

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

Present: Mark Becker (6/6); Jay Schrock (6/6); Richard Bradshaw (6/6); Laura Williams (6/6); Larry Fineberg (5/6); Comm. Joseph Barbetta (3/3); Trent Young (5/6); Paige Hartman (5/6); Michael Klauber (3/6); Leslie Power (4/6).

Excused Absence: Susan Danis (5/6); Kumar Mahadevan (5/6).

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

At 8:07 AM Chairman Mark Becker called the meeting to order in the Third Floor Conference Room of Ed Smith Stadium. He extended congratulations to Laura Williams for the wonderful job she did on the Baltimore Orioles Spring Training Opening Day and the entire stadium renovation project. In kind, Ms. Williams thanked Sarasota for its support of the Baltimore Orioles. She felt the most significant event of Opening Day was recognition of the workers on the stadium renovation for their tremendous accomplishment, noting that 80 percent of the workmen were Sarasota residents. She also felt the local children lining up for the ball players when they first came on the field was another highlight of the day. Mr. Becker expressed how proud everyone was of the stadium and what an amazing event Opening Day was.

Consent Agenda:

The Chairman proceeded to the Consent Agenda and asked the Trent Young, Chair of the Governance Committee, to expound on the new candidates for the two open Board of Directors positions. Mr. Young spoke about Mr. Chris Rolle of BBT Bank and Mr. Scott Busby of Charter One Hotels, the two candidates. Chair Becker noted that approval of the Consent Agenda constitutes approval of these two candidates as members of the SCVB Board of Directors.

Jay Schrock moved to approve the Consent Agenda; Michael Klauber seconded the motion. The Chair called for other comments or discussion. There was a brief discussion of Ron Burks addressing the Executive Committee. There was a question about the new logo and when the Board will see it (April meeting). The Chair called for a vote on the Consent Agenda, and it was approved.

President's Report:

Virginia Haley spoke about the list of hotels participating in the STR reports, included in the Board packet, and noted that this information is confidential. Some properties choose not to participate for business reasons. The SCVB is not able to obtain segmented STR reports because there are so few participating properties, especially on Siesta Key. Ms. Haley also pointed out ways in which other destinations manipulate STR report data and noted that information from Dr. Klages (Sarasota County Hotel-Motel Occupancy and Average Daily Rate, on page 17) is more accurate.

Other discussions included:

- Things seem to be looking up, with the Orioles in town, weather especially good, and overall economy improving.
- We need to recognize the positive impact of the Orioles' contribution to the local economy and also recognize that TDT funds are paying for the stadium. Local taxpayers need to be reminded that tourists, in effect, are paying for the stadium renovation.
- The Festival Steering Committee (FSC) had a productive meeting last week and seems to have concluded that a festival is not sustainable. In effect, the FSC has provided more of a feasibility study than a business plan. It may be that a grants program with possible arts marketing is a more viable use of these TDT funds. Some on the FSC feel that if it develops a business plan, it would need to stand behind that business plan. It may make more sense to support what is already in place. One idea is to support one or two local arts organizations to create new productions in connection with the Ringling International Arts Festival utilizing local talent.

Financial Matters:

Jay Schrock reported that the financials keep looking better. Accounts Receivable are down; new laptop computers were purchased with TDT funds; the ratios look good; and, as discussed last month, savings were moved from the LandMark Bank savings account to a SunTrust account. Leslie Power moved to approve the January financials; Paige Hartman seconded the motion. The motion passed.

SCVB Marketing Funds Continuation:

Virginia Haley asked Board members for the results of their conversations with Tourist Development Council members on the subject of continuing SCVB marketing funds set to expire next year. Following are comments on the calls:

Mark Becker spoke with the following people:

- Jim McManemon of the Ritz-Carlton supports continuation of the funding.
- Dan Bebak of Mote supports continuation of the funding.
- Sharon Cunningham of Cunningham Properties very much supports continuation of the funding but points out that the TDC will need specific information about how the current funds have been spent.
- David Garofalo of the North Port City Commission is non-committal on continuation of the funding.

Larry Fineberg spoke with:

- Terry Turner of the Sarasota City Commission is in favor of continuation of the funding.
- Bob Waechter of the Airport Board of Directors is very supportive of continuation of funding.

Richard Bradshaw went to Warm Mineral Springs Motel to visit with Roger Herber, who appreciated the visit from a fellow hotelier. He could be a supporter and he feels that the springs are the sole major tourism asset in the North Port area. Virginia Haley noted that we should include information on the various writers we have taken to Warm Mineral Springs in our TDC

presentation. Mr. Bradshaw also spoke with Bob Kirscher, who is not sure if he is on the TDC or not. Apparently this will be decided at the March 23 TDC meeting. Other candidates are John Ryan, Ted Allen and Ed Braunlich of the Hyatt Siesta Key.

Trent Young has been unable to reach John Moore by phone but will continue to try.

Virginia Haley spoke with David Brenner, the TDC representative from Longboat Key. He has another meeting on March 17 but will try to attend the TDC meeting, and he fully supports continuation of the marketing funds. Ms. Haley noted that this subject is first on the TDC agenda on March 17 at 4:00 PM, and Mark Becker plus two other Board members should speak. After discussion, it was agreed that Chairman Becker will give an introduction, Richard Bradshaw will speak on the metrics of the current funding, and Susan Danis will speak on the potential negative impact if these marketing funds are allowed to expire. There will be no PowerPoint presentation, but the SCVB's white paper on tourism marketing funds will be provided to the TDC in advance of the meeting. The SCVB should provide one overhead slide of 'where did this money go?'

Michael Klauber gave a brief description of the Forks and Corks event on the last weekend in January, noting that 42 restaurants participated, all events sold out, and over 1,300 tickets to the Grand Tasting at Ringling were sold. Participant surveys indicate that 40 percent of attendees were repeat attendees, 16 percent were visitors to Sarasota County, and 85 percent of attendees were very satisfied, with the Ringling event and the breweries being the two most popular events. Ninety-five percent of attendees are likely to attend again. Mr. Klauber also noted that in recognition of the Baltimore Orioles Spring Training, Michael's on East would be having a Maryland-themed menu throughout March.

SCVB Website and Online Advertising:

Anne Zavorskas introduced Anand Pallegar and Danny Watts from atLarge, Inc., who is in its third year of doing the website and online advertising for the SCVB. They reviewed the engagement goals, some problems encountered in the past two years (economy, oil spill), and the method by which they arrived at the estimated increase in economic expenditures in tourism of \$6.8 million. Mr. Watts is primarily responsible for strategies to bring more traffic to the SCVB website better and cheaper. He noted that the main goal is interactions. Anne Zavorskas noted that we exceed industry averages in interactions and are moving beyond that metric to the next level. Members of the Board discussed how the \$6.8 million number breaks down – it is for paid lodging visitors only, based on an average six-day stay per person. Most of this information comes from Dr. Klages' October 2009 conversion study. The SCVB has commissioned another conversion study for October 2011 (every other year).

Mr. Watts talked about the things atLarge has done (history) with the SCVB in the past two years:

- Website content and messaging
- Partners – promotions, articles/content, videos, improvement of click-thru rates
- Mapping – showing where partners are located
- Niche audiences – 25 niches now addressed, with potential for 100 niches, such as arts/culture, budget, family, etc.
- Video galleries

- Co-op advertising
- Eco-tourism – now does well and will improve

Mark Becker asked if there is a place on the website for feedback on the destination. There is not, but Mr. Pallegar suggested that a better alternative is to link to existing feedback sites such as Yelp, Open Table, Zagat because that allows for feedback independent of SCVB evaluation.

Mr. Pallegar then spoke on future plans and strategies:

- Cultural asset awareness
- Positioning of the destination – affordable luxury
- Trend toward late booking
- Deal-hungry consumers
- The website is now a data source
- Mobile applications will dramatically increase, especially with the Ipad. Advertising on mobile applications yields greater intention to act.
- Four areas of focus: search, online display, video, mobile app.
- To design a mobile application, atLarge sought information from hotel concierges as to what consumers want – things to do, places to go, deals.
- Geo-location is an important new component.
- A United Kingdom micro-site is being developed.
- Social integration across all sites and social forums
- Video gallery to upload to YouTube, including positioning videos for searches.
- Hyper-niche ads (for example, weddings) that will allow for retargeting.

Board members then discussed how important partner education will be for new platforms, especially the mobile app. We will need to present a “help us help you” program and will need testimonials from other partners as to effectiveness of these new methods of interaction with visitors. We need to make it easy for partners.

The Chairman asked for other discussion or new business, and there being none, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 9:40 AM.