

**Aspen Chamber Resort Association  
Marketing Advisory Committee Meeting  
Minutes  
February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
Aspen Square Hotel**

**Call to order:** The meeting was called to order at 9:07am. Casandra Foister and Rob Henderson chaired the meeting. In attendance: Alan Cardenas, Corey Enlowe, Kristin Drake, Tahnee Perry, Beth Albert, Warren Klug, Jeanne Mackowski, Holly Bornemeier, Eileen Tucker, Alex de'Laube, Maureen Poschman. Staffed by: Julia Theisen, Joanna Eisler, Annie Dockter.

**1) Marketing Budget / Tax Revenues**

J. Theisen: The Destination Marketing Budget is upon discussion at the next City Council work session, Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> 5pm. Prior to Julia's arrival, the city discussed supplementing our fund but with the economic landscape changing, the City may not be able to supplement funds. The original projections of 615k, presented at the DM 2009 Marketing Plan are expected to fall short by 10-20%. The way I see it, my job is to increase the funding for DM; not watch the funding decrease.

**Recommendation:** Hold back on spending some of the season marketing funds to see how the lodging tax is pacing this year. If lodging taxes are low, we will not have spent all the budget.

Our current lodging tax is very low comparatively – if we go forward with a lodging tax, we need to be aware of our efforts and find the appropriate amount to increase and do not want to aim too low. Possibly this is the best time to go to a public vote to increase the lodging tax to our transient guest which will ensure we have marketing in the summer months to drive tourism. At this point it seems the most appropriate vehicle is for us to move forward with is a lodging tax as the it is already in place, whereas looking at a BID or a Marketing District there would be start up costs involved. Current Lodging tax: 10.1%, in Sept. 09 will decrease to 10%, we need to see about increasing by .5% or 1% to an 10.5 or 11% on the Nov. 09 ballot.

**Motion:** The MAC recommends going to the public with a .5 or 1% lodging tax.

Motion Seconded

\***Recommendation:** bring this to the ALA prior to making public

**2) Summer Travel**

The occupancy reports do not show how we're pacing as of yet but if summer follows winter business, we will see an increase in "last minute" bookings. Members expressed concerns regarding summer business. Are we seen at "too expensive", do we really have features which differentiate Aspen as a summer mountain destination compared to our competitive set?

- For summer business, we need to keep "rate integrity". As coined by Peter Yesawich, vacations are a "birthright" to the American people. We need to look at putting together promotions that have "value-added" components to them.

- We need to look at capturing the Denver/Colorado Springs market. Do we reach out to their CVB's and cross-promoting to the groups that want to travel in the mountains?

-What is ACRA doing to reach out to the Colorado Welcome Centers? Do we put together a FAM for all the Welcome Center's staff to come to Aspen in May/early June to get excited about selling our destination?

-What is the ACRA Visitor Center staff doing to capture the day visitor and turn them into overnight stays? We need to work on getting a "Hot Sheet" together for Last-Minute Deals to have at the Welcome Centers on a daily/weekly basis. Do we set up a direct phone line at the Guest Pavilion to call SAS on spot to book a night stay?

\***Recommendation:** by next MAC meeting ACRA staff and SAS will have a proposed plan for capturing state travel / last minute bookings.

### **Website Update:**

Website project is moving forward. Looking to launch database next week which will allow businesses to log-in, update information, post business to business or business to consumer coupons, photo galleries, etc.

- The new database has enhanced data mining capabilities – we plan to send multiple targeted email blasts to various markets promoting drive market specials, airline feeder market promotions, and events calendar.
- Looking to launch new website live March 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- March 5<sup>th</sup> ACRA will host a meeting to go over how to log into website and also have Carrie Koenig present what the new CTO website looks like and advertising opportunities. Need to try to have other representation there from the CTO to give update on Summer Marketing plans.
- ACRA will make effort to be involved in the Colorado Tourism Promotion committee. They are open meetings – good to be informed and have representation for our area.

### **SkiCo Update:**

J. Mackowski: 9 weeks left of the ski season – still going strong with marketing and coming up with new ideas daily. The Frontier packages (Perfect Storm/Fly Free) is valid through Feb. 19<sup>th</sup> and currently has booked over \$300k in total sales. The Free Flight campaign has over 1m online impressions in the marketplace.

- Looking to make “Big Air Deals” an RSS Feed through SAS
- Remainder of season efforts: Drive Business through promotions and marketing.

The National Ski Association meeting was held recently, here are some facts:

- Drive Markets in general way up; East Coast – way up; Seattle/Whistler: having tough season with several freak events – avalanche / gondola falling; SkiCo's single lift tickets sales are up in all air service markets: Texas way up, Florida is down, Denver market is up. Good ski conditions are drawing visitors.

### **PR Update: M.Poschman / A. de Larbe**

- Possible Summer Promotional Package: “Every day's a Weekend” promoting travel Sun – Thursday and highlight various cultural events that take place during the week.
- Media Kits: sending out soon to top 100 journalists – media kits on USB drive made out of renewable resource, bamboo with the ACRA logo and website etched into jacket.
- Going to NY for pitching trip end of February.
- Went to CTO luncheon in January. Had very good connections – met with AP writer looking to write story on Affordable Aspen; 9News looking for positive message on tourism.
- National Media Group in town now; journalist from Martha Stewart living, NY Times freelancer, journalist from Sunset magazine as well as a few others.
- Competition for editorial coverage is up with advertising going down.
- Aspen Music Fest – would like to see a 20% increase of people listening on the lawn, Holly B. with Anderson Ranch is doing a promotion – if you bring a friend they receive 25% off.

**Recommendation:** Can ACRA subsidize music on the mall? Bring energy and entertainment to the downtown core?

### **Aspen Groups Update:**

J.Eisler: Wed. Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> is holding a DOS brainstorming session. To be discussed Aspen/Snowmass Denver Series, Coop advertising, Summer Promotions

- Aspen Groups has a bid out for PRSA to host their 2010 conference here in May. It would bring in 250 travel and pr writers to Aspen. Competitor Reno NV has bumped their incentive to a 25k sponsor contribution. Aspen Groups looking to hotels for possible sponsors, ACRA DM would be a 10k sponsor.
- Aspen Groups: less funding than anticipated from SAS by 15k; continuing on with Print/Travel plan as scheduled.

W.Klug: Is it realistic to look at cutting back on budget; should look at cutting print advertising.

- R. Henderson: Continue to be high profile: key to sales – making that connection. Call on our clients, need to get face time. Keep the trade shows and travel in budget. Aspen Groups was formed to have a person to represent us and attend the trade shows.

**Recommendation:** Increase meeting to once a month instead of bi-monthly.

Meeting adjourned: 11:02am.