

**Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau
Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting
October 5, 2011**

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

Excused Absence: Larry Fineberg (0/1); Steven High (0/1).

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

At 8:05 AM Chair Susan Danis called the meeting to order. She presented a thank you gift to outgoing Chair Mark Becker, thanking him for his service, and she welcomed the new Board members present and introduced them to the group: Maria Bankemper of the Holiday Inn Express Sarasota Siesta Key; Pete Norden of Clear Channel Communications; and Mindy Pieper of Venice MainStreet. Steven High of The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art was not able to attend.

Consent Agenda:

Chair Danis moved to the Consent Agenda, asking for questions or comments. Virginia Haley noted that at the Board's request the Executive Committee carefully reviewed six of the major vendor contracts and approved them for signature. She also called attention to the fully executed County contract in the packet for the Board's information. Mark Becker noted that the standardization of SCVB contract language for all vendors made review of the contracts easier this year.

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

Board Annual Business:

All attendees were asked to sign the Conflict of Interest forms. Board Committee assignments were given to those Board members assigned to committees.

Banking Resolution:

Chair Danis called the Board's attention to the Resolution in Tab 2 that would allow the SCVB to open a \$45,000 line of credit with BB&T to be used for the seven staff credit cards, and asked if there were questions or comments about the Resolution. There being none, Ms. Danis asked

for a motion to approve the Resolution. Paige Hartmann moved for approval; Michael Klauber seconded the motion; Christopher Rolle abstained from voting. The motion passed.

President's Report:

Virginia Haley reiterated that the US Airways special advertising special was very successful. She described the negotiations she has had with the County about next year's contract. Currently the County requires three levels of review for reimbursement of expenses. One proposal for the next year's contract would be performance-based with spot checks by the County. The SCVB's internal procedures would remain the same, but the requirement for multi-level review by the County would be eliminated.

Ms. Haley happily announced that the August STR report is the best ever for August, showing huge strength in the southwest coast of Florida. Lost business from the BP oil spill all appears to have returned to Sarasota County. Additionally, there are two major events in negotiation for Sarasota. One is a major triathlon for the islands, the Half Ironman. Jason Puckett is working on this negotiation. The other is Beach Soccer coming to Sarasota. The SCVB is working on a venue for this event.

Mark Becker agreed that the STR report is great and felt that the SCVB needs to get that information to the press and to our partners to show our partners that their membership pays for itself. Commissioner Barbetta suggested that the SCVB prepare a one-page white paper listing its recent successes. Ms. Haley also said the SCVB will be conducting small partner events in November on Siesta Key, Longboat Key and Venice to talk about successes and to give the outlook for the coming year. Additionally, there is an upcoming joint meeting with the Board of County Commissioners and the Tourism Development Council in the last week of October which will be a very public venue for sharing success stories.

There was an inquiry about the status of the Colony Beach & Tennis Resort, and Ms. Haley said she had heard that either it may become a fractional ownership property or an upscale boutique hotel, but that legal disputes remain. The change of leadership in the Town of Longboat Key may bode well for potential new development on Longboat Key.

Financial Report for August 2011:

Christopher Rolle spoke to the Board about presenting the future financials in a more condensed way, possibly in a one-page dashboard format. He explained that the ratios are a good indicator of the SCVB's ability to pay its obligation and are above normal.

Mark Becker asked about the Visitor Guide sales. Virginia Haley said they were excellent, requiring the addition of pages to the Visitor Guide, and she noted that Bernie Gottschalk did an excellent job with Visitor Guide advertising sales. This is the third year the SCVB has handled sales in-house, so partners are more familiar with the process now, and the uptick in the economy helped sales also. Stephanie Grosskreutz noted that remaining Visitor Guides from

last year (approximately 15,000) will be sent to VISIT FLORIDA Welcome Centers for distribution, and they have had 'Siesta #1 Beach' stickers added to them.

Kumar Mahadevan moved to approve the August financials; Mark Becker seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Public Relations Presentation:

Erin Duggan, Director of Communications, introduced Chuck Mardiks and Ashley Korin from MMG Mardiks, the SCVB's U.S. public relations firm that is based in New York. Ms. Duggan briefly reviewed the public relations functions of being reactive, proactive and conducting press trips. She observed that the local media now comes to the SCVB as experts on tourism.

Ms. Duggan then described the new social media campaign, Searching for Sara. The campaign is operating through the Facebook page VisitSarasota and has generated a huge increase in friends of the SCVB on Facebook. The campaign concludes on November 7th, with selection of the four winning Saras by the end of the year and the winning trips to take place in the first half of 2012, allowing this social media campaign to have an impact that extends for a total of nine months.

Chuck Mardiks spoke briefly about what MMG Mardiks does for the SCVB with its staff of 15 in New York. Ashley Korin talked about MMG's goal to increase media impressions for the SCVB. She noted that Dr. Beach's selection of Siesta Key as the number one beach has helped hugely. Other effective PR 'pitches' have been circus heritage (on the release of the movie Water for Elephants), Baltimore, antiquing, Boston (pie article), GLBT magazine Out had a huge spa piece that mentioned Warm Mineral Springs. Ms. Korin also pointed out the difference between how the Hampton CVB handled being named number one beach last year and how the Sarasota CVB proactively managed being number one this year, with Sarasota garnering significantly more media impressions.

Commissioner Barbetta suggests a notebook on all ecotourism activities and parks.

Board Retreat Plans:

The December 7th Board meeting will be a half-day Board retreat, at a location to be determined. Berkeley Young will work with the Board on the issue of visitor services, including increasing visitor spending, enhancing the Visitors Center to make it a sales center, and finding ways to bring visitor services throughout the county.

Another item on the agenda is a potential name change, possibly to Visit Sarasota. There was a discussion of how the word bureau connotes big business or government and that there is a movement to the Visit [Destination Name] model. Mr. Young should bring information on best practices and outcomes regarding the issue of the name change. Mr. Mardiks noted that Visit Sarasota is more welcoming.

Ms. Haley asked if there were any other items that should be on the agenda. Mr. Becker suggested a discussion of the expiring portion of the TDT funds for product development, how to explain the process and how to give the SCVB a voice in the process. This subject is slated to be presented to the TDC in January or February.

Legislative Update:

Virginia Haley gave a brief legislative update. She said we will see an expansion of gaming. Many lobbyists feature gaming clients. The City of Sarasota would consider an expansion of dog track gaming, but would not support downtown or bayfront gaming. The statewide tourism industry previously opposed it but now is split on the subject. Tribes will oppose it. This issue has many moving parts and involves such big players that no one cares what the position of the SCVB is on the topic. If anyone hears any additional information on the topic of gaming, please share it with Ms. Haley.

Adjournment:

At 9:25 AM, Chair Danis called for a motion for adjournment. Mindy Pieper moved for adjournment; Paige Hartmann seconded the motion; and the motion was approved.