

**Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau
Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting
November 2, 2011**

Present: Susan Danis (2/2); Mark Becker (2/2); Paige Hartmann (2/2); Commissioner Joseph Barbetta (2/2); Laura Williams (2/2); Michael Klauber (2/2); Scott Busby (2/2); Pete Norden (2/2); Maria Bankemper (2/2); Mindy Pieper (2/2); Larry Fineberg (1/2).

Excused Absence: Christopher Rolle (1/2); Kumar Mahadevan (1/2); Steven High (0/2).

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

At 8:07 AM Chair Susan Danis called the meeting to order and moved directly to the Consent Agenda.

Consent Agenda:

Chair Danis called for questions or comments. Virginia Haley noted one addition to the Executive Committee minutes. The Executive Committee reviewed the contract with iDSS for destination database management and approved it via electronic mail. Also, Ms. Haley noted that the Executive Committee made a change in the John Deere replacement incentive program to reduce the room night requirement from 500 to 250 room nights.

Michael Klauber moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Paige Hartmann seconded the motion. The motion passed.

President's Report:

Virginia Haley explained to new Board members that every quarter the SCVB staff presents a summary of its performance for the past quarter. Overall, numbers shows improvement. Print media impressions were down, but online media impressions were up dramatically, reflecting the move to online media. The movement to online media will be reflected in next year's goals.

Ms. Haley noted that the SCVB is acting as the fiscal agent for the Chalk Festival, and she explained the Lego man remains in the custody of the Sheriff's Office due to legal requirements regarding found property, but Lego man may be allowed to attend the Chalk Festival for promotional purposes if appropriate arrangements can be made. The Searching for Sara campaign was a significant boost to social media efforts on Facebook. Voting ends Monday, November 7th.

Ms. Haley made a presentation to the Joint Meeting of the TDC and Board of County Commissioners on October 26th. Dave Bullock of the County asked the SCVB to look niche market numbers to determine if it is prudent to invest in sports and culture marketing. The

results show sports accounts for approximately nine percent of visitors and culture accounts for approximately 25 percent of visitors, with both niches generating good numbers for first time visitors and high household income visitors. Some visitors come for more than one reason, so the total of niche markets exceeds 100 percent.

Some comments from the Board members include:

- can we see a measurement of sports visitors over the past years? SCVB will ask Dr. Klages for a three year report; there was no sports segmentation prior to that.
- the Orioles have budgeted for a Spring Training demographic profile for this year
- where are we relative to pre-recession number? We will provide ADR/Occupancy numbers for the past six years in next month's Board packet.
- travel is up nationwide.

Ms. Haley then stated that no partners are currently 60-days overdue in dues payment. She noted that the STR report for September show a little slippage, possibly because we do not have hotels set up to accommodate international tour groups. Mr. Becker observed that the SCVB is retaining its partners, which reflects well on the staff in selling the message of the SCVB.

Ms. Haley noted there are two issues to be discussed in the brief time allotted at the Legislative Delegation: (1) continue VISIT FLORIDA funding; (2) internet travel tax again may be an issue before the legislature. The proposed legislation would ban Florida from collecting the tax on the full value of room nights. It probably will not pass.

Mark Becker said the RevPar growth struggled in the first two quarters but now is second only to St. Petersburg. Ms. Haley added that some lost Colony Beach & Tennis Resort customers were going to other locations but now are coming back to Siesta Key. Additional Allegiant Airlines flights may be helping the St. Pete numbers.

Financial Report for August 2011:

In the absence of Treasurer Christopher Rolle, Bob Horn spoke to the Board about the new one-page financial dashboard presented for the first time (page 45 of packet). He explained that the cash accounts are good, County expenses are those submitted for reimbursement (not direct pay accounts), accrued liabilities are for the Visitor Guide invoice not yet received, deferred revenue will recognize payments each month at 1/12th of total, revenue is good because of partner sales and visitor guide sales, the expense side is over \$11,000 but that is more than covered by the increase in revenue, allowing the ratio to remain in the safe range at 1.28. He noted that the ratio is a good indicator of the SCVB's ability to pay its obligation but will fluctuate slightly throughout the year. The Board commended him on the new dashboard format. Mr. Horn noted that detail continues to be available in the Board packet for those who wish to review it.

Pete Norden moved to approve the September financials; Mindy Pieper seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Board Retreat:

The Board members were given a handout detailing the schedule for the December 7th Board Retreat, which will start with breakfast at the Visitors Center and move to the airport and Ringling Museum to look at the destination from a visitor's perspective. Berkley Young will lead a discussion about strategies and future plans. We will have flip cameras for taking videos to illustrate what a visitor will see. The Board members indicated they like the format for this retreat.

US Airways Insert Feedback

Virginia Haley noted that the feedback from the US Airways insert has been completely positive. Several members reported hearing excitement and approval from friends and associates regarding the insert. Pace Communications owner, Bonnie McElveen-Hunter, is very committed to culture and the SCVB should try to get her to make a visit to Sarasota County. The Pace representatives who attended the event at the Opera House felt the insert was very impressive, communicating that these types of inserts are done only for cultural/educational offerings and not for other topics and that Sarasota's was their largest insert ever.

Sports Presentation:

Jason Pucket, Director of Sports, gave a presentation to the Board, with an update on the past year's programs and a look at upcoming programs for this year. He made the following points:

- 9.3% of visitation to Sarasota is for sports, including all sports – organized sports, golf, fishing, etc.
- in the coming year Dr. Klages will try to capture more data regarding sports, but generally has indicated that sports visitors are older than the average visitor, stay longer and spend more money. The area of sports has proved to be recession-proof as a rule.
- last year the SCVB Sports Department sponsored 54 events; the goal this year is to sponsor 60 events; the Suncoast Offshore Grand Prix boat races now fall under sports and have taken a significant amount of sponsorship funds, but last year the races created an estimated economic impact of \$12 million.
- the SCVB is trying to sponsor events with higher economic impact and greater potential for return events.
- the Sarasota County Sports Commission (SCSC) was created to assist with marketing outside of the area. Sports organizers want to deal with a Sports Commission that has a dedicated staff and funding.
- The SCSC is an advisory committee of 19 members to help with sponsorship funds allocation. One member is Bradley Robbins, an attorney at Williams Parker, who was most helpful with the US Ultimate event.
- Westanna Carlton, a SCVB intern last summer and Boston University rower, put together a research paper about the need to increase niche sports marketing opportunities, including utilization of the beach, paddle facilities, disc golf, and lacrosse, the fastest growing sport.
- the SCVB is working with Premier Sports Campus in Lakewood Ranch which has 22 fields, allowing unlimited types of sports at that facility. Although it is in Manatee County, it generates significant room nights in Sarasota.

- Ms. Sarasota Softball has 6 fields, plus another 6 fields nearby, that need upgrading to make them viable for tournaments. The issue of control of fields remains a problem, with leagues reluctant to make fields available for events even when the leagues could financially benefit by handling concessions for events. Jason Puckett continues to work County Park & Recreation on this matter.
- Current events on the schedule include US Soccer Showcase, that is projected to generate 5,000 room nights and could possibly lead to a seven year deal; US Synchro Swimming Masters Championships in Oct. 2012 could be a stepping stone to future business; US Sports Congress in December 2012 will bring 40 to 50 top sports event organizers to let them see Sarasota first-hand. Kelly Defebo was instrumental in landing this conference.
- Pam Am Masters Swimming event is scheduled at the YMCA Aquatic Facilities for May/June 2013 and will bring South American visitors to Sarasota.
- Sports Department is working on a national triathlon that could generate 2,000 room nights and a television show to be aired in the spring. Longboat Key is saying no due to traffic problems. We will continue to work on this project. It would help replace the John Deere room nights.
- Sports Department is also working on a FIFA beach soccer international event that would be televised and would involve turning Ed Smith stadium into a beach venue, plus possibly utilize some beaches for events. The SCVB is proceeding cautiously because this event would require the County underwrite \$400,000 or more in funding and the event organizer is a for profit company.
- Another possible event is the Lacrosse and IWLCA Conference in November 2012 which would generate many room nights and be a good inroad for future lacrosse events.
- Use of Siesta Key beach facilities has become an issue, with the County planning to disallow any events in January, February and March, and to limit events to one per month for the rest of the year. The Sports Department will work with the County to allow additional events on Siesta Key Beach.
- The Cal Ripken Youth Academy is an issue that the County has indicated it wants to handle but the SCVB believes that the Sports Commission should be out front on this issue.

Comments from the Board included:

- lobby all County Commissioners to make them aware of the Sports Commission's position on issues relating to sporting events in Sarasota County, including limited use of County facilities;
- how to get County and community to cooperate regarding control and use of County fields?
- a map of the existing fields would be helpful;
- the expiring TDT funds could possibly be used for the \$50,000 to \$1000,000 required to upgrade facilities and regain control to allow them to be used for events;
- operating funds for upgraded facilities is another need;
- a sports facility needs to be built mid-County;
- as to the Cal Ripken Youth Academy baseball, it is better to speak in terms of a youth baseball academy, and that is next to further along on the Orioles' agenda upon completion of build-out of the stadium. Private funding would be required. Cal Ripken remains interested in this project, and the Orioles will continue to pursue a Cal Ripken Youth Academy.

Jason Puckett was asked about his European trip, and he said in Europe the rowing community is a central part of the culture there. Hosting a rowing event here would be like having a mini-Olympics here because of its popularity. Slovenia had 50,000 room nights from the events, primarily from the participants. Mr. Puckett met with ten countries about coming to Sarasota to train. He learned that the Australian facility is used approximately 20% of the time for rowing events and is used for many other types of events. Formation of the rowing foundation is moving forward. Paul Blacketter of Benderson Development is a great ambassador for rowing, and he has shared that rowing people know about Sarasota. Larry Fineberg suggested that Mr. Blacketter give a brief presentation to the Board, including showing the latest plans. Joe Barbetta noted that DC United Soccer has expressed an interest in practicing in Sarasota and gave contact information to Jason Puckett.

Other Comments:

Pete Norden asked about seeing Partner of SCVB stickers in business windows with the old logo. He suggests we get new stickers with new logos to partners as soon as possible.

Susan Danis noted that at the Chalk Festival this weekend there will be a live opera performance on Sunday at 11:00 AM, 3:00 PM and 8:00 PM in full costume with chalk art scenery.

Mindy Pieper said this weekend is the opening of the Legacy Trail Overpass in Venice, along with an art festival. And she asked everyone to take a look at Venice MainStreet's new website.

Adjournment:

At 9:20 AM, Chair Danis called for a motion for adjournment. Mark Becker moved for adjournment; Paige Hartmann seconded the motion; and the motion was approved.