

Convention and Visitors Bureau
Board Meeting/ Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, March 15, 2004 – 8:15 a.m.

Meeting Call to Order: Marilyn Josephson

Roll Call: Present - Marilyn Josephson, Shane Horton, Darsie Culbeck, Karen Hess, Tom Crandall, Herb VanCleve

Absent - Jeff Butcher, Judy Heinmiller

Also present - Lori Stepansky, Mayor Mike Case, Jan Hamp

Approval of Agenda: Approved

President's Report:

Old Business: **Pavilion project progress** – Karen reported that she, Lori, and Dale Mulford went to the potential pavilion site and discussed design layouts including some that would not require pilings which could greatly reduce the cost of the project. The first estimate was in the \$400,000 range. The grant is for \$120,000

Budget – Lori distributed the current copy of the tourism portion of the budget indicating that there were not changes from the last copy given to the Board except for the inclusion of the payroll section. Marilyn asked Mayor Case when the next Assembly hearing on the budget would be. Mayor Case indicated that it would be the meeting after next and it would actually be the first hearing.

Logo/Branding RFP progress – Lori reported that she had written up a first draft of the RFP using the Ketchikan logo/branding and website redesign RFP as a model. She stated she has sent this to Borough Clerk, Julie Cozzi, for review and assistance in wording the RFP. Lori also stated that it was her understanding that all RFP's and job postings are required to be written by the Borough Clerk and writing the logo/branding RFP is in progress.

Outdoor Life Videos – on the way – Lori reported that there was some confusion on *Outside Magazine's* end for obtaining a copy of the program which aired on Outdoor Life Network about heli-skiing in the Chilkat Mountains of Haines. She is expecting to receive copy of the video soon. Karen Hess mentioned that her daughter, Angie, had seen the program and that there was good coverage for Haines in the program.

Grant Writing Class – Lori reported that she was not able to attend the Grant writing class in Juneau do to weather and no ferry for transportation to Juneau. Karen Hess stated that Joan Carlson of the Haines Chamber was investigating possibilities of having the grant writing class (conducted

by Foraker Group) held in Haines as there were others in the community, including several from the Library, that were not able to attend this class in Juneau for the same transportation reasons.

New Business:

Miami Trip – Karen Hess reported about the Miami cruise ship sales call in which she participated. Karen reported that she and Lori visited with Shannon McKee at Norwegian Cruise Lines and also Jack Williams and John Fox at the Royal Caribbean offices. Karen stated first that Lori has now met with these cruise line contacts enough that she will be very well received if she were to contact them herself to meet with them in the future. Karen and Lori decided to bring Beth Cline from White Pass Railroad to the meetings to show that Haines and Skagway/White Pass are working together to promote the area for the cruise ships instead of competing between the two communities. Jack Williams and John Fox of Royal Caribbean said their 2005 schedules were set but there were still opportunities to look at 2006 for sending a ship to Haines. Karen and Lori told them about the transportation between Haines and Skagway with the Chilkat Cruises Fast Ferry, the People Mover Cart, and about projects such as the pavilion facility. Mr. Williams and Mr. Fox did ask about the environmentalist in the area, which Karen indicated that they still have past issues on their mind. Karen said that after discussing this with them during this meeting, they did indicate that they have moved on from past problems and are willing to look at Haines again.

Karen reported that she, Lori, and Beth Cline met with Shannon McKee of Norwegian Cruise Lines to thank Norwegian for bringing a ship to Haines this year. The conversation moved into bringing more ships to Haines. Shannon told Lori being able to move passengers to the train in Skagway would mean more ships for Haines. Karen stated to the CVB Board that she is aware that people get upset for ships sending so many of their passengers to Skagway for the train, but pointed out that the train generates a great deal of revenue for the ships. Karen also pointed out that Haines does not currently have the capacity to handle the numbers (passengers) that the train is capable of and though passengers may choose the train as an excursion, they do have to get back on the boat to return to Haines and cannot hang out in Skagway. This allows the opportunity for these passengers to spend time in Haines as well as ship passengers having the options to explore activities in Haines. Karen said she was told by Brian (Fogcutter owner) that “rising tides float all ships” meaning all ships coming to Haines is good for everyone. Karen ended by saying that the meetings went very well and it was all very encouraging for Haines.

Marilyn asked Lori if she had anything to add. Lori stated that Beth participating in the meetings had a lot of impact as it came right from the source that if the cruise lines wanted to bring ships to Haines, White Pass Train would accommodate them. Lori also stated that in her conversations

with cruise ship contacts, the animosity between Haines and Skagway in the past does not go over well and they like seeing the communities working together.

Department Credit Card – Lori stated that she has asked about getting a department credit card before but the request has not gone anywhere. She brought up a situation recently experienced in Miami where the Holiday Inn did not accept the Borough check she was given to pay for the room despite the fact that she called ahead to verify they would accept check for payment. Lori stated that she had to use her personal credit card. Even though this worked out all right in this situation, she did mention when she attended the ABA conference in Chicago where the hotel room charge was over \$1000. Lori pointed out that there are times when such a situation may not allow for paying on the personal credit card to be reimbursed later due to current personal charges on the card, the amount of potential charges due to travel, and overlapping charges and payments applied from the frequent travel. Lori said that with the amount of travel that she does, she thinks a credit card for her department, and one that would earn miles, is a reasonable request and wanted the board's backing on this. Karen asked Lori to tell the Board what steps she has to take for travel in which Lori explained the process of the travel authorization and making room reservations when an establishment will not accept a purchase order number. If a PO number is not acceptable, Lori has to request the hotel to give her a total amount with tax so Borough accounting can cut the check. Lori stated that in cases the check has not been for the correct amount due to miscalculation of the hotel at time of reservation.

A discussion progressed about credit cards that earn miles and Lori indicated she does not have that kind of credit card. Karen stated that this system is archaic and should be updated. Shane Horton stated that whether an employee has enough credit available for all travel required or not, an employee should not be expected to use his or her own finances and funds and have to wait for reimbursement at a later date. Shane moved to make a formal motion to support having the Borough provide a credit card for the Tourism Department for travel expenses. Karen Hess second the motion, Marilyn, third. Marilyn called upon Mayor Case asking if any other Borough employees have a credit card. The Mayor's response was no. Marilyn asked what the reason might be for that and if an employee could be bonded for this purpose. Mayor Case said that it was possible and that he thought the reason might be that employees were using their own credit card for the airline miles. Shane pointed out that the person that flies actually gets the airlines miles. The Mayor said that he didn't see any reason why an employee couldn't be bonded so the department could have a credit card.

Herb VanCleve stated that he doesn't know at what point the Tourism Department stopped having a credit card but he knew for a fact that Tyson Verse and Larry West had a credit card for department use. Karen Hess stated that the Haines Chamber has a credit card for at least the president's use as well as for Joan Carlson and noted its convenience and simplicity, especially for travel situations. Darsie Colbeck stated that the Borough should look at acquiring an Alaska Airlines Corporate credit card for the Tourism Department as this helps with earning more miles and could also assist in acquiring free tickets for Lori's business travel. Lori pointed out that a lot of items in her budget can be purchased with a credit card and if these items could be purchased with a credit card that earns miles, then she would be able quickly accumulate miles for free tickets that in turn would help ease the travel portion of her budget. Marilyn motioned to have Lori proceed with the Borough to obtain a credit card for the Tourism Department. Shane, Karen, Marilyn, Tom, Herb, and Darsie were all in unanimous favor of this motion.

Directors Report: **Joint Marketing efforts with Skagway** – Lori reported that Buckwheat Donahue, Beth Cline and Jeremy have indicated wanting to meet with her periodically throughout the season to work on marketing efforts that would benefit both communities. Lori stated that there are many opportunities for Haines and Skagway to work together through cooperative advertising and other marketing options to attract tour groups, travelers, and promote the Golden Circle.

Website – training and updates – Lori reported that a few training sessions for HTML code have taken place with Todd Rafferty and his brother Shannon, who are contracted through the Borough. More sessions would be scheduled in the upcoming months. This has allowed Lori to change the colors and look of the web site. Lori reported that more changes will be taking place but it is a tedious with the code and is a work in progress. Lori also pointed out that with the colors, monitors may have different settings in place by the user causing variations in colors chosen to colors actually seen. Lori encouraged feedback and gave some examples of procedures and challenges in making changes to the web site. Herb VanCleve said he has equipment/programs that could check the Visitor Center monitors settings to display 'true' colors.

Karen Hess stated she wanted to give credit to Lori for her photography and her efforts of sending her cruise line contacts a photo each week. Lori stated that she got the idea after hearing Shane Horton say the cruise line people should be getting something good about Haines across their desk each week. It occurred to her that photos would be different and a nice change for the cruise line contacts instead of something that were buried on a desk or thrown in the garbage.

Cooperative Ads – Chilkat Cruises – Lori reported that Chilkat Cruises and the Visitor Center collaborated on a cooperative ad with *Where Magazine*, which resulted in more ad space for a little less money than planned. Lori also pointed out other cooperative ad options such as *Sunset Magazine*, which has been very good for lead generation. Cooperative ad efforts will help in stretching advertising dollars by getting more advertising frequency in some cases, savings in others, while giving other businesses in the community opportunities to enhance their exposure in publications for less money.

Bulk Mailings – Old and new vacation planners – Lori reported that there were still about seven boxes of 2004 Haines Vacation Planners. Instead of throwing them out, Julie Shook at the Visitor Center has been printing up 2005 Calendar of Event inserts for these Vacation Planners and doing bulk mailings to travel agencies in certain areas of the lower 48. Combined with the current requests for information in which new Vacation Planners are mailed, the Visitor Center had five bulk mailings in February with the smallest being 224 and the largest being 510.

Upcoming travel – Lori reported that Julie Shook will be going to Haines Day at Nugget Mall with her husband, Jim, and thanks to John Venables, the accommodations will be at no charge. It is possible that the transportation to and from Juneau may be comped as well. In addition, Lori will be going to Juneau for a few days the first week of April for a SATC and a VBA meeting in conjunction with the ATIA meetings but returning on April 8 for a special Chamber luncheon with guest Rod Pfleiger of NWCA. Lori reported that the TIA Yukon Conference will be taking place in Haines Junction on April 21 – 23 and the Yukon Trade Show hosted by the Whitehorse Lion's Club will occur the end of April. Lori will not attend this due to a schedule conflict but will send Julie Shook and suggested to Karen Hess that Jim Shook attend the trade show on behalf of the Chamber, which may lower the costs.

Travel Writers/Fam Trips – Lori reported that she should be finding out soon who and how many travel writers will be coming for the SATW fam trip taking place the end of April/beginning of May. Lori also said that Sharon Gaipman working with ATIA was arranging an Alaska FAM trip for tour operators from TIA and NTA, which will be taking place June 7 and 8. Lori also reported that a National Geographic travel writer working on a tour book for 2006 would be here May 22 and 23. Details are already in place for arrival and departure times the Haines portion of his travel. Lori indicated she would be hearing from him in a few weeks about his agenda of activities he wants to cover while he is here. Karen Hess mentioned that a travel writer from last year, Matt Ross, contacted her recently about photos for additional articles he has written. Karen also stated that there are cruise line FAM trips scheduled for April and Linda Huston has arranged for Carnival and Holland America FAM trips to overnight in Haines.

Public Comments: Jan Hamp commented that she appreciated Julie Shook sending out the referral list twice in one month. Jan asked Lori if there was anything operators and businesspersons in Haines could do to help facilitate the referrals being sent more frequently. Lori responded that there was not anything that Jan could do but it was something she herself would do. Lori then indicated that part of the on-going website training and updates were going to include improvement in the database and streamlining the requests for information directly into the database. Lori also pointed out that although this would help the Visitor Center process the referrals more efficiently, the requests for information come in different modes such as faxes, mail, etc., but she believed the process could be improved for more frequency in referral distribution. Shane made a request for being able to be included, if necessary, in any training for options of tour operators being able to streamline the referral information into databases on their end of this process.

Jan also commented that she had a journalism degree and had been involved in outdoor magazine publication and would be happy to meet with Lori for assisting in increasing travel writer contacts and involvement with travel writer organizations. Jan said that she was busy at this time with her parents' business, but could meet with Lori in the fall. Lori welcomed the assistance and indicated looking forward to the fall meeting.

Set Next Meeting Date: Meeting date is potentially Tuesday, April 12 at 8:15 a.m. Karen Hess will be checking dates of a cruise line FAM trip. It was agreed that if the cruise FAM trip conflicted with this time, then the meeting would be moved to Wednesday, April 13, at 8:15 a.m.