



Resort Advisory Commission
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RESORT ADVISORY COMMISSION
MINUTES

DATE: August 4, 2016
TIME: 3:00 pm
PLACE: Virginia Beach Convention Center, Room 4AB

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

Billy Almond
Sam Reid
Bill Gambrell
Joe DaBiero
John Hawa
BJ Baumann
Bryan Cuffee
Sylvia Strickland
Tyler Brown
Craig Roback
Michael Cloud-Butler
Randy Thompson
Preston Midgett
Bobby Melatti
Nancy Creech

Kristina Chastain
Laura Habr
Gerrie West

OTHERS PRESENT

Brad Van Dommelen, CVB
John Uhrin, Council
Diana Burke, VBHA
Scott Wichtendahl, 2nd Prec.
Kathy Warren, SGA
Bill Reed, BEACON
Stacey Parker, The Pilot
Mike Eason, SGA/Resort Mgmt.
Robin Hart, SGA/Recorder

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Jim Davis

Chair Billy Almond called the meeting to order at 3:00p.m.

Motion carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the July 7, 2016 meeting as written.

Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Update – Brad Van Dommelen

The new Director of the CVB, Brad Van Dommelen, provides an overview of the CVB, lists some of his observations as a person new to the area, talks about some of his planned initiatives, and updates the Commission on how the summer is going, from a numbers standpoint.

Destination marketing organizations have an increasingly important role in our communities and Brad sees the CVB as an economic development organization that advocates a brand.

He lists CVB core functions such as sales, service, and communication of the brand. An administrative division keeps the functions operating smoothly. As an organization, we

should function more collaboratively, both internally and externally with the industry (our stakeholders and marketing partners).

He observes that we are a passionate hospitality community who is very engaged. He wants to figure out how we can reinforce our seasonality and then broaden that concept. In order to determine how to do that, he is reviewing advertising spending. Although Beach Events already brings a variety of experiences in a somewhat compressed area, he feels that we should be doing more.

Two product gaps noticeable to him concern the Virginia Beach Convention Center (VBCC) and retail mix offered to the public. The VBCC lacks the supporting assets to bring more events to the area, and the mix of retail product repeated every few blocks needs analysis to see how it fits together to affect the business we are bring here as well as the brand of the destination.

Planned initiatives based on observations include defining the advertising need as well as evaluating the advertising budget based on what markets we are in now and what markets we might want to consider, either in more of a year-round way, or by being more saturated. The goal will be to then define in which markets we should build our brand and when, and how to go about doing it, and see where the gap lies.

We continue to serve our core markets – Washington, D.C., Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Richmond, Raleigh, Pittsburgh, Columbus and Chicago – each with its own tactics and timing. Even though we still need television, newspapers and radio to some extent, many advertising tactics are digital, and it is growing. There are plans for outdoor billboards near the Richmond area and I95 corridor.

There is a new campaign for this year, a late summer campaign called, “Don’t Let Summer Slip Away”. The goal is to continue the pace of the busy summer into August. They want to grow the shoulder season and off-season with Passion Platform Marketing, for which digital marketing is tailor-made. We can use this to bring people to the beach for other reasons other than the beach, and is collaborating with the Virginia Tourism Corporation on how to modify “Virginia is for Lovers” to incorporate sub-brands.

Since Virginia Beach is such a large area, we have plenty places for plenty of stories that will excite people about Virginia Beach. Letting people know how to get to those places and letting them know that they have arrived are critical to the success of bringing people to the area and it involves signage and branding.

For product development, a study for sports marketing includes analyzing where we are now and where we want to be, and the results should be ready for review at the end of August.

Brad understands that, although June was better, our July business has been good, and we are looking forward to a profitable August.

He observes that the traditional travel plans have changed and noted that the Outer Banks is discounting rates in vacation rentals to draw travelers to their area. As a board member of the US Travel Association (USTA), he learned that the research from their

“Project Time Off” indicated that millennials make up the largest part of the 55% of people who lose accumulated time off. The millennials are supposed to be a large consumer, and he has been trying to understand why the data is reflecting that information. The USTA is starting to market the idea to people to take their vacations because taking a vacation is a healthy thing to do.

QUESTIONS

Brad agrees to share the sports marketing study with John Uhrin and the RAC.

Brad briefly describes a new possible product initiative that he learned about through Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI).

On Air BNB and VRBO, Brad replies that he understood that a representative for AirBNB is acceptable with appropriate regulation and they are willing to pay occupancy tax. In an effort to stay relevant for those that are attracted to Air BNBs, the City will be looking at some hotels that have changed their lifestyle brands to reflect that taste.

On what the most viable season is for our area, Brad replies that it would be the fall season. It is on the heels of the summer season and visitors would most likely be easiest to attract then, appealing to culinary and outdoor experiences and events that attract Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers. It would require collaboration with, foremost, the Virginia Tourism Corporation and their sub-brand category that fits that market.

On whether there is a huge difference in spending between our core markets, Brad replies that it depends on how far away the market is and how heavily we are advertising in that market. He guesses that we invest the most heavily in the markets located 4- to 5-hour drives away.

When asked about CVB marketing and its emphasis on marketing to the locals, Brad replies that encouraging locals to the resort is not historically the mission of a CVB, which is charged with increasing visitor stays. Typically, the out-of-towners are the ones who bring in the spending power and support products that cannot be supported by locals (although locals benefit by being able to enjoy them).

There were differing opinions on how the locals felt about the resort areas, some locals expressing that they did not feel a lot of good will and others saying that they stayed away because it was too crowded. There was a suggestion to use some of the advertising dollars to start up a locals' campaign similar to what they had years ago, with billboards in Norfolk, Virginia Beach and on the Eastern Shore.

For the status of the Canadian and Asian markets, and Brad replied that since the value of Canadian money has dropped some, so they are less apt to travel to the U.S. right now; however, the Chinese market is the largest mid-salary growth market in comparison to other Asian markets. The visa process has improved, taking days now, versus months in the past.

Committee Reports

Transportation, Parking, Pedestrian Committee (TPPC)

Preston Midgett reports that the TPPC met last month and had an update from Rob Fries on the employee parking passes.

All 14 HRT trolleys are all on the road. The HRT and VBHA met to find out some way to make the trolley passes more available, with one way being to develop some type of application. John Uhrin would like to see that this Commission take a formal position recommending that to HRT. Sam Reid mentions that they were told that the trolleys have the credit card capability but they are not allowed to use it because the regular city buses do not have the same capability. Allowing the trolleys to accept credit cards and not implementing the process across the board would affect HRT's federal funding. John Uhrin will ask about that. **The Commission voted unanimously to proceed with trying to get HRT to get an app in service.**

Planning and Design Review (PDR)

Billy Almond reports that they had two more multi-family apartment project presentations in the ViBe District. The PDR gave them both recommendations and they are to return in August or September.

Oceanfront Enhancement Committee (OEC)

Sam Reid reports that there was no OEC meeting last month.

Resort Investment Committee (RIC)

Billy Almond reports that they addressed the upcoming speakers on the circuit starting with August through December 2016.

The September 1 RAC meeting has been confirmed as meeting at the Cavalier Hotel for a tour in lieu of the traditional RAC meeting.

They talked a lot about the SGA and later this month they are having an RIC meeting during which the SGA will present the plans and get input on spurring redevelopment citywide. John Uhrin further explains that it is about the SGA plans and associated short-term and long-term action items. The challenges are public infrastructure and the underlying zoning, and he wants to be clear that incentives, although included, are not the major component of the meeting.

Oceanfront Strategic Growth Area Committee (OSGAC)

BJ Baumann reports that the OSGAC did not meet last month.

G.R.E.E.N. Committee

Billy Almond reports that the G.R.E.E.N. committee did not meet, but an email via Laura Habr stated that there was general discussion on Beachy Clean recycling cans, and reaching out to Sandbridge and Bayfront areas to discuss interest in the program.

Economic Development

None

Staff Report

Mike Eason comments that the G.R.E.E.N. committee asked Resort Management to determine which recycling cans on the resort beach still need stickers and when he gets a response, he might have a volunteer project to get more cans covered.

Labor Day is right around the corner and there are three events are all falling within a week or so of each other. They are working with onsite parking as opposed to shuttling and are working closely with law enforcement.

The speaker system at the oceanfront on the west side of Atlantic between 17th and 25th is working, and management will now fall under law enforcement, along with the camera systems.

The remaining 18 lights on the boardwalk are set to be replaced under Phase II, starting soon.

There was discussion on the new banners at Rudee Inlet and Mike says that they can make them shorter and wider but the consensus is that they are glad that something noticeable is on the Rudee Bridge.

Other Business

None

Public Comment

None

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.