

**Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting  
July 6, 2011**

**Present:** Mark Becker (10/10); Jay Schrock (10/10); Richard Bradshaw (10/10); Laura Williams (10/10); Commissioner Joseph Barbetta (7/7); Paige Hartmann (9/10); Leslie Power (8/10); Trent Young (8/10); Kumar Mahadevan (8/10); Scott Busby (3/4).

**Excused Absence:** Larry Fineberg (7/10); Susan Danis (8/10); Michael Klauber (5/10); Christopher Rolle (2/4).

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

At 8:05 AM Chairman Mark Becker called the meeting to order and immediately addressed the Consent Agenda.

**Consent Agenda:**

The Chairman noted the inclusion of June Board and Executive Committee Minutes, Procurement Manual and RFP template, along with updating of Code of Ethics and Financial Policies. He inquired if the memorandum regarding travel to Bled, Slovenia was different than the one considered last month, and Virginia Haley explained that because Jason was adding some personal days to the trip, policies required an updated memo. Finally, it was noted that the RFP recommendations for technology, research, UK public relations and US public relations firms are included in the Consent Agenda. Prices for the research contract and technology contract are lower; the price for the UK public relations firm is lower due to the exchange rate; the price for the US public relations remains the same.

Ms. Haley explained that the policy updates were done proactively so those changes could be incorporated into the upcoming audit. She expects there will be issues with the upcoming County contract because of the procurement problems the County has experienced recently. She added that the SCVB has engaged its attorney to assist with negotiating the terms of the SCVB's contract with the County. She also pointed out that the Procurement Manual includes a protest procedure should a protest ever be lodged.

Kumar Mahadevan moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Paige Hartmann seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

**FY2012 Board Officers:**

Chairman Becker then discussed the remaining terms of the Board members, as follows:  
One year remaining: Mark Becker, Kumar Mahadevan, Susan Danis, Larry Fineberg.  
Two years remaining: Michael Klauber, Paige Hartmann.

Three years remaining: Laura Williams, Scott Busby, Chris Rolle.

Richard Bradshaw, Leslie Power and Trent Young will be leaving the Board at the end of the fiscal year. Also, Dr. Schrock is retiring this year. Commissioner Barbetta will continue to be the representative from the Board of County Commissioners.

Virginia Haley said the following people have been contacted regarding service on the Board: Peter Norden of Clear Channel; Steven High, Executive Director of The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art; and Maria Bankemper of the Holiday Inn Express Siesta Key and Director of Tourism for the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce.

The Chairman then discussed the issue of succession, with the need for a Vice Chair and Treasurer in fiscal year 2012. Paige Hartmann was asked if she would be willing to serve as Vice Chair, with the idea that she then would become Chair of the Board in fiscal year 2013. Ms. Hartmann said she would be honored and is willing to serve as Vice Chair. The need for a Treasurer then was discussed, and Chris Rolle (who was absent at the meeting) was mentioned as a potential candidate.

Finally, it was noted that the SCVB continues to search for Board members from South County. Several names were mentioned, with Virginia Haley to follow up on the suggestions.

#### **President's Report:**

Virginia Haley discussed the international travel memo from Lynn Hobeck Bates that adds Amsterdam and Zurich to the already scheduled German travel. She said it has been approximately ten years since travel agents in those two cities have been visited by the SCVB and it is cost effective to add those cities to the itinerary. The Longboat Key Club & Resort also is sending a sales representative on the trip. As usual, international travel requires approval by the SCVB Board of Directors. Scott Busby moved to approve this travel; Richard Bradshaw seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Virginia Haley noted that Visitor Guide sales continue to go well. There was a question regarding the Travelocity memorandum, namely, if the presence of Travelocity drives traffic to the website. Ms. Haley responded that it does not drive traffic but is a useful tool to have on the website.

There was a discussion about dropped partners generally and if it would make sense for a Board member to reach out to partners about to be dropped to convince them to continue partnership. It could be educational for Board members to make these calls and get feedback from partners who are dropping their partnerships.

A report on Savor Sarasota Restaurant Week will be included in the next quarterly report. Board members asked how to increase the number of participating restaurants and how to generate room nights by making Savor Sarasota more of a festival. This issue will be added to the agenda for the upcoming Public Relations and Marketing Committees to seek their input. Erin Duggan noted that originally Forks & Corks occurred at the same time and made restaurant

week more of a festival but that Forks & Corks had moved its event to January. Some kind of food festival would enhance restaurant week.

#### **Financial Report for May 2011:**

Jay Schrock reported that the May financials continue to look really good, with income ahead of budget year-to-date by over \$23,000. The big issue is that County receivables are currently over \$51,000. The Clerk is holding up payment, fueled by the County's procurement problems. The SCVB is double-checking all submissions to the County and is providing a higher level of back-up, including memoranda explaining anything that might be questioned by the County.

Dr. Schrock noted that everything else is fine. Stephanie Grosskreutz added that the funds to cover the County's shortfall in payment are coming from the SCVB savings account.

Paige Hartmann moved to approve the May financials; Leslie Power seconded the motion. The motion passed.

#### **Visitor Services (continued):**

Stephanie Grosskreutz reviewed the proposed Board Action Plan for Visitor Services provided in the Board packet. She noted that Berkeley Young stresses a change from information delivery to selling. As to the Visitor Center improvements, creation of the task force, including non-Board members with special talents (architecture, interior design, landscape design, history center staff) is the essential first step. The mobile visitor center task force will review options for a mobile visitor center and whether to purchase one or lease one. Forming a non-profit corporation for visitor services is needed to allow the non-profit to apply for grants and may take up to one year, so that process should be started promptly. The tourism product development fund might be a possible funding for the gateways and signage component of visitor services improvement.

Comments by the Board included:

- moving visitors services to selling will be an added partner benefit
- support for the creation of a non-profit corporation
- Mote Marine could help with information on a mobile unit
- the mobile unit should be such that no commercial driver's license is required to operate it
- is it feasible to use a portable tent (such as the one at Ed Smith Stadium) for Venice?
- the transportation problem is an important component of visitor services; a downtown circulator trolley would be a benefit, along with something to meet demand on Siesta.
- the Venice trolley is merchant supported and works well; possibly Mindy Pieper of Venice MainStreet could make a presentation to the TDC about its effectiveness
- TDT funds prohibit transportation *per se*, but wayfinding, schedules, brochures could be covered by TDT funds

The Chair asked if there currently is room in the budget for these visitor services improvements, and Stephanie Grosskreutz responded that there is minimal funding available. Staff time can be used for research. The most important thing is to start the process: apply for 501c3 status,

form the Visitor Center Task Force, form the Mobile Visitor Center Task Force, and set criteria for moving forward. Virginia Haley suggested that Berkeley Young make a presentation on this subject to the TDC, and Mark Becker suggested that Mr. Young also address the task forces once they are formed. Other Board members made suggestions about people in the community who may be helpful to the process, such as architects Halfants and Guy Petersen.

### **Tourism Product Development Fund:**

The SCVB wants to provide input to the TDC for structuring and use of the approximately \$300,000 to \$400,000 annual funds for product development. The 2011-2015 Tourism Strategic Plan contains five goals that might be included, as enumerated in the draft provided in the Board packet. Upon discussion the Board agreed that item four should be deleted as it would not be an appropriate use for these funds, leaving four goals, as follows:

1. Enhance destination transportation and parking throughout the County.
2. Enhance destination wayfinding signage.
3. Develop additional sports tournament facilities.
4. Maintain and, where appropriate, enhance the County's beach parks.

Generally the draft uses the Asheville model of awarding the funds every other year, so that the funds are significant enough to have an impact. A community-appointed Board would make the recommendation for the selected project, and projects where they are multiple partners with additional contributions (for example, the rowing facility) would be preferred. The role of the SCVB would be to do legwork in preparing the applications but the project proposer must present a complete package to the community-appointed board who would rank the projects for review by the TDC and then for selection by the Board of County Commissioners.

Currently the Board of County Commissioners has approved the concept. The TDC must approve the concept next week and then ask for county staff to work with SCVB staff regarding the technical details for the process. Board members volunteered to contact TDC members to seek their support for the Tourism Product Development Fund.

Also, it was noted that Friends of Sarasota County Parks wants to provide amenities to parks and may be a good resource for achieving this goal.

It was also mentioned that SCVB staff should contact Guy Peterson about the Chamber North Trail project that he is doing.

Chairman Becker called for final questions and comments, and there being none, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 9:25 AM.