

Minutes
El Paso Convention and Visitors Bureau
Advisory Board Meeting
Thursday, November 13, 2008, 4:00 p.m.
Las Palmas Del Sol Room

Board Members Present

Betsy Behrenhausen
Elvia Hernandez
Kay Mooy
Jane Ratcliff
Bernie Sargent
Pat Valdez-Rios

Board Members Absent

Joe Daubach
Joe Frandina
Terry Guerra

CVB Staff

Bill Blaziek
Bryan Crowe
Veronica Castro
Susie Gaines
Wendy Garrett
Pifas Silva
Brooke Underwood

I. CALL TO ORDER

- The meeting was called to order at 4:11 p.m.

II. Review of Minutes

- A motion was made by Jane Ratcliff to approve the minutes from the previous meeting; Pat Valdez-Rios seconded the motion. Minutes were unanimously approved.

III. UPDATES

A. Financials: Bryan Crowe reviewed financials for September 2008

- September was a very good month; revenue generated was one of the highest in past years.

B. Convention Sales Development : Brooke Underwood

- Ten hotel leads were generated in the month of October representing a total of 4,607 room nights with an attendance of 5,554 patrons with an approximate economic impact of \$3.5 million.
- Three pieces of business went definite for the month representing a total of 236 room nights with an attendance of 910 patrons with an estimated economic impact of \$581,854. Notable business includes: Texas Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Texas Association of Community Development Corporations.
- We lost six pieces of business with an approximate economic impact of \$1.1 million.

C. Tourism Development: Veronica Castro

- Walk-in traffic at the Visitor Information Centers in the month of October totaled 1,713 and requests for information totaled 1,420, both numbers are slightly down from last October. November is currently on pace with forecast.
- A radio promotion will soon launch in the Chihuahua market to help push for travel to El Paso. The promotion will begin Nov. 24 and run for five weeks. The promotion in cooperation with Simon Properties will offer a "gift bag" with discount coupons to shoppers who show a Chihuahua State ID to mall customer service personnel at Cielo Vista or Sunland Park malls.
- Preparations are underway for the three Sun Bowl events the El Paso CVB participates in: Sun Bowl Marketing Trips, Rotary Luncheon and Fan Fiesta. Veronica informed the Board that two teams made up of representatives from the CVB, El Paso Sports Commission, Sun Bowl Association and the El Paso Hotel Motel Association travel to the cities of the universities selected and promote the city and the Sun Bowl activities. She also explained that the CVB puts together a travel fair during the Fan Fiesta to offer visitors the opportunity to gather information about local attractions at booths set up in the lobby of the convention center.

D. Performing Arts Venues: Wendy Garrett

- Total attendance in both theatres for the month of September was 14,365, the attendance last year was 12,352, so the theatres are up 2,000 attendees this year compared to last year. The break down in attendance was: Plaza Theatre had 5,290 attendees and the Chavez Theatre had 9,075.
- Number of performances for the month of September was 16. The Plaza Theatre had 10 performances and the Chavez Theatre had 6 performances.
- The El Paso Community Foundation will hold a Christmas Film Festival in the Plaza Theatre Dec. 6-7, showing three movies a day. Cost will be \$5 and the movie titles have not been released. The Christmas film festival comes on the heels of the Film Festival hosted in August attracting 18,000 people during the week-long movie festival.

E. Operations and Food and Beverage: Bryan Crowe

- There were 25 events presented in all the venues in the month of October compared to 29 the year before.
- Attendance in all venues was at 30,744 in October 2008 as compared to 38,607 patrons that attended all venues in October 2007.
- Future events booked in October 2008 totaled 10, compared to 22 booked in October 2007. Some of the events include: 2009 YWCA Luncheon and 2009 El Paso Association of Realtors Rally.
- Highlighted events during the month in our facilities were: Junior Women's Club Spooktacular, Hispanic Chamber Biz Tech, Greater Chamber Gala.
- Revenue in Food & Beverage for the month of October was \$150,700, compared to \$139,000 last year. Year to Date Revenue was \$305,011, up from last year's total of \$255,000.
- Big contributors to catering revenue in October were: Diocese of El Paso Dinner (600 people), Texas Tech conference (650 people) and the Chamber of Commerce Gala (560 people).

F. Communications: Pifas Silva

- Website visits for the month of October totaled 50,946, an increase of 9% over the previous month which had 46,685.
- Eric Peterson with Frommer's Texas guidebook was in El Paso the past two days (Nov. 12-13) researching information about El Paso for the new edition of the Texas guide. The Communications Dept. assisted him with information and lodging.
- The last two Press Trips which the CVB participated in were very successful. Sixteen journalists were hosted in El Paso and several writers have complimented the El Paso staff for a job well done and have mentioned that editorials should be appearing soon.
- Two magazines (Texas Co-Op and Family MotorCoaching) had extensive editorial about El Paso in their October issues. Both were the results of previous Press Trips hosted by the Communications Dept.

G. Film Commission: Susie Gaines

- There were seven leads in the month of October as well as two scouting visits in the month.
- One production filmed and wrapped during the time period and CNN is coming back to El Paso for another film segment.
- Two documentaries were shot (Latinos/Blacks in America).
- Five permits were worked on in the month of October

IV. General Manager's Update

- There is now a greater concern about the devaluation of the peso. The sentiments come out of a focus study with UTEP students and the bureau's bi-monthly Directors of Sales (DOS) Meeting with local hotel directors. Because of those concerns a strong concentration on Mexico has been put into place to increase the frequency of visits to El Paso by residents of

Chihuahua. The bureau hopes to shore up shrinking numbers. The encouraging side of it is all of the lodging partners have shown an interest to participating and cooperative advertising is being discussed.

- We have met with the City to discuss the national economic recession as it relates to our funding and revenue sources. El Paso remains resilient at this time with little to no effect on our revenue or funding. We have however, outlined a plan to combat revenue loss and reduce expense should it be necessary. No reduction in sales and marketing efforts are planned in this contingency plan.
- The convention center plaza improvement project is currently on hold awaiting more favorable rates in the bond market.

V. Open Discussion

- Pat Valdez-Rios invited everyone to the Nov. 20 groundbreaking ceremony for the Thomason Hospital Westside expansion. The event will be at 11 a.m.
- Bernie Sargent updated everyone on Longrider Bob's journey to El Paso on horseback which will arrive in El Paso on Dec. 1. While in El Paso he will participate in the City's Holiday Tree lighting; and take a tour of El Paso.
- Bernie also invited everyone to the Keystone luminaria event on Dec. 5-6 from 6 to 9 p.m. at Keystone Heritage Park.

VI. ADJOURN

- A motion was made by Elvia Hernandez to adjourn the meeting; Pat Valdez-Rios seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 5:17 PM.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, December 11, 2008 at 4 p.m. in the Las Palmas Del Sol Room