

Minutes

Destination El Paso Advisory Board Meeting

Thursday, December 9, 2021 4:00 p.m.

Destination El Paso Virtual Meeting

Board Members Present

Gracie Viramontes
Johnny Escalante
Katherine Brennand
Katie Scott
Gina Roe Davis

Board Members Absent

Elvira Galvan Galindo
Monica Lombrana
Patrice Hills

Destination EP Staff

Bryan Crowe
Jose Garcia
Brooke Underwood
Veronica Castro
Amanda Fernandez

I. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes

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

III. General Manager's Update: Bryan Crowe

- Bryan shared data with the board regarding hotel occupancy. The U.S./Mexico Border opened on Nov. 8 and we did see a small increase in occupancy that week it opened. We are at 81.3% for the week of November 28, 2021, with revenue at \$5.544M. The occupancy continues to be strong, and we have seen an uptake in hotel occupancy which may be due to the opening of the U.S./Mexico border. Due to high occupancy, Mexican travelers are having a harder time securing rooms and rates are also up. We are encouraging Mexican travelers to plan and make reservations before arriving. Hoteliers have asked if it is still beneficial to market to Mexican travelers with hotel occupancy being so high. We will still continue to market in Mexico because it also benefits our economy with visitors eating in our restaurants and shopping at our outlets and malls. Veronica can go into more detail in her report regarding our messaging to Mexican travelers.

IV. Department Updates

- **Financials: Bryan Crowe**
- Financial Narrative for October 2021.
- Total revenue for the month of October is at \$407,621 which our YTD budget is under at \$29,299.
- Total expenses for El Paso Live for the month of October 2021 were \$473,115 bringing YTD expenses under budget at \$59,030.
- Total expenses for Visit El Paso for the month of October 2021 were \$220,556 bringing YTD expenses under budget at \$168,806.
- Total expenses for Water Parks for the month of October 2021 were \$213,523 bringing YTD expenses under budget at \$6,316.
- YTD we are experiencing a positive variance of \$204,853.
- YTD after the influx of City of El Paso funding there is an Adjusted Net profit of \$624,471.
- This is the first month to show water parks not operating.
- **Tourism Development: Veronica Castro**
- Amigo Man has been busy making several appearances in the community. We are continuing our efforts in participating in community events. Amigo Man was in the Dia de los Muertos parade, the Sun Bowl Thanksgiving parade and the Celebration of Lights parade.
- We have relocated the airport Visitor Information Center to a store front area. We can now offer retail items highlighting top local artists. We want to encourage people to come out and purchase merchandise from local vendors. We are opened M-F 10:00am to

5:00pm and Sat. and Sun. from 10:00am to 2:00pm. We have brochures from our attractions along with our visitor guides and an interactive video board.

- We are excited to have travel writers and bloggers start traveling again to El Paso. In November we had three travel writers visit El Paso. This is a great way to market our city, people follow these writers and go off their recommendations. We only have to pay for their travel here and their accommodations.
- We have welcomed back our visitors from Mexico. We built a campaign around the border reopening. We have a landing page on the website, a billboard was placed, a 10 second ad is running in Chihuahua and digital ads running on social media.
- Veronica was in Chihuahua when the border opened and did several television, radio, and print interviews about our Welcome Back campaign. With our welcome back campaign, we are educating them on the hotel occupancy being high. We are encouraging them to make their reservations at the hotels ahead of time and shop around for the best rates.
- The Outlet Shoppes did see an increase in sales during Thanksgiving week from Mexican shoppers.
- **Convention Development: Brooke Underwood**
- The team has been traveling in the month of November. Brooke and Ray attended a total of three shows this past month.
 - The first show was IMEX America Las Vegas attended by Ray, November 9-11. This was a co-op with Travel Texas and national and international meeting planners attend this show. Ray had nine one on one appointments and twenty-five walkups specifically inquiring about El Paso. Ray collected over 280 contacts.
 - Jose Garcia traveled on behalf of the team and attended IAEE and attended the national sales meeting for ASM Global
- Ray just got back from US Sports Congress and we should have some great news to report in December.
- 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.
- The next shows coming up in December are Esports Travel Summit and in January is the PCMA Convening Leaders and Southwest Showcase.
- **Venue and Event Management: Bryan Crowe**
- Special Events has been busy with the opening of WinterFest. WinterFest opened on Saturday, Nov. 20 in conjunction with the Celebration of Lights. Attendance for November 20-30, 2021 was 4,713 skaters. We have several ancillary events planned for the duration of WinterFest. We will have Fiesta Fridays which is live entertainment by local bands on the deck by the rink from 7-9pm. The WinterFest Holiday Market will be held every Saturday from 4-8pm featuring local artisans. EPCF and PCFF presents Free Holiday Movies in the Plaza Theatre.
- El Paso Live team has been very active with several shows in all of our venues. The total attendance in our venues for the month of November was 26,309.
- We were able to have the Jr. League Christmas Fair back in the Convention Center which brought in over 11,000 patrons the weekend it was opened.
- We had sold out and close to sold out shows in the Plaza Theatre and Abraham Chavez Theatre.
- We hosted a series of events for the City of El Paso with a Veterans Luncheon and a City Employee Thanksgiving Luncheon in the Convention Center.
- **El Paso Water Parks: Bryan Crowe**
- The water parks are closed but the managerial team is still working and attended a two-day end of season work session. They have developed goals and measurables for the 2022 season along with reviewing strengths and opportunities.
- The managerial team is also playing a major role in the preparation and operations of Winterfest with the skating rink.

- We ran a Black Friday special on our Season Passes and sold them for \$30 each. We had a great social media campaign promoting this special.
- Katherine Brennand asked when we will be able to meet in person and not do virtual meetings. Bryan answered that he will need to get with the city on their recommendations. Katherine suggested we meet in a room where we can all spread out. Katherine asked for Bryan's suggestions for this board to be more active and helpful with Destination El Paso. Bryan answered the intent of the board is to be a conduit between us and the community. We encourage the board to advocate on our behalf and share with city council and the community what we are doing. Karla Munoz also responded regarding meeting in person and shared it has been easier to meet quorum with conducting virtual meetings. Also, COVID numbers are going up in the city and we are taking that into consideration with keeping meetings virtual.

***Adjourn 4:50pm**

***The next meeting will be on Thursday, January 13 at 4:00 PM via Zoom.**