

SARASOTA

—AND HER ISLANDS—

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

April 13, 2011, 9:00 AM

Sarasota Visitor Information Center

Minutes

In attendance:

Committee Members: Martha Wells, Chair; Owen Comora; Holly Johnson; Sarah Ozgun; Gretchen Walker; Erin Bryce; Suzanne Willis

SCVB Staff: Erin Duggan, Anne Zavorskaskas, Lynn Hobeck Bates, Janis Holland

Excused absence: Lucy Nicandri. Unexcused absence: Jennifer Ahearn-Koch.

The meeting was called to order and Anne Zavorskaskas presented an overview of SCVB's new advertising campaign. She showed where we started in 2008 and changes to the Go Beyond the Beaches campaign that produced a 10 percent increase in market share. Ms. Zavorskaskas talked briefly about the process, from research, through target market messaging, to creative development, yielding a focus on nine niche markets (general leisure, ecotourism, cultural, culinary, meetings/groups, family, travel agents, bridal and sports) and a final concept incorporating a vibrant color palette and entitled Colors. The campaign will launch May 26 with a reception at the Sarasota Opera House. The feedback from the group was positive.

Erin Duggan then reviewed the draft PR plan and budget for fiscal year 2012, reviewing each line item and presenting the rationale for changes from last year. She noted that next year a Request for Proposal would be issued for our national public relations firm, as required by our County contract. She elaborated on several line items, as follows:

- Clipping Service: All digital now, so now worth the expense.
- Content Creation: Possibly create an 'insider's' blog with writers featuring a niche market each month. Some suggestions by the committee include: pay by the word and photo; tap into existing journalists through SATW, journalists associations, universities; require that writers have an existing blog.
- Foodie Farm Guide: Create a product that features 'farm to fork' options in Sarasota County (and nearby counties). Committee suggestions included: a stone crab promotion, community gardens to restaurant feature, Eat Local campaign, and bring writers at times when farm to restaurant promotions are occurring, including Restaurant Week.

The committee had several general questions for Erin Duggan:

- what are plans for use of Ed Smith Stadium? Stadium is still being completed by contractor / Baltimore O's org and should be available for events and other uses, including minor league use, thereafter. This will be determined by the Baltimore O's.
- are small eco and birding events useful, or must it be a large event? It must be an ongoing program for public relations features to be helpful, because that allows the story to be picked up by media at various times of the year.

Ms. Duggan then provided a PR update for the committee, as follows:

1. National Tourism Week will be celebrated at Ed Smith Stadium on May 12th at 8:00 AM with a free breakfast, recognition of all nominees and presentation of awards.
2. Festival Steering Committee – Martha Wells provided an update, noting that the FSC has completed its work and made its recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. The BCC has allowed the Arts Alliance of Sarasota County an additional two months to present a workable plan for a Festival of Firsts. If it cannot, the almost \$1 million in one-time funds will most likely go to an arts grant program.
3. The relationship with the Baltimore Orioles has worked out very well. There is an ad for Sarasota County in the current Orioles baseball program, and Sarasota is viewed favorably by the Baltimore travel market.
4. Current public relations efforts include circus-themed packages to tie in with the release of the movie *Water for Elephants* and have resulted in an Orlando article and interest from USA Today.
5. This summer's PR efforts will include targeting culinary, family and international travelers.
6. Virginia Haley is presenting an Indicators column twice quarterly in the Sarasota Herald Tribune Business Section, with a tourism-focused topic for each column.
7. The local portion of the Sara campaign has been dropped because of the success of the Sarasota's Got Talent promotion that yielded the local story aspect. The national portion of the Sara campaign will roll out at the end of the summer.
8. 30 Days of Discovery will be managed by Lynn Hobeck Bates, who will gather packages and promotions for September 1st through 30th and must include some kind of 2-for-1 offer. Even restaurants can participate in this promotion.

Ms. Duggan reminded everyone of the advertising launch at the Sarasota Opera House on May 26th, with invitations to be mailed shortly. The next meeting of the Public Relations Committee will be on July 13th.

The meeting adjourned at 10:35 AM.