

**GATLINBURG DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
CONVENTION CENTER/GROUP SALES WORK GROUP MINUTES**

September 26, 2007

The Gatlinburg Department of Tourism Convention Center/Group Sales Work Group met on September 26th, 2007 at 9:30 a.m. in the Board Room of the Convention Center. **The following members were present:** Ms. Jackelyn Schaffer, Mr. Joe Waggoner, Mr. Bud Lawson, Ms. Sharon Sutton, Ms. Vickie Simms, and Mr. David Perella.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. David Perella called the meeting to order.

SELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIRPERSON

Mr. David Perella motioned to appoint Ms. Jackelyn Schaffer Chairperson, seconded by Mr. Joe Waggoner.

The Vice Chairperson will be selected at the next meeting when there are more members present.

INCLUSION OF BUSINESSES INTO THE WORK GROUP MEETINGS

The group decided that they should invite businesses throughout the City to be included in this Work Group since they will be the persons dealing with groups that visit Gatlinburg. Ms. Sharon Sutton will be contacting the following people/businesses to see if they might be interested in participating: Edgewater, Andrew, Clarion, Greystone, Jackie Leatherwood, Angela, Ober, Park Grill, Ripleys, and other representatives in the City that Ms. Sharon Sutton and the Sales Staff at the Convention Center work with on a regular basis concerning groups or group sales.

AGENDA ITEMS

The Scope of this Work Group: It was unanimously agreed that the overall Scope of this Work Group is “Bringing more City-Wide Business to Gatlinburg.” The members will be focusing on 4 major goals that include: 1. How do we deal with Group Tours and their large buses (example: parking) 2. How can we initially get groups to visit Gatlinburg? 3. We will be focusing on Faith Based Groups and encouraging a return visit from those who are already visitors of Gatlinburg. 4. How much energy and financial resources do we put toward these efforts and our visiting Groups?

The Group had a large discussion of ways we can make our visiting Groups feel “Welcome” when they enter our City and businesses and travel throughout the city during their time here in Gatlinburg. Two of the ideas up for discussion were giving a small Welcome Gift to each Group or putting Welcome posters or flags throughout the City and businesses windows.

The Group also discussed getting the restaurants involved and for them to participate in encouraging Group Sales. It was mentioned that they need to understand that they need to give and provide something special for Groups while they are in town. Mr. David Perella mentioned that maybe the restaurants should form some type of an Alliance or Group so that it wouldn't necessarily be considered a State Membership Board. They can charge a small fee to belong to the group and can make one of their focuses Group Sales.

The Trolley System can also get involved. It was agreed that our transportation and being known as a "walking city" is our largest selling point. Ms. Schaffer commented that maybe the Trolleys can provide a 2 for 1 ticket for Groups to keep them inside the City itself while they are visiting.

When going to Shows, we need to be large and have Gatlinburg City Staff as well as Gatlinburg Businesses participating. The Group discussed maybe having a system or way of tracking the results of shows (example: before show-work with our Marketing Team and send pre-information, at show-talk to people and hand out flyers that can be tracked when our staff returns to Gatlinburg, after show-follow tracking).

Continuing the discussion about encouraging Groups to travel here and making them feel Welcome once they have arrived; Ms. Sharon Sutton suggested making a short video for Gatlinburg. This video may be distributed to interested parties, played on the tour bus rides traveling to Gatlinburg, or given to Group leaders to advertise with participants - or interested participants - prior to their trip. Mr. David Perella is going to call the City of Chattanooga and get a copy of their latest video that was shown at the Governor's Conference. This video will be made with our Advertising Agency.

SCHEDULE NEXT TAB MEETING

The next Convention Center/Group Sales Work Group Meeting was scheduled for **Friday, October 19, 2007 at 9:00 am in the Board Room at the Gatlinburg Convention Center.**

UNSCHEDULED ITEMS

There were no unscheduled items. However, Ms. Sharon Sutton will be updating the Work Group with the list of interested businesses that will be participating in future meetings.