

**VIRGINIA CITY CONVENTION & TOURISM AUTHORITY MEETING
MINUTES**

Thursday, October 1, 2009, 8:30 am

**Comstock History Center
20 North E Street
Virginia City, NV 89940**

Call to Order: Angelo Petrini called the VCCTA meeting to order at 8:35 am

Roll Call:

Chairman: Angelo Petrini

Board Members: Joe Curtis
Carol Fain
Leisa Findley
John Flanagan

Staff: Susan Sutton
Cory Wood
Patrick Gilmore
Dawn Neamo

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Curtis moved to approve the October 1, 2009 agenda. Flanagan seconded, motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR AUGUST 6, 2009: Flanagan moved to approve the May 27, 2009, minutes. Findley seconded, motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR AUGUST 27, 2009: Fain moved to approve the August 27, 2009 minutes. Flanagan seconded, motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Ralph Witsell, executive Director of Travel Industry Sales for the Reno Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority (RSCVA), reported to the board the importance of familiarization tours to our region. Witsell continued the RSCVA's Winter and Summer FAM 's generates a ROI (rate on investment) of \$220.00 for every \$1 spent. Witsell reported this year's National Tour Association (NTA) conference will have the largest concentration of tour operators who are looking for new destinations. Witsell continued VCCTA involvement with NTA is essential.

Rich Crombie, owner of PlanItBig Productions, introduced himself to the board. Crombie reported he is very happy to be assisting the chamber with the Outhouse Races. Crombie offered his assistance with other event planning and management.

Austin Osborne, Storey County planner, updated the board on the V & T excursion train on September 26. Osborne reported no complaints with passengers mixing with the many bikes and bikers on C Street during the busy weekend. Osborne reported the trolley

provided transportation to the Silverland Inn & Suites, Stagecoach and Chollar mine for approximately 20 passengers who chose not to go to C Street.

Mary Reno, Silver Legacy sales manager, commented that even though her job is to fill her rooms, Virginia City plays a big role as a destination.

Jim Clark, Virginia City resident, reported a motion picture made for television completed shooting and provided 38 room nights at the Silverland Inn & Suites.

Brandi Lee, Virginia City resident, reported amateur boxing has been confirmed and the first match will be at Piper's Opera House on November 14.

Wrangler Rich, owner of Silverland Stables, reported a loss on his business and asked for ideas and help for next year's season. Rich thanked the VCCTA and all others who assisted.

Flanagan reported the VCCTA website needed updated as a few August and September events are still listed. Sutton reported the website is a priority and will be updated as soon as possible. Flanagan reported he received complaints of excessive amounts of trash in streets following Saturday's crowd.

Curtis requested why the webcam is not functional. Sutton reported the ongoing problems with the webcam are costly and time consuming. Sutton will offer a financial report for next meeting on total webcam expenditures.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: MARY RENO AND KITTY BOLEY

FOR TOURISM CONTRIBUTION: Sutton thanked and recognized Kitty Boley for painting the stand up Camel and visitor center restrooms at a reasonable cost. Sutton thanked Mary Reno from the Silver Legacy for all her volunteer work and dedication to Virginia City. Sutton present etched thank you plates to Boley and Reno for their contribution to tourism.

FINANCIAL REPORT: Neamo presented the current financial report to the board, which included room tax through August 31, 2009. Dawn reported approximately \$26,000.00 less income than last year for first three months of current fiscal year. Dawn reported the budget will need to be augmented to cover the YESCO sign kiosks and the V & T Railway excursions. Sutton and Neamo reported the VCCTA will be facilitating the V & T excursions next year and need to anticipate costs. (Currently scheduled for four days per week for 2010). Neamo reported costs continue to rise as income continues to slide. Fain moved to approve the financial report. Curtis seconded, motion passed unanimously.

VISITOR CENTER TICKETING PROCESS/

SECURITY ISSUES & PURCHASING REVIEW: Sutton & Neamo updated the board on security issues selling tickets for events and event coordinators. Sutton reported the VCCTA has a responsibility to protect customer credit card information and

information cannot be removed from the premises. Neamo and Sutton continued the VCCTA will continue to assist selling tickets but it is time-consuming and the 5% fee charged does not cover accounting costs. Neamo reported selling the SLE tickets and the bookwork involved is extremely time-consuming process.

NATIONAL TOUR ASSOCIATION (NTA) UPDATE: Sutton reported plans continue for NTA's pre-familiarization tours (FAM) on November 10 and the sightseeing FAMS on November 14. Sutton shared NCOT funds are no longer available and she is negotiating for lower prices for lodging and food. Sutton reported the VCCTA needs to subsidize these FAMS to showcase our destination to tour operators.

TNT STAGECOACH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S PERFORMANCE

COMPLAINT: Gary Teel, owner of TNT Stagecoach, reported he was invited by the VCCTA to attend this meeting to address his complaints. The discussion included:

- Teel's complaint letter alleging the VCCTA and visitor center was not promoting his Stagecoach or other Virginia City venues
- Approaching Sutton at the VIP Railfest reception was inappropriate in the presence of government officials
- Invited Teel to talk to Sutton and any board member if he has an issue or complaint
- TNT Stagecoach is a quality attraction for Virginia City visitors
- Teel apologized to Sutton

CAMEL RACE SUMMARY/FINANCIAL REPORT: Shara Bouvier, Camel Race coordinator, presented a financial report to the board. Bouvier reported all invoices have been paid. When all funds are collected, a small profit will be donated to the Shriners. Bouvier reported the following:

- Successful event although with a few glitches including confusion regarding Linda Del Carlo, previous Camel Race promoter
- High daily attendance
- \$30,000.00 free advertising from JoBo & Associates who volunteered their services
- Camel promoter, Joe Hedricks was happy with the event
- Thanked everyone for their support and help
- Will bid on the right to promote the Camel Races in 2010. Critical to start now to obtain sponsorships
- Jim Webster, JoBo & Associates, would like to invite Truckee Meadows Community College students to intern next year for the camel races

The board requested the Camel Race financial report include all sponsors, donations, advertising, services and volunteers time. Woodmansee reported the Virginia City Chamber will be going dormant and will no longer coordinate events. Woodmansee reported she will continue managing the parades.

SILVERLAND INN & SUITES CAMEL RACE GRIEVANCE: Steve Rahim, Silverland Inn & Suites general manager, reported a few glitches but happy with the

camel races. Rahim continued 45 rooms are pre-booked for Camel Races 2010. Rahim also reported booking two large groups in April that may utilize all available rooms in Virginia City. Rahim shared he has lowered his average daily rate for September which has resulted in increased room nights.

BOOMTOWN SIGN KIOSKS REVISITED: Sutton reported contacting YESCO and negotiating for 2 kiosk signs for \$7,000.00 each which include transporting to site, painting, engineering and installation. Sutton continued there is tentative approval from Storey County Commissioners and Storey County Planning Department for the installation of these signs. Sutton shared YESCO is donating the signs to an historic destination. Sutton will write the press releases and public service announcements. Sutton requested members Joe Curtis, John Flanagan and Storey County planner, Austin Osborne, to oversee the project. Flanagan moved to approve \$14,000.00 for two kiosks signs contingent on approval of Storey County Commissioners and securing site at south and north portals to Virginia City. (\$1,000.00 refundable deposit now, followed with \$6,000.00 down and remaining \$7,000.00 at project completion if all contingencies are met) Fain seconded, motion passed unanimously.

CHRISTMAS ON THE COMSTOCK DICKENS FAIRE UPDATE: Izabella Jones, volunteer, reported plans are being finalized for the Dickens Faire, December 18-20. Jones continued planned events include city wide decorating, a juried professional craft faire, singers, chestnuts and Victorian ball. Jones reported there will be a party for children of servicemen stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Sutton reported the Ad Co Op traditionally does not advertise for Christmas and Jones requested \$3,000 to advertise the Dickens Faire. Marshall McBride, Ad Co-Op member, reported there is not a return on investment advertising for Christmas events. The board recommended splitting the costs of advertising between VCCTA and the Ad Co-Op at \$1,200 each. Fain moved to approve \$1,200.00 for the Dickens Fair advertising. Flanagan seconded, motion past by a majority with Curtis abstaining.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Sutton updated the board on the following:

- CBS billboard on Highway 50 is complete with 32,000 eyeballs daily
- Rand-McNally visited Virginia City for future publications and website stories
- Balloon Race ad on second page with right hand read
- Preservation Magazine Virginia City advertisement at discounted price
- Name the Baby Camel contest on KOLO 8 winner. The name SBIT (Step Back In Time) was chosen out of over 150 entries
- VCCTA and Lake Tahoe North Shore Hyatt partnership. Hyatt markets Virginia City to their guests
- Nevada Commission on Tourism, Chris Chrystal, will include the Silver State Police Officers Museum on their monthly newsletter of what's new
- Reno News & Review Outhouse Races ad

CONVENTION SERVICES REPORT: Gilmore reported on the following:

- Sports & Leisure Tour in June 2010 with overnights at Cobb Mansion and Tahoe House and will include the play, "The Sunshine Boys" at the Gold Hill Hotel

- September was busy month for bus tours which included the Bonanza reunion, Beyond Travel, Santa Maria Travel Club and Hyde Tours
- VCCTA featured in Courier Magazine (for NTA member) with a write up on Virginia City and the Silver Line Express discount ticket

CORRESPONDENCE: Wood & Sutton presented the board with following correspondence:

- *Nevada Appeal* article on the Bonanza reunion in September
- Bay Area newspaper report on the Virginia & Truckee Railway excursion
- Joan Trapper announcing her book, “Most Beautiful Villages – Towns of the Southwest which includes Virginia City
- Complaint letter about the Juliet Bulette Museum
- Thank you letter to Patrick from Style Magazine which will feature a story on Virginia City in November
- Thank you letters to Sutton from Hyatt Resort in Incline Village and from Mary Reno

PUBLIC COMMENT: Woodmansee, Chamber of Commerce treasurer, reported the Veteran’s Day Parade on November 11 will have a marching band. Angel Mann, *Comstock Chronicle* editor, suggested that smaller businesses might join the Ad Co Op for a lesser fee.

ADJOURNMENT: 11:30 am