

**MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
CITY OF BRANSON, MISSOURI, MAY 10, 2004**

**The Board of Aldermen of the City of Branson, Missouri, met in a work session meeting in the Council Chambers of the City Hall on May 10, 2004 at 8:30 a.m. with the following members present:**

**Mayor Pro Tem Huff presiding, with Aldermen Dick Gass, Stan Barker, Beverly Martin, Ron Huff, David Edie, and Jack Purvis present. Mayor Lou Schaefer absent.**

**Also in attendance from the city were: City Administrator Terry Dody, City Attorney Dan Wichmer, City Clerk Sandra Williams, Deputy City Clerk Lisa Westfall and Finance Director Deanna Schlegel.**

**Mayor Pro Tem Huff called the meeting to order with the “Pledge of Allegiance.” He then stated this meeting was planned as an informal roundtable discussion in the conference room, but with the good turnout it was moved to the Council Chambers. The purpose of this meeting is a work session to hear a presentation by the Branson Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce on a branding program for the purpose of promoting tourism marketing. Mayor Pro Tem Huff then turned the floor over to Ross Summers, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce.**

**Mr. Summers explained that the project will put Branson’s marketing on the correct path over the next years, and introduced Jennifer McCullough, the Chamber’s new Director of Public Relations. He then introduced Dan Lennon, whom he stated would make the introductions for the presentation.**

**Mr. Lennon discussed identifying the need to clarify Branson’s brand, and how to bring future visitors to Branson. He indicated about 40 agencies received a Request for Proposals, 19 of which sent back proposals. A Branding Tax Force was established, reducing the number of agencies being considered, and finally selecting The Sterling Group of San Francisco who is here today to speak about branding. Mr. Lennon then introduced Austin McGhee, Managing Partner of The Sterling Group.**

**Mr. McGhee briefly outlined The Sterling Group’s view of a good brand strategy, which is how the client is on “their very best day”. He says the idea is to come in and work with the team here, determine what Branson is like on its very best day, then decide how to present that in a simple idea that everyone locally can support. McGhee says the “fence sitter” who hasn’t made a decision about visiting the area should be targeted before those who have decided to visit and those who have decided not to.**

He explained that this is a good time to market Branson's values to the type of traveler who would like to visit, and the way in which those values are communicated will make all the difference in who visits.

Mr. McGhee explained an approach which outlined a three step process for Branson's branding strategy. The first is "immersion" with a kick-off session involving all stakeholders taking in all available research and information for a period of about five weeks. That would be followed by about two weeks in the "invention" phase, including an intensive, day-long work session to discuss the best way to position Branson as a branded destination. The last phase would be "transformation." Sterling would spend about two weeks reviewing all of the findings, then present a summary to all stakeholders.

He then responded to questions from the aldermen. Alderman Gass noted that he had seen the presentation previously, but wanted McGhee to explain how Sterling intends to deal with the fact that Branson is not a business owner, but a city. McGhee said it's a bit more difficult, but the important part is the ideas that come out that the community can get behind.

Alderman Huff asked how the new perspective of Branson would fit into the brand, given the effort to attract a new demographic with Branson Landing. McGhee said the brand must build into what Branson will be, and that the whole brand strategy will have to incorporate Branson Landing.

City Administrator Terry Dody asked Mr. McGhee to differentiate between "positioning" and "branding." McGhee responded that positioning must be done in a way that's different from everyone else, and in a way that is compelling. He said the brand is built on top of that position, bringing the basic positioning to life. Dody also noted that it would be a daunting challenge to create a brand and maintain that brand vision without a corporate structure, bringing the whole community behind it. He agreed that it is a daunting challenge, but a fascinating one, but said that in many ways Branson has a better chance at doing so than other organizations. He said there is a clearer sense of what Branson is, and a clearer sense of ownership of what the brand strategy will be. McGhee also noted that there is probably a lower turnover in the community than what would be found in a corporate organization; with corporations, he spends a lot of time training new employees on brand strategy.

Alderman Edie asked McGhee if Branson has a brand now. He said there is a brand, and his perception of it is that there is a group of people who understand what Branson is, and who visit frequently. But he also said people now have limited knowledge, and need more. He said they see the brand now as older and more limited in activities.

After more discussion, Mayor Pro Tem Huff asked Ross Summers if he wished to make a formal request for funding. Summers responded that is the ultimate reason for their appearance,

that the process is extremely important, that the end result will pay handsome dividends, and will actually make it easier for the Chamber to market the community in a more efficient and consistent way. Mr. Summers asked the Board to consider helping the Chamber in financially supporting the branding process.

There was further discussion regarding ownership of the brand, licensing, trademarks, logo and tagline.

City Administrator Dody then discussed a resolution going before the Board that night, and an ordinance amending the city budget. He noted that the money for the study would be spent directly by the city, which did not go through the RFP process, and said monies would likely have to go through the marketing contract rather than be distributed directly from the tourism fund. That would mean the marketing contract would have to be amended, due to restrictions on the use of those dollars for research.

Mayor Pro Tem Huff noted that the branding item would appear on that night's agenda as a business item. Mr. Summers noted that the entire presentation would not be made, but he would present a condensed version of the morning's discussion and make a formal request for funding.

#### **ADJOURN:**

Mayor Pro Tem Huff then entertained a motion to adjourn. Alderman Gass made the motion, seconded by Alderman Purvis. Voting aye: Gass, Barker, Martin, Huff, Edie, and Purvis. Nays: none. Meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.