

City of Morro Bay
**TOURISM BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
ADVISORY BOARD**

Minutes – Thursday, August 20, 2009

MEMBERS PRESENT: KAREN BIAGGINI, PETER CANDELA, MIKE CASOLA,
NICK MENDOZA, VALERIE SEYMOUR, JOAN SOLU
MEMBERS ABSENT: MICHELE JACQUEZ
STAFF PRESENT: ROB SCHULTZ, CITY ATTORNEY
OTHERS PRESENT: JOHN SORGENFREI

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Joan Solu called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Member Valerie Seymour moved the Committee approve the minutes of the July 16, 2009 Tourism Business Improvement District Advisory Board meeting as submitted. The motion was seconded by member Peter Candela and carried unanimously. (6-0)

IV. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A) Presentation Regarding JackRabbit Reservation System

Steve Mead of JackRabbit Systems gave a presentation on their online booking system. The system uses no interfaces and all reservations are done on the backend of the website, which keeps the customer on the Morro Bay.org website. It results in an average savings of 30-72% on commissions. The system can be up and running on the website in 45 days. The cost is \$.70 per click, whether or not a room is booked.

JackRabbit offers an additional system for smaller hotels without web or credit card capability to give them those capabilities. There is a \$100 setup fee and a monthly credit card processing fee of \$18.00.

John Sorgenfrei mentioned that the intent in considering this is to make the website more competitive, and added that the BID could consider absorbing the cost. He said that if it is done correctly, it should generate more traffic. He can work with Mr. Mead and staff to bring back more figures.

Joan Solu said that there are funds of \$8,800 allocated for an outside booking agent. She suggested that staff also look at the differences in the BID paying the costs v. not paying the costs. She mentioned that this service might help move City hoteliers toward modernization.

MOTION: Member Nick Mendoza moved that John Sorgenfrei and staff work with JackRabbit to draft a contract and return to the Advisory Board with figures. The motion was seconded by member Peter Candela and carried unanimously. (7-0)

B) Discussion on How to Handle Funding Requests from Other Groups/Events, etc.

Joan Solu reported that she pulled request forms from the internet for several cities and noted the following:

- One city runs all requests through the Recreation & Parks Dept.
- Each city has a cap on the amount BID will give.
- One City has a “post event report” that each group or event sponsor must fill out and return if they want to apply for funds the following year.

John Sorgenfrei said that it is important to control the funds and not to just give the cash, to include a message on advertising, and to determine whether the event results in overnight stays.

Joan Solu suggested, in order to avoid groups/event representatives making their presentations during public comment, having one or two presentation days a year and then announce the awards.

MOTION: Member Nick Mendoza moved that the issue of handling funding requests be tabled, the Board develop a funding request policy, and in the spring consider funding events. The motion was seconded by member Mike Casola and carried unanimously. (7-0)

C) Discussion on How We Measure Our Success

John Sorgenfrei said that digital advertising and email statistics are very trackable, as are Google adwords.

D) General Budget Report

Joan Solu reported that BID collections for the first month, June, total approximately \$44,000, with one or two hotels not yet collected. TOT overall is down from previous years. Susan Slayton told Ms. Solu that the City budgeted for it to be down, based on trend.

Mike Casola requested that future TOT reports include a five or six year month by month history.

John Sorgenfrei said that the \$8,800 allocated for a booking agent might be low and may need to be adjusted. He mentioned that the Board might consider waiting for the website redesign before adding the booking agent.

Mr. Sorgenfrei also said that he would report each month on where we stand with the budget.

E) Discussion on the Website

Rob Schultz reported that he met with Peter Candela and John Sorgenfrei regarding the website. He suggested a subcommittee of 2 members each from Community Promotions Committee and Tourism Business Improvement District Advisory Board to review the websites and ensure that they all work together, considering reservations issues, etc.

Member Joan Solu volunteered to sit on the subcommittee. Michele Jacquez was also nominated.

There was discussion regarding offering packages and using the newsletter to provide information and encouragement. Peter Candela said that the Chamber created a package matrix for a recent softball event and that it worked very well.

VI. DECLARATION OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- A) Website
- B) JackRabbit negotiations
- C) Google adwords

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Solu adjourned the meeting at 11:48 am.