

## Minutes

### Destination El Paso Advisory Board Meeting

Thursday, October 8, 2020 4:00 p.m.

### Destination El Paso Virtual Meeting

#### Board Members Present

Katherine Brennand  
Gracie Viramontes  
Patrice Hills  
Wolfgang Jonas  
Gina Roe Davis

#### Board Members Absent

Elvira Galvan Galindo  
Katie Scott

#### Destination EP Staff

Bryan Crowe  
Brooke Underwood  
Veronica Castro  
Amanda Fernandez

#### I. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 4:02 p.m.

#### II. Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes by Gina Roe Davis
- Seconded by Katherine Brennand.

#### III. General Manager's Update: Bryan Crowe

- I wanted to share some data with the board regarding hotel occupancy. We have seen a recovery in hotel occupancy week to week. Moving forward we will probably stay in the mid 50% range.
- Non-essential travel from Mexico and business travel has affected hotel occupancy. We hope to see occupancy go up once both types of travelers can travel again.
- We are looking at April 2021 as the expected date of business travel resumption. This is when we will see a recover in hotel occupancy as it pertains to business travel.
- Wolfgang Jonas asked if he could receive a copy of the Smith Travel report. Brooke responded that she would send him a copy of the report.
- From a leisure point of view a report shows that most people are interested int traveling to small towns and rural destinations. The leisure traveler feels safer in smaller communities with less population density.
- Beach destinations in Texas are doing well on weekends.
- We are seeing travelers are open to experiencing new destinations and we are reframing our messaging. Our messaging is focused on the fact that we are a smaller community with great outdoor experiences, mountains, access to state and national parks, our culture and history.
- We launched a campaign to focus on the leisure travel, *This is El Paso* which has helped with hotel occupancy. We focused on an outdoor campaign and staycation campaign.

#### IV. Department Updates

- **Financials: Bryan Crowe**
- Financial Narrative for August 2020, this is the last month of our fiscal year.
- Total revenue for the month of August 2020 was \$119,737 bringing total YTD revenue to \$4,086,631.
- Total expenses for El Paso Live for the month of August 2020 were \$431,612 bringing YTD expenses to \$6,189,535.
- Total expenses for Visit El Paso for the month of August 2020 were \$251,365 bringing YTD expenses to \$3,391,553.
- YTD we are experiencing a positive variance of \$928,665.
- YTD after the influx of City of El Paso funding there is an Adjusted Net profit of \$928,664.
- We closed out the fiscal year relatively strong considering the last month we had any revenue was at the beginning of March.

- **Tourism Development: Veronica Castro**
- As Bryan mentioned we have focused on leisure campaigns and focused on road trippers. We are showcasing our mountains and state and national parks.
- Dick Behrenhausen commented that we should not commit ourselves to being a small town, we're actually the 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> largest city. Veronica responded that we are constantly updating our commercials and will make a note on that.
- We started a project called Love Letters to El Paso. The letters are displayed in San Jacinto Plaza for the community to take pictures and tag us in their posts. The letters are currently celebrating Hispanic Heritage month.
- We also created short videos of local, homegrown businesses. We have seen great responses to these videos, each video has over 200 completed views over a one-week period.
- So far, we have featured 15 local, homegrown businesses and we are always looking for new businesses to feature.
- Patrice Hills asked if we could send her a list of the businesses we have featured, she has some suggestions for us for upcoming videos.
- Katherine Brennand asked if we ever share the Cultural Roundtable from the Community Foundation. These videos highlight all the local arts and performance organizations.
- **Convention Development: Brooke Underwood**
- I wanted to share some of our Meetings and Conventions advertising campaigns. We are focusing on budget, modern amenities, transformation with new hotels in downtown, and fresh outdoor activities.
- We completed the Threshold 360 project. Threshold 360 has emerged during the pandemic which allows meeting planners the opportunity to view a virtual tour of hotels, attractions, and the convention center.
- Meeting planners have expressed their interest in seeing these virtual tours.
- Visit El Paso in cooperation with El Paso Parks & Rec assisted with the USSSA Whole Enchilada Softball Invitational. The event was relocated to El Paso this past weekend (October 2-4, 2020). We were able to register and survey 275 registered teams. There was over 6,500 in attendance and it represented 9 states. The tournament took place at 4 different parks, mostly on the eastside. We have been accepted by the Governor's Office for the Texas Event Trust Fund.
- The majority of the teams did stay in Airbnb's and we will look at working with them to offer more hotel options.
- **Venue and Event Management: Bryan Crowe on behalf of Trudy Sweeten**
- We are getting ready to reopen the venues when we are able to reopen. We have a corporate reopening plan called *Venue Shield*. It is a proprietary program ASM Global is using worldwide in all the venues. It details processes and procedures to keep our patrons and employees safe.
- We are currently working with the City to install bio ionization systems on all of our air handlers to help eliminate airborne virus as it passes through the air handlers in our venues.
- The Abraham Chavez Theatre was used for the El Paso Center for Children StreetARTreach project. Images from local artists were projected off the side of the building.
- We also have been host to some city events in the past month or so. The City held their annual employee health expo in the Convention Center, September 18-19. These events have given us the opportunity to put into place the *Venue Shield* protocols.
- We are currently pursuing the Global Biorisk Advisory Council certification. It is an international certification related to facility cleanliness and the ability to reduce the spread of viruses and biohazards through out the facilities. We have 4 employees who

completed the employee component of the online training program. We hope to complete the certification before the end of the year.

- The Plaza Theatre turned 90 on September 12 and we would have loved to have events leading up to the birthday. We placed a message on the marquee and asked through our social media avenues for people to share with us their Plaza Theatre memories.
- Dick Behrenhausen asked how the RFP went with the city. We submitted our response the end of September and the city is hoping to decide by the end of November.
- Katherine Brennand asked how concerned we are in the fall with revenue stream. Bryan answered we do not have much event activity planned. We have tried to have some activity such as the drive-up movies at the hangar in the August. We have reduced our expenditures and staffing to align with the fact that we do not have operating revenue each month.
- Gina Roe Davis asked about our involvement with Sun Bowl Association. Bryan answered that we are very supportive of the Sun Bowl and will continue to support them with the advertisement that runs nationally on CBS. We provide the décor in the Sun Bowl to help promote El Paso as a destination city.
- Wolfgang Jonas asked if the attendance will be limited to attend the game. Bryan answered that it will be up to the City and State ordinances and the university's preference on the limit inside.
- Gracie Viramontes asked the status of WinterFest. Bryan answered there will be reduced programming and activities. We will not be able to have an ice rink due to the pandemic and not be able to practice social distancing. We are looking at still having décor on Arts Festival Plaza, some virtual programming and free holiday movies inside the Plaza Theatre. The City will not be having the Celebration of Lights parade or tree lighting. City décor will be limited to San Jacinto Plaza and Paseo de las Luces but not on the scale as in the past.

**\*Adjourn 4:47 pm**

**\*The next meeting will be on Thursday, November 12, 2020 at 4:00 PM via Zoom.**