

Minutes

Destination El Paso Advisory Board Meeting

Thursday, January 14, 2021 4:00 p.m.

Destination El Paso Virtual Meeting

Board Members Present

Katherine Brennand
Gracie Viramontes
Elvira Galvan Galindo
Patrice Hills
Johnny Escalante
Katie Scott
Monica Lombrana
Wolfgang Jonas

Board Members Absent

Gina Roe Davis

Destination EP Staff

Bryan Crowe
Brooke Underwood
Veronica Castro
Trudy Sweeten
Anthony Mancuso
Amanda Fernandez

I. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes by Gracie Viramontes.
- Seconded by Katherine Brennand.

III. General Manager's Update: Bryan Crowe

- Bryan shared some data with the board regarding hotel occupancy. We continue to see an increase in hotel occupancy week to week. It has been a steady increase and we are keeping on pace with where we were at this time last year. We are at 63.1% as of January 9, 2021. This week's occupancy is only 5% lower than the same period one year ago despite a 7.1% increase in supply with the opening of the Plaza Hotel and PDN.
- Monica Lombrana asked if we took out the supply increase can we calculate the demand to get an accurate comparison year over year. Bryan mentioned that we can recalculate it and send an email to the board with the information.
- Bryan shared that El Paso surpassed other Texas cities in Hotel Occupancy for the month of November.
- According to Destination Analyst which sends us a weekly report, travelers said the vaccine makes them more optimistic to travel safely in the next 6 months. It also reports that 60.8% of Americans have high degrees of excitement about travel in 2021.

IV. Department Updates

- **Financials: Bryan Crowe**
- Financial Narrative for November 2020.
- Total revenue for the month of November 2020 was \$337,224 bringing total YTD revenue to \$442,277.
- Total expenses for El Paso Live for the month of November 2020 were \$242,059 bringing YTD expenses to \$654,349.
- Total expenses for Visit El Paso for the month of November 2020 were \$190,403 bringing YTD expenses to \$559,599.
- YTD we are experiencing a positive variance of \$408,480.
- YTD after the influx of City of El Paso funding there is an Adjusted Net profit of \$394,058.
- The Alternate Care Site is boosting our revenue and why we are ahead of our projected budget.
- We are in a good position so far this FY and the extra revenue will help us in the later months due to no events. We are looking at having events late August or September.

- Per our contract with the City, we are required to have an annual independent audit. The FY20 Annual Audit was completed on Jan. 6, 2021 and we are pleased to report the auditor express an unmodified opinion.
- **Tourism Development: Veronica Castro**
- We have paused our leisure campaigns, but we are still advertising with meetings and conventions. We are looking at spring 2021 to start again with leisure campaigns.
- We have moved from display advertising to in-need advertising and it is performing strongly.
- We will begin our leisure campaign the second or third week of March and the focus will be on the drive market and the number one push will be the outdoor experience.
- The Mexico/U.S. border is still closed but we will begin a social media campaign the middle of February and the call to action will be “We miss you and can’t wait for your return to El Paso”.
- For the month of November there was a 61% decrease in passengers compared to November 2019 and YTD there is a 57.4% decrease in daily flights. There are currently 23 daily flights which is down from 54 last November.
- In the past we have partnered with City Magazine to produce the Official Visitors Guide and it is distributed to Southern NM, West Texas, and Big Bend. We will now be producing the guide in house and it will be a smaller version due to no ads, but it will include itineraries and day trips.
- **Convention Development: Anthony Mancuso**
- We had a busy Q4, the team attended eight tradeshows showcasing El Paso as a meeting destination. We need to reintroduce or introduce the revitalized El Paso to meeting planners.
- Due to us attending tradeshows and conventions we have received some RFP’s for sports development.
- We will be attending the Texas Association of Convention and Business virtual 2021 conference the end of January. The virtual show encompasses two action-packed days of thought provoking and critical conversations, inspirational ideas, and networking opportunities.
- The team rolled out a brand-new incentive to entice clients to book self-contained programs in the year, for the year. The promotion is called Adios, Attrition! The incentive will waive attrition fees for groups contracting by April 30, 2021 and actualizing by April 30, 2022. We have 19 hotel partners participating. We e-blasted the plan to over 4,000 meeting planners, posted on LinkedIn and on CVENT.
- This year since we were not able to host our annual Tamale Drop locally or in Austin, the Convention Development team identified 50 VIP clients and we partnered with Operation Noel to provide 50 coats on behalf of our clients. Operation Noel provides winter coats for El Paso’s neediest children and has provided these coats to over 20,000 children in the area.
- The team is planning a State of the Industry meeting to update the hotel community on the road ahead for El Paso, as well as hosting a Virtual FAM with Connect Meetings at the end of February 2021. This Virtual FAM will bring 25 vetted meeting planners together virtually to learn about El Paso as a meeting destination, to engage these planners with our hotel community, and to re-introduce El Paso as a premier destination for their programs.
- **Venue and Event Management: Trudy Sweeten**
- The Convention Center continues to serve as an Alternate Care Site (ACS). We are currently setup for 100 patients and to date there have been 297 admissions, 267 patients discharged and 21 patients in-house.
- The Convention Center continues to serve as an Infusion Center. We are currently built out for 20 beds and to date we have seen 827 patients.

- The contract has been extended through January 31, 2021 and we will know mid-January if it will be extended into February of if the site will be closed. We are working with vendors and contractors to get the Convention Center cleaned and restored for possible events in March.
- Virtual WinterFest began on December 5 and ran until Jan. 3, 2021. We partnered with other City departments and had virtual programming scheduled throughout the month of December. Programming included live concerts, story time, arts and crafts, cookie decorating, ornament decorating and cooking classes.
- Virtual WinterFest was successful and we had great numbers for social media.
 - Impressions: 597,398
 - Engagements: 27,271
 - Clicks: 9,897
 - Total Audience: 13,061
- Bryan mentioned that our contract was set to expire in April 2021 and the City sent out an RFP back in Sept. which we responded to. On December 15, 2020 City Council unanimously approved the contract and ASM was awarded the management agreement for a term of three years.
- We will be adding a third division under Destination El Paso which will be 4 water parks. We will handle the sales, marketing, food services, retail sales and all operations of the water parks.
- Katherine Brennand asked with everything we already have going on how will we be able to handle another division and why did the city pick us to manage the water parks. Bryan responded that the water parks was included in the RFP that was sent out. He also explained that we will be hiring an executive position that will report directly to him along with other positions. It will be a separate division and we will receive additional funds to run the water parks. The City chose us due to our assets with managing the venues, regional marketing experience.
- Johnny Escalante asked if there were any updates regarding events. Bryan responded that we are starting to book events for late summer and early fall. Special events that we produce will run in the new FY year with dates in September and October. We are also in communication with other events such as Comic Con and Neon Desert on maximizing the dates to where we do not compete. We will be executing our premier events this fall.

***Adjourn 5:48 pm**

***The next meeting will be on Thursday, February 11, 2021 at 4:00 PM via Zoom.**