

# SARASOTA

—AND HER ISLANDS—

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

November 17, 2010, 9:00 AM  
Sarasota Visitor Information Center

### Minutes

#### In attendance:

Committee Members: Martha Wells, Chair; Owen Comora; Gretchen Walker; Holly Johnson; Lucy Nicandri; Erin Bryce; Patricia Horwell; Jennifer Ahearn-Koch; Suzanne Willis

SCVB Staff: Erin Duggan, Anne Zavorskas, Virginia Haley

Excused Absence: Sarah Ozgun

Martha Wells, Chair of the SCVB's Public Relations Committee, welcomed everyone and asked for introductions around the room.

Erin Duggan explained the SCVNGR project, a multi-platform, interactive scavenger hunt, that the Sarasota CVB purchased as a package of 9 games. One game (Celebrate Sarasota) has been running for several months without anyone completing it. The next game will be an ecology-based scavenger hunt. The one after that will deal with Art Intersections. Ms. Duggan asked for suggestions for future games. Martha Wells asked who else is using the SCVNGR games, and Ms. Duggan said Coldwell Banker is using them for housing sales and the Boston CVB is using the software also.

Chair Wells asked Virginia Haley to briefly review the role of the Public Relations Committee. Ms. Haley said it is to provide input, ideas and support for the Sarasota CVB's public relations efforts, noting that the Sarasota CVB's mission is to promote the whole destination. Ms. Haley then explained that the SCVB has voluntarily agreed to submit to Sunshine Law and how that impacts interaction of the PR Committee members in regard to the business of the PR Committee.

Art Intersections, the next SCVNGR topic, is scheduled to launch on January 20 at 5:00 PM at Five Points Park. Art Intersections consists of art installations throughout the downtown City of Sarasota area. The SCVNGR tie-in will be that players can vote on their favorite piece of art and potentially win

prizes. There should be brochures and a map released soon by the organizers of event, the public art committee with the City of Sarasota.

Virginia Haley was asked about the prospects for this winter's tourism season; Ms. Haley responded that there was a survey two weeks ago of lodging partners regarding bookings and rates, and it seems to indicate group meetings will be important, upper-end market will be traveling, and that oil perception problems remain. She noted that the cold weather last year created problems but generally weather works to our advantage. The committee discussed some statistics about visitors. The outlook for 2011 is posted on the [sarasotafl.org](http://sarasotafl.org) website, in the partner section.

There was a discussion of the Elderhostel's Roads Scholar program bringing birding to Sarasota County and of the tourism value of birding generally. It was agreed that a 'Lunch and Learn' meeting to share information about activities and events, with a speaker to share specialized information, would be a useful educational tool for Sarasota CVB partners.

The next item on the agenda was the Sara Campaign – a social media based PR campaign to reach out to people named Sara to become the 'face' of Sarasota, offering prize packages, to launch in the Spring-Summer 2011. Discussions included suggestions that it be simple and viral, and that it offer multiple opportunities for different kinds of Sara – Eco-Sara, Romantic Sara, Girlfriend Getaway Sara, Cultural Sara, etc. The winners must have some component of Sara in their names. Holly Johnson suggested the phrase "Why I want to be Sara so I can go to Sarasota." Martha Wells suggested discounts to people named Sara. It was agreed that the terms and conditions of the contest would need to be very specific and include permission to use photos. A draft of this plan will be presented at the next PR Committee meeting.

Gretchen Walker asked about golf promotions. Virginia Haley is reaching out to adjoining county CVBs to explore golf promotion, as has been done in the past, but not recently.

A PR Themed Calendar of upcoming activities was shared with the committee for input. Several committee members suggested that the eco-tourism timeline for PR be extended through April (rather than just through January). Erin Bryce noted that North Port is developing a canoe/kayak map that would be helpful in promoting Paddle Florida. Lucy Nicandri talked about motorcycle events and motorcycle consumer shows for promotion.

Erin Duggan next talked about some of the activities of the SCVB, including the Great Visit Florida Beachwalk that took place on Nov. 6, promoting 825 miles of clean Florida beaches. Look for information about it in the next Partner E-newsletter including how to vote for a Sarasota County image and potentially win a new car and \$5,000 from VISIT FLORIDA. Ms. Duggan also

noted that the SCVB is looking to hire a full-time communications/events administrative person, and that the job is listed on the EDC's Job Focus website. If anyone knows someone for this position, please have them email her a resume by mid-December.

Next, there was a discussion about the Crystal Classic Master Sand Sculpting Competition on Siesta Key, a first-time event bringing professional sand sculptors to Sarasota, sponsored by the SCVB, the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce and others. It starts on Nov. 18, lasts for four days, and benefits Mote Marine Laboratory. Hopefully it will become an annual event and tourist draw.

Martha Wells briefly talked about the Festival Steering Committee, of which she and Mark Becker, Chairman of the SCVB Board of Directors, are members. Its function is to find consensus on a tourism/arts-based festival or event in Sarasota County in 2012 or 2013, and to present a business plan to the TDC and eventually to the BCC for support. Funds of approximately \$800,000 of TDT are available on a one-time basis for this project. Watch the news for a draft business plan.

Erin Duggan called the committee's attention to the upcoming meetings, noting that the January 12 meeting will deal with a draft plan for the upcoming "Sara" PR program, and the April 13 meeting will deal with the creation of the 2012 public relations plan. She thanked the committee for its assistance.