

**Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau
Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting
January 4, 2012**

Present: Susan Danis (4/4); Mark Becker (4/4); Commissioner Joseph Barbetta (4/4); Laura Williams (4/4); Christopher Rolle (3/4); Kumar Mahadevan (3/4); Steven High (2/4); Pete Norden (4/4); Mindy Pieper (4/4).

Excused Absence: Paige Hartmann (3/4); Michael Klauber (3/4); Maria Bankemper (3/4); Larry Fineberg (2/4).

Unexcused Absence: Scott Busby (3/4).

Staff in attendance: Stephanie Grosskreutz, Anne Zavorskas, Erin Duggan, Jason Puckett, Bob Horn and Janis Holland.

At 8:05 AM Chair Susan Danis called the meeting to order, noting that Virginia Haley was absent due to the birth of her grandson early this morning and offering her congratulations.

Consent Agenda:

Chair Danis called the Board's attention to the Consent Agenda and asked if there were any questions or comments. There being none, Pete Norden moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Mindy Pieper seconded the motion. The motion passed.

President's Reports for December and January:

Chair Danis noted that December's President's Report materials were included with the last month's Board packet and asked if there were any questions regarding the December information. There being none, she called the Board's attention to January's President's Report materials, including the revised TDC meeting schedule, showing Bill Geist scheduled to provide an update on the SCVB's Strategic Plan at the February 16th TDC meeting which will be held in Venice. Ms. Danis said the February Board packet will include the ADR and occupancy numbers updated to December.

Mark Becker observed that the STR report showed November 2011 as a decent month, with Naples and St. Petersburg exceeding Sarasota in occupancy, but RevPar showing a 12 percent growth over last year.

Stephanie Grosskreutz discussed the Partner Revenue report showing a decline in revenue. She asked if anyone could reach out to those partners listed on the December 1 and January 1 overdue list, noting that the December 1 overdue partners have been dropped as of yesterday. The following Board members volunteered to call the following overdue partners: Mindy Pieper will contact the Holiday Inn Express Venice; Mark Becker will contact Tommy Bahama; Susan Danis will contact the Sports Page Bar & Grille.

Chair Danis called for other questions or comments, and there were none.

Financial Reports for October and November 2011:

Treasurer Chris Rolle reviewed the financial reports for the months of October and November. He called attention to the dashboard, pointing out that cash accounts and ratio are good and that the overall financial condition is very good. Stephanie Grosskreutz said there has been some delay in the County processing payments, but that is normal during this time of year with County staff absent for vacations and holidays. We use reserves to cover expenses until the County reimburses us. Kumar Mahadevan asked how much of the reserves are committed to budget items, and Ms. Grosskreutz replied that nothing is budgeted against the reserves. The reserves are critical because we have no line of credit.

Mindy Pieper moved to approve both the October and November financials; Kumar Mahadevan seconded the motion. The motion passed.

FY 2011 Audit:

Chair Danis discussed approval of the final fiscal year 2011 year-end audit. Chris Rolle noted that it was a good year all around with revenue up in all five categories. Susan Danis noted that the Audit Committee reviewed the audit and that a clean opinion was provided by the auditors. Bob Horn provided a handout of the final revised audit reflecting minor changes as requested by the County, so our numbers and their numbers match.

Mark Becker moved to approve the FY 2011 audit; Pete Norden seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Partnership:

Bernadette Gottschalk spoke on the subject of SCVB partnerships, with the Executive Committee asking the Partnership Advisory Committee to explore the option of moving all billing to one date and moving all billing for each partner to once per year, or possibly twice per year for partners with larger billing. Ms. Gottschalk stated that 27 percent of all SCVB partners purchase additional services, such as website banners and photographs in the Visitors Center. The Partnership Committee recommended a ten percent increase in dues since there has been no increase in partnership dues for the past four years. The Board previously recommended a three percent per year increase in dues but, in light of the economic downturn, had suspended that recommendation. The Executive Committee feels the ten percent increase is too high and would recommend a five percent increase in dues and a five percent increase in high revenue website banners. Ms. Gottschalk asked for Board input on the amount of dues increase.

Kumar Mahadevan asked what the desired result of the potential dues increase is. Ms. Gottschalk responded that raising revenue would be the desired result. Stephanie Grosskreutz noted that because partners get so many benefits (website listing, Visitor Guide listing, Visitors Center presence), it is difficult to find ways to raise dollars. She said we need to educate partners about the many benefits they receive and pointed out the sample invoice that would include a listing of all benefits received by partners at no extra charge, with the invoice

becoming a selling tool. Some potential areas for raising additional funds are: a special 'featured' area in the Visitors Center and possibly increased charges for a presence in the planned mobile Visitors Center.

Mark Becker asked about the benefit of doing away with dues since the tourism tax pays the largest amount of funding, noting that being inclusive would be beneficial and assist with the SCVB being the definitive source for the entire county for every tourist-related activity or event. Ms. Grosskreutz responded that with the county-required ten percent matching funds, as additional TDT taxes are collected we need to increase our portion of the funding also. She added that the SCVB has tried to be more inclusive for non-partners in recent years. Pete Norden asked if we didn't charge dues but charged for website advertising and other add-ons, could the SCVB provide the required matching funds. The consensus was probably not. Add-ons cost between \$495 and \$5,000.

The Board previously had asked for a white paper on how to be more inclusive. One possibility discussed was to allow partners who have their own members to include those members as SCVB partners for a nominal fee (example, Venice MainStreet). Mindy Pieper noted that a double digit increase in the first year of an improving economy would be undesirable. She feels that two upcoming things (Rev 3 and the mobile visitor center) will open eyes as to who we are and what we do which will bring new partners to the SCVB.

Further discussion included:

- billing on anniversary date of dues
- no increase in dues, but show value of partnership on invoice
- increase dues but allow discount for early payment
- some partners want all bills for the year at one time
- some partners want bills spaced throughout the year
- partners initially join at the time of year when they have money available, so their anniversary date should remain their billing date
- offer discount for multi-year partnerships

A summation of the discussion was:

- no increase in dues
- investigate offering flexible payment arrangements
- offer a discount for multi-year partnership
- show benefits on the invoice
- charge additional cost for featured section of the Visitors Center and for the mobile Visitor Center.

Board Retreat Follow-Up:

Chair Danis called the Board's attention to Tab 6 in the Board packet, outlining the projects resulting from the Board Retreat, and the task forces for those projects: Visitor Center WOW Task Force and Mobile VC Task Force. She asked if anyone else wanted to join either of these task forces. Kumar Mahadevan volunteered to join the Mobile VC Task Force. Reminders for

the scheduled task force meetings (VC WOW, January 24 at 4:00 PM; Mobile VC, January 26 at 8:30 AM) will be sent later today.

Ms. Danis asked for other comments on the retreat and the following were given by the Board:

- it was good to see the destination through the eyes of the visitor
- the issue of a name change should be on the February agenda
- the cost of a name change should be analyzed
- funding will be an issue, so the Board should move forward with establishment of a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization that could apply for grants funding
- the non-profit would need to be established with an educational mission, as there is precedent for other CVBs using that mission
- a name change would not affect the recent rebranding
- the name change could be VISIT and then the various islands/locations
- the name change would be related primarily to urls

Other Comments:

Kumar Mahadevan noted that the annual Audubon count included the penguins at Mote Marine Aquarium.

Mark Becker noted that the issue of a walkable downtown, closing traffic on Main Street between Lemon Avenue and the bayfront will become a controversial issue with many moving parts, including resistance by local merchants to the disruption of businesses downtown during construction and Duany's walkable downtown plan. The SCVB will need to take a position on this issue at some point. He suggested that we ask Dr. Klages to do an intercept study to determine the opinion of tourists on this issue, and that the opinion of the tourists is the one that the SCVB should adopt. There was additional discussion about the parking situation generally and the conflicts between the DID, DSA and the City, with the observation that the Palm Avenue parking garage is under-utilized.

There was a question for Jason Puckett regarding the Rev 3. He stated that the Cities of Venice and North Port are in favor of it but that the Florida Department of Transportation and the Sarasota County traffic engineering department are raising obstacles. Before Mr. Puckett could elaborate, a building fire alarm sounded. The Chair called for a motion to adjourn. Chris Rolle moved to adjourn the meeting; Laura White seconded the motion. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 9:10 AM.