for the current date. He had concerns about the functionality that would be looked into.

Rick Hensler reported that the GatorBowl Patch Plus program. He reported that there are 15 partners participating in the program, offering a discount to Gator Bowl patch holders.

Rick also reported that there is an active slate of radio and online promotions encouraging listeners to vacation on Florida's Historic Coast in Tampa and Orlando markets. These promotions are designed to supplement the paid advertising in those markets. Currently there are 12 promotions planned. He expressed thanks to the businesses that have contributed rooms, services and goods to help make these promotions successful. Lodging partners have been exceptionally supportive.

Rick informed the Board that the VCB advertising will carry a strong Halloween message to drive more business here during the haunting holiday. It was asked to make an effort to drive that

business to the week-night Halloween events since that weekend is already heavily booked to accommodate the Florida Georgia game.

Rick also informed the Board that the St. Augustine Marathon is scheduled to take place on the weekend of November 19 & 20 and that this is the first of the 450th events. The winner will be presented with a special grail filled with water from the Fountain of Youth.

Barbara reported that the Flavors of Florida's Historic Coast promotion is going well. There have been 2,216 website hits to the site with 12,101 page views. Website visits are being generated primarily from Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Orlando, Miami and Tampa markets. There will be a full report on how the promotion went at either the November or December Board meeting.

She also reported that Richard, Glenn Hastings and Lesley Keys have been meeting with the Florida Humanities Council to plan and promote the Viva Florida Conference to take place at Flagler College in May 2012. This is a TDC and Humanities Council granted program. This is a 450th commemorative event.

Barbara also reported that the Univision filming of Despierta America took place at various locations around town and included a segment at the Fountain of youth where there was a reenactment of Menendez Landing and the first real Thanksgiving. The segment will air Thanksgiving week. Also, while here that p[roduction crew learned that Ray Charles went to the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind. As a result, staff arranged a visit there and the crew ended up taping other whole segment just about the school.

Finally Barbara reported that researchers are in the field collecting data for the Visitor Profile Study and that several hoteliers are participating by providing information.

Bob O'Neill informed the Board that there were Flavor's, Nights of Lights and Fifteen and Forever promotional materials available for them to take to their properties for distribution.

John Fraser asked if it was possible to have a letter sent to local businesses encouraging them to add to the city's display during the Nights of Lights. Jay reported that every bulb represents \$30 to our local economy. John Fraser made a motion that the VCB send a letter to local businesses encouraging them to participate in the Nights of Lights by updating and adding lights to their businesses. Virginia Whetstone seconded the motion. **Approved Unanimously**

Other Business

Kathy Fleming informed the Board that the Florida Humanities Council published article stating that Ponce de Leon landed in Melbourne, Florida. It was requested that the VCB take action to promote the fact that Ponce de Leon actually landed here.

There was discussion about how to take the position of claiming the landing with no debate. Rick Hensler informed the Board that there is a Ponce Plan that will be presented to the Board in November.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Adjournment

Bob O'Neill adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Jeffrey Oliasami by Barbara Golden