

Minutes

Destination El Paso Advisory Board Meeting

Thursday, September 17, 2020 4:00 p.m.

Destination El Paso Virtual Meeting

Board Members Present

Katherine Brennand
Katie Scott
Patrice Hills
Wolfgang Jonas
Gina Roe Davis

Board Members Absent

Elvira Galvan Galindo
Gracie Viramontes

Destination EP Staff

Bryan Crowe
Trudy Sweeten
Brooke Underwood
Veronica Castro
Amanda Fernandez

I. Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 4:06 p.m.

II. General Manager's Update: Bryan Crowe

- Bryan welcomed and introduced new board members Wolfgang Jonas and Gina Roe Davis.
- We hopefully will have a full board next meeting and can elect a Chair; we are waiting for two more appointees.
- This is the first advisory board meeting of our Fiscal Year. Our fiscal year begins on September 1 and ends on August 31.

III. Department Updates

- **Financials: Bryan Crowe**
- Financial Narrative for July 2020.
- Total revenue for the month of July 2020 was \$49,637 bringing total YTD revenue to \$3,966,893.
- Total expenses for El Paso Live for the month of July 2020 were \$325,718 bringing YTD expenses to \$5,754,269.
- Total expenses for Visit El Paso for the month of July 2020 were \$201,427 bringing YTD expenses to \$3,140,188.
- YTD we are experiencing a positive variance of \$319,612.
- YTD after the influx of City of El Paso funding there is an Adjusted Net profit of \$812,714.
- July was one of our lowest months for FY19/20.
- In the month of June, we had to go through the process of lay offs and furloughs which helped control expenses due to no events occurring.
- We are hopeful the US/Mexico border will open soon and that will help to increase hotel occupancy taxes. Visit is funded from HOT taxes.
- Richard Behrenhausen asked if the City adjusted their funding to us due to the pandemic and what is our manpower currently at.
- Bryan answered that City funding did not impact our FY19/20 budget, but we did receive a 35% reduction in funding for FY20/21. We are currently at 25 full time employees.
- **Tourism Development: Veronica Castro**
- We have resumed our digital and social advertising with reduced budget amounts. We are targeting the following markets: Locals, the state of Texas and Southern NM. Messaging for these markets has been "Road Tripping for the out of towners and staycations for the El Paso Community. Our Northern Mexico advertising is still on hold as International borders are still only open to US citizens and Working Visa's. Non-essential/tourist crossings are not permitted.
- We launched a digital video project called "This is El Paso" where we feature a local entrepreneur (retail, food, bar, craft, etc.) and promote that they are open for business.

- Our digital El Paso Ambassador program increased in number in the month of April and May due to El Pasoans having to stay home and work from home. The City encouraged all of their employees to participate in the program.
- The Chihuahua VIC closed in April and continues to be closed until further notice.
- **Convention Development: Brooke Underwood**
- We were experiencing great momentum and were on track to exceed all of our goals before the pandemic.
- We did lose some business an example is Texas Travel Alliance Annual Summit. We bid to host in 2021, but because the 2020 Summit, originally to be held in Amarillo, was cancelled, they awarded 2021 to Amarillo, therefore our bid was lost
- We have been able to keep some business and move it into 2021 or further out.
- The Film Commission has still been operating and we have been able to provide permits and assist various productions.
 - We assisted ESPN with a shoot in July for a production covering the August 3, 2019 tragedy. We also assisted with Exotic Creatures on August 7.
- We are currently working on hosting a virtual FAM tour to occur in October. Due to the pandemic meeting planners are unable to travel and participate in FAM tours or site visits.
- We have hired Threshold 360 to help us with the virtual tours. Threshold 360, delivers powerful, immersive content that helps customers truly understand the destination or location via 360 virtual tours. We selected 50 locations, hotels, attractions, restaurants, and meeting spaces to capture for a 360 virtual tour and it will be placed on Visit El Paso's website for meeting planners to be able to experience the location virtually. This will help planners make the decision whether the destination can accommodate their needs without having to travel.
- Katherine Brennand asked if the Plaza Hotel has meeting space available.
- Wolfgang Jonas, GM, for the Plaza Hotel who serves on the board answered Katherine saying there is meeting space available along with a ballroom.
- Visit El Paso in cooperation with El Paso Parks & Rec is assisting the USSSA Whole Enchilada Softball Invitational. The event has been relocated to El Paso this October 2-4, 2020 as NM parks remain closed to tournament activity. The Tournament has already registered over 260 teams of roughly 15 individuals and can contribute \$1Million in Economic Impact to the community. It is our desire to help execute a successful tournament and ultimately keeping it in El Paso for future years. We currently have an application in to the Governor's Office for the Texas Event Trust Fund.
- **Venue and Event Management: Trudy Sweeten**
- Our last events were held in the beginning of March. In April we had to cancel or postpone all events.
- Unfortunately, in the months of June and July we had to go through furloughs and then layoffs.
- We are working on a corporate program called Venue Shield which entails policies and procedures to follow upon reopening. We want to make sure we create a safe environment for our patrons and employees.
- We hosted the City Council meeting and All-American City presentation on Aug. 18 at the Convention Center.
 - We will continue to host small City events in the Convention Center.
- Movies on the Fly was a new event that took place at Hangar 7 by the airport in the month of August.
- Gina Roe Davis asked when we will see events and meetings occurring in our venues.
- Bryan answered that realistically he does not see commercial events happening until late spring, April or May. Commercial events need to be able to operate at 100% capacity.

- Conventions and meetings usually are secured one to two years out and there are already destinations confirmed for 2021 and 2022. We may not see conventions or meetings until 2022 and beyond.

***Adjourn 5:06 pm**

***The next meeting will be on Thursday, October 8 at 4:00 PM via Zoom.**