

**GATLINBURG DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

January 11, 2007

The Gatlinburg Department of Tourism Advisory Board met on January 11, 2007, at 1:30p.m. in Meeting Rooms 1 and 2 of the Convention Center. **The following members were present:** Mr. Dan Booth, Mr. Bud Lawson, Chairman Sid Maples, Mr. Bob Waikel, Ms. Sandy McCown, Mr. Any MacKinnon, Mr. Dan Saffelder, Mr. Joe Waggoner, Ms. Kathy Doyle, Mr. Matt Zoder, Mr. Darrell Whitchurch, Commissioner Mike Werner, Commissioner Harry Montgomery, Ms. Vicki Simms and Mr. Kevin Tierney. **City of Gatlinburg Staff included:** City Manager Cindy Ogle, Executive Director David Perella and Ms. Johnna Greene. **Business community member present:** Mr. Joel Young

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Maples called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 30, 2006 MEETING MINUTES

Chairman Maples asked if any changes/corrections needed to be made to the November 30, 2006 meeting minutes. **Motion to approve the November 30, 2006 minutes was made by Commissioner Werner, seconded by Ms. McCown and unanimously approved.**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Maples stated that Mr. King apologized for his absence while in Orlando. Mr. Perella distributed the Online Booking Report on gatlinburg.com. Mr. Perella reported that the online booking system collected more than expected. He also stated that the combined internet committee would be meeting to discuss the cost of set up of a new software that would enable the larger cabin rentals to participate in the online booking system.

Mr. Perella distributed an eBrains pay-per-click handout. The handout was a month to month comparison of clicks of gatlinburg.com. The handout reflects the number of visits per sight.

PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM UPDATE

Chairman Maples stated that the Public Relations Search Committee met with three different firms. The Search Committee consists of five board members and five representatives from the City. Each firm was given an hour and a half to present themselves to the committee. After the presentation, the committee discussed and recommended that French, West and Vaughn of Raleigh, NC be hired as the City's Public Relations Firm. Ms. Doyle stated that she felt that this firm was very rounded, was creative, enthusiastic, and brought "new eyes" to the table. She felt that FWV would mesh well with all of the companies involved in the promotion of the City of Gatlinburg. Mr. MacKinnon stated that FWV has a very diverse client base and that they think

outside of the box which is what is needed. Chairman Maples stated that FWV could cross sell Gatlinburg within its client base. Mr. Waggoner pointed out that their average length client/employee service is seven years. He felt this showed that clients and employees don't come and go. Mr. Perella stated that the City has budgeted \$150,000 for public relations and that he could negotiate the contract and what the City's expectations are. **Mr. Waggoner motioned to recommend to the Board of Commissioners that French, West and Vaughn be hired as the City's public relations firm. Mr. Whitchurch seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.**

TOURISM SUMMIT UPDATE

Mr. Perella stated that the scheduled date of February 14, 2007 conflicted with the attendance of the wedding chapel segment of the community due to Valentine's Day weddings. **Mr. MacKinnon motioned to move the date of the Summit to Thursday, February 15, 2007. Commissioner Werner seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Mr. Perella stated that the Summit would begin at 8:30a.m. in Mills Auditorium with lunch being served at 12:15 and breakouts being held in the Convention Center.

ZENO PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN

Mr. Perella distributed the 2007 promotional schedule for Zeno. After reviewing the schedule, **Mr. Waggoner motioned to change the wording of all to most and in 2e of the schedule to change Saturday evenings to seven evenings. Mr. Booth seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.**

UNSCHEDULED ITEMS

Mr. Perella stated that Ms. Kara Dense, Director of Sales, accepted the position of Executive Director for the Greenbriar County Visitors and Convention Bureau in Virginia. Her last day with the City will be January 31.

Mr. MacKinnon thanked the board for its support with the selection of the Public Relations firm.

Commissioner Werner stated that he felt the new public relations firm would be a good fit with the City. He also stated that he has received several good comments regarding the undergrounding and the new lights. He requested that the members that haven't looked at the scroll on Dudley Branch view it.

Mr. Whitchurch suggested that the Summit's 2007 – 2011 calendar be opened for more revisions and suggestions for the community at large. Mr. Perella stated that the breakouts would be used for that.

Commissioner Montgomery reiterated Commissioner Werner's statements.

Ms. Simms inquired of Mr. Perella if the business survey by Steven Morris of UT specified that health insurance was a benefit. Mr. Perella said that he believed that it was and that the survey would be conducted via internet.

Ms. Doyle stated that the slopes were reopened today. She also requested the board's support in the Special Olympic Winter Games being held at Ober Gatlinburg on January 29 and 30 as well as its support in the local blood drives.

Mr. Waggoner commended the City on its handling of Maple Lane during the undergrounding.

Chairman Maples stated that French, West, and Vaughn compared Gatlinburg's downtown streetscape to that of a western mountain town such as Vail's or Aspen's.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.