



PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE
January 18, 2012, 9:00 AM
Sarasota Visitor Information Center

Minutes

In attendance:

Committee Members: Holly Johnson, Chair; Suzanne Willis; Sarah Ozgun; Jennifer Ahearn-Koch; Martha Wells; Sonia Velasco; Robert Shaffer; Danae DeShazer; Kristine Nickel; Jan Thornburg.

SCVB Staff: Erin Duggan, Lynn Hobeck Bates; Deborah Ericson, Janis Holland
Excused absences: Erin Bryce; Sandra Rios.

Sunshine Law

Holly Johnson, Chair, opened the meeting, welcoming all attendees and asking everyone to introduce themselves. She requested that everyone get a copy of the list of committee members. Ms. Johnson then discussed Florida Sunshine Laws and Public Records Laws, and Erin Duggan noted that the SCVB voluntarily complies with these laws requiring that members do not discuss committee issues with other committee members outside of committee meetings. It also was noted that email communications among committee members are considered meetings and are available to the public if requested. Public notice of meetings is posted and the public may attend committee meetings.

Sara Campaign

Erin Duggan then brought the committee members up to date about the Sara campaign that was launched at the end of the summer of 2011. It resulted in 300 entries and over 10,000 additional 'likes' on the SCVB social media outlets. Four winners were chosen, with the Arts Sara and Eco Sara visiting in February/March and the Family Sara and Culinary Sara visiting in June/July. There was one ineligible submission by a minor, but her story was so compelling that the SCVB is hosting her and her family for a visit to Sarasota Count over the Summer of 2012.

Promotions for each winner's visit will begin a week or two before the scheduled visit. The winning Saras will post about their visits on Facebook. Losing Saras may be offered a complimentary discount card or some other benefit if they chose to visit Sarasota and come to the Visitors Center. This promotion will depend on SCVB Partner participation/interest.

SATW Atlantic Caribbean Chapter Meeting, May 20-24, 2012

In May of 2012, the SCVB is hosting the annual conference of the Atlantic/Caribbean Chapter of the Society of American Travel Writers (SATW). SATW requires travel writers to apply and provide references and examples of work, is nationally know and is highly regarded. The SCVB

competed for this very desirable business and is providing transportation, meals and many other benefits to conference attendees. If anyone wants to be involved in this project, please let Erin Duggan know. There will be between 30 and 60 attendees staying at Lido Beach Resort. The Ritz-Carlton is hosting the opening reception. The Ringling Museum is hosting the closing reception and awards ceremony. The museum will open its grounds for the reception and will feature the Turrell exhibit. Ms. Duggan noted that we will want to provide SATW attendees with as many opportunities for various activities as possible, so the attending writers will have many different things to write about their visit to Sarasota. The conference will take place May 20-24, 2012, and the SCVB will provide transportation to/from SRQ airport, along with Tampa and St. Petersburg airports.

Holly Johnson asked if the SCVB is scheduling a 'dine around' and offered to chair that portion of the project. She was involved with the Rocky Mountain Chapter of SATW and noted that the dine around and all activities are excellent opportunities to showcase Sarasota.

Fall 2012 promotion ideas

The next topic was brainstorming for a Fall 2012 promotion for the September need period. Previously, 30 Days of Discovery covered the September period but it appears to have peaked and declined. The following ideas and comments were discussed:

- Buy One Get One (BOGO). Would it work generally?
- Everyone is familiar with the BOGO concept.
- Would BOGO work with lodging?
- Breakfast on US! – little enthusiasm for this and it could be a logistical nightmare. How would you provide it? Limited service hotels often already provide free breakfast.
- Should the Fall promotion target both tourists and local residents? September is slow enough to warrant a promotion that appeals to both.
- The promotion should be clear and straightforward; percentage discounts are not desirable.
- How is it promoted? Heavy radio advertising in Fort Myers, Tampa and Orlando areas; heavy Internet advertising; in-state emphasis.
- Orlando is launching a Second Summer promotion; Fort Lauderdale is doing a Spa Chic BOGO promotion.
- Fewer restrictions on the promotion and simplicity in the concept would be best.
- Flexibility in BOGO should be allowed, but it should be buy one get one of like kind – buy a glass of wine, get one free; buy an admission ticket, get one free. Can't be buy one, get one half off in some instances.
- Check with partners for feedback on the BOGO concept. What would work for them?
- Lodging and others could offer the BOGO only on select days or at select times.
- Sunny Hours: discount during afternoon hours, playing on the concept of Happy Hour.
- Requirement for a coupon for promotion? A coupon drives traffic to SCVB website and enables tracking. However, printed coupons can be a challenge for travelers who don't have access to a printer.
- A coupon book available at the Visitors Center?
- Make offers good for duration but highlight one each day, with first partners to sign on being highlighted first.
- September to Remember as a title.
- September to Remember – pitch PR stories about memories of activities, etc.

Other discussion:

Our public relations firm in NYC was responsible for locating the Sand Wars television show in Sarasota County, but the show did not focus on Sarasota specifically and brought its own sand sculptors.

A committee member brought up that the Republican Convention is coming to Tampa later this year.

The City of Sarasota may be willing to issue a proclamation to the winning Saras, maybe featuring Sara Day. SCVB staff will work directly with the City to discuss.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 AM.