

Minutes

Destination El Paso Advisory Board Meeting

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

Destination El Paso Virtual Meeting

Board Members Present

Johnny Escalante
Katherine Brennand
Patrice Hills
Katie Scott
Gina Roe Davis

Board Members Absent

Gracie Viramontes
Elvira Galvan Galindo
Monica Lombrana

Destination EP Staff

Bryan Crowe
Brooke Underwood
Veronica Castro
Amanda Fernandez

I. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 4:08 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes by Patrice Hills.
- Seconded by Johnny Escalante.

III. General Manager's Update: Bryan Crowe

- Bryan has accepted a position with the company that will be taking him to another account which is the BOK Center and Cox Center in Tulsa. He will be relocating to Tulsa, OK. This is a promotion to a VP level and will be overseeing other corporate accounts. We are looking for a new lead to run Destination El Paso and the city has been notified.
- There is some other exciting news to share, as part of the leadership change Brooke Underwood has been promoted to Executive Director of Visit El Paso. She will be leading the Visit El Paso team.
- Bryan shared data with the board regarding hotel occupancy. We are at 84.7% for the week of October 3, 2021, with revenue at \$5.546M. The occupancy continues to be strong, and we still are leading in the state of Texas and ahead of the national average through the end of July.
- El Paso is currently over 70% with the state and national average which is just over 50%.

IV. Department Updates

- **Financials: Bryan Crowe**
- Financial Narrative for August 2021.
- The financials represent the last month of our Fiscal Year. Total revenue for the month of August at \$1,364,513 bringing total YTD revenue to \$6,015,026. We are ahead of revenue and that is due to water parks. When we first created our budget water park operations were not projected as we did not know at the time that we would be managing the water parks. We are over budget by \$2,515,026 in revenue.
- Total expenses for El Paso Live for the month of August 2021 were \$1,636,176 bringing YTD expenses to \$6,497,060. Water Park operation expenses were not projected when creating the budget therefore we are over budget by \$1,855,978 in expenses.
- Total expenses for Visit El Paso for the month of August 2021 were \$472,697 bringing YTD expenses to \$2,768,308.
- YTD we are experiencing a positive variance of \$1,116,581.
- YTD after the influx of City of El Paso funding there is an Adjusted Net profit of \$796,421.
- We are still pacing ahead of budget. We are starting to see the impact from the water parks.
- Katherine Brennand asked if our revenue is \$2.5M ahead of budget what happens to the money? Bryan explained that the revenue is so far ahead of budget because water parks was not part of the original budget and it represents about \$1.5M of that amount. We were very conservative because of COVID and when we were going to reopen and start to

see revenue. The funds stay with our operations and will become part of our retained earnings and with special permission can be utilized for other projects.

- **Tourism Development: Veronica Castro**
- We are trying to get Amigo Man out in the community at events and engaging with the community. He has participated with Live Active EP, the 915 Tour, and the Candlelighters Walk of Hope. We will continue to have him be active within the community.
- Veronica and Nora Ochoa have been traveling quite a bit attending tradeshow and media trips. Nora attended the Travel and Adventure Show in Dallas and came back with 41 direct leads. We sponsored 5 travel writers to attend the Tom Lea Media FAM in Mexico. We are trying to expand the trail to be able to bring more people from out of town to visit the trail to Chihuahua. Veronica, Emi Diaz and Kylar Walker attended International Pow Wow in Las Vegas. The team had 54 one-on-one meetings with tourism industry professionals and tour operator groups. Emi attended the ETourism Summit in Las Vegas which held educational sessions on industry trends and marketing destinations through digital channels.
- Katherine asked if the Tom Lea Trail was a walking trail. Veronica described that it is a driving trail. You drive from El Paso to Casa Grandes and each stop is about 30-45 minutes apart and you can experience the history and what Tom Lea contributed to that area.
- We hosted a travel writer, Patrick Cooper, and he recently published a two-page article in Travel Girl with an earned media of \$40,000.
- September ads are focused on outdoors and running in the US only right now. We are hoping the borders will reopen soon and we have begun creating ads to run in November welcoming them back to El Paso.
- We are very excited that La Frontera with Pat Jinich will air on Oct. 15 and Oct. 22 on PBS in primetime. El Paso and the show have received positive feedback.
- **Convention Development: Brooke Underwood**
- The team has been traveling a lot in the month of September. Brooke has stepped in and traveling to conventions and tradeshow.
 - TX Society of Association Executives New Ideas Conference was on Sept. 17-19 in Corpus Christi, TX. Ray had the opportunity to network with multiple Texas association planners and Executive Directors. He contacted three Texas associations for future events.
 - Smart market Meetings 3-day Summit in Cheyenne, WY, Sept. 26-28. Brooke had 32 one-on-one appointments and received two RFPs and three more are in route.
 - TEAMS Conference and Expo in Atlantic City, Sept. 27-Oct. 1. Ray attended this conference which is educational and the opportunity for one-on-one appointments. Ray had 38 appointments with meeting planners and received four RFPs and two leads. Sporting events are very strong right now and we have seen some great numbers and productivity.
 - Katherine asked what a reverse tradeshow is. Brooke explained that it gives the attendee and vendor the opportunity to know who is attending and from there you are able to book appointments with each other and meet with the planner individually.
- We have a lot more travel coming in the next few months, and we always welcome hotel partners to attend the shows and conventions with us. IMEX is coming up in November and it is one of the largest tradeshow we will be attending. We will be a part of the Texas booth and are excited to be attending.
- We are currently recruiting for a Director of Convention Development.
- **Venue and Event Management: Bryan Crowe**
- Special events hosted their first event in the Fiscal Year which was Sun City CRIT on Sept. 11 around San Jacinto Plaza. We saw about 430 athletes and about 6,000 in attendance. The vaccination center has moved to the old Chamber of Commerce offices, and this

happened on Monday, Aug. 23. This has allowed us to get the venue ready for upcoming events that will be hosted inside the Convention Center.

- We hosted an event for Viva Auto Group on Friday, August 20 at the Plaza Theatre and Convention Center Plaza with an attendance of 388. This event was supposed to occur at McKelligon Canyon but due to the conditions of the canyon it was moved.
- The Michelob Ultra Tour was also relocated from McKelligon Canyon to Arts Festival Plaza. This was a private event for local influencers and bloggers with a small concert.
- We hosted our first event on Friday, Aug. 27 with the new mask mandate inside the Plaza Theatre. The event was an almost sold-out show, and we had no issues from patrons. We are requiring masks in all our facilities since they are city owned.
- **El Paso Water Parks: Bryan Crowe**
- We have completed the final round of the unannounced Ellis and Associates Audits. The audit focuses on three sections. All the parks received Meets or Exceeds which is great given the amount of time we were given to open these parks. Camp Cohen is doing very well and, in the running, to be named one of the top water parks in the world for park safety.
- We had an adjusted schedule for the month of August with one park operating each day of the week and all four parks operating Fridays 4-8pm, Saturdays and Sundays 11am-6pm. Beginning in September all four parks will only operate on Saturdays and Sundays 11am-6pm and the last day of operation will be on Sunday, September 26.
- Katherine asked what the attendance was for the water parks. Bryan answered that the average weekend attendance is 300-400 per park. Weekday attendance dropped once school started. In the off season we will evaluate scheduling and hours of operation. We will also have a longer season next year with opening earlier than Memorial Day Weekend and all four facilities will open at the same time.

***Adjourn 4:56 pm**

***The next meeting will be on Thursday, October 14, 2021 at 4:00 PM via Zoom.**