

Minutes

Destination El Paso Advisory Board Meeting

Thursday, June 23, 2022 4:00 p.m.

Destination El Paso

Board Members Present	Board Members Absent	Destination EP Staff	City of El Paso
Patrice Hills	Gracie Viramontes	Jose Garcia	Karla Munoz
Johnny Escalante	Katie Scott	Brooke Underwood	
Deborah Zuloaga		Rene Wong	
Katherine Brennand		Diana Thornton	
Danny Padilla			
Gina Roe-Davis			

I. Call to Order

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

II. Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes by Deborah Zuloaga
- Seconded by Katherine Brennand

III. President/CEO Update: Jose Garcia

IV. Jose shared data with the board regarding hotel occupancy. Numbers show 73.8%, up 2%, with revenue also up 2%. El Paso once again is leading in the state. Katherine Brennand asked if government contracts could be a contributing factor to the increase, Brooke said there was an increase in leisure travel.

V. Department Updates

- **Financials: Jose Garcia**
 - Financial Narrative for April 2022.
 - Total revenue for the month of April 2022 was at \$711,505 with our YTD budget over by \$313,608.
 - Total expenses for El Paso Live for the month of April 2022 were \$520,959 bringing YTD expenses under budget at \$302,156.
 - Total expenses for Visit El Paso for the month of April 2022 were \$399,853 bringing YTD expenses under budget by \$143,014.
 - Total expenses for Water Parks for the month of April 2022 were \$214,568 bringing YTD expenses under budget by \$134,877.
 - YTD we are experiencing a positive variance of \$893,665.
 - YTD after the influx of City of El Paso funding there is an Adjusted Net profit of \$2,092,400.
 - April numbers show similar as the previous month, strong revenue and is still on pace. Reported that we are close to being fully staffed in the Sales Department between Visit El Paso and El Paso live. El Paso Water Parks is still recruiting lifeguards which attributes to their financial report. Jose reported that 15 lifeguards at each park are required at all times. Johnny Escalante reported he has seen an increase in cost for police officers, up to \$95.00/hour.
- **Introduction of Matt Christmas, Director of Event Services.**

- **Tourism Development: Brooke Underwood on behalf of Veronica Castro**
 - National Travel & Tourism Week was held Sunday, May 1-6 with activities including an activation at the El Paso Chihuahuas game and El Paso Locomotive FC game, a tour of the Magoffin Home, a Streetcar Tour, and Mural tours as well as a Cinco de Mayo reception and dinner recognizing our hotel and local partnerships in the hospitality and tourism industry.
 - The tourism department attended the Reverse Marketplace in San Antonio May 15-16. During the trip, they met with 12 tour operators about potentially bringing business to El Paso. They are currently in communications with one discussing attractions in the area.
 - The team also attended the Outdoors Writers Association of America conference in Casper, Wyoming from May 20-24. The purpose of attending this conference was to find media and travel writers to visit the area and promote El Paso as a candidate to host their 2024 conference. The team was able to garner a substantial amount of interest and make good contacts within their organization.
 - The tourism team along with hotel partners Plaza Hotel, Hotel Paso Del Norte, and Courtyard attended the Index Golf Tournament in Ciudad Juárez on May 20th. The team was able to network with over 120 various maquiladora executives of the border. Discussions were had regarding transportation services between El Paso and Juarez, lodging options, and attractions. Participants of the golf tournament were given promotional items and refreshments at the booth which was located on the 12th hole. At the end of the event, giveaways were raffled which included hotel night stays in El Paso.
 - The tourism department ended the month hosting Ruben Gryson, a travel expert from Belgium from May 29 to June 1. He stayed at the Hotel Paso Del Norte and mountain biked in the Franklin Mountains, hiked Hueco Tanks and White Sands, and toured the downtown El Paso area. He enjoyed the trip thoroughly and will be in touch with our department on how he plans to promote and sell El Paso to his client in Belgium.
- **Advertising: Rene Wong**
 - Earned media - El Paso received coverage from Jacob Hollifield in The Local Palate from his visit back in April. This coverage was worth \$2,850. El Paso was also mentioned in MSN UK for a total of \$9,141 worth of earned media, El Diario for \$10,248, The Group Travel Leader Inc. for \$2,000, and Netnoticias.mx for \$3,302. In Texas Highways, we received a spread called "Don't Let Go" detailing the uniting of families at the border which was worth \$12,073. In Texas Monthly, there was an article called "Why do I sometimes hear El Paso referred to as El Chuco" which was worth \$5,313. The total earned media for the month of May was valued at \$44,927. Rene explained was earned media was for the board.
 - Reports were made on leisure advertising with focus towards outdoor, ecotourism and history. There was an increase in the digital buy to increase traffic. Meetings/Conventions & Sports has the top-ranking page visits on the Meeting in EP page. Mexico continues the So Close campaign with traditional media including billboard, print and radio. Digital advertising was added in the month to increase the push.
- **Convention Development: Brooke Underwood on behalf of Valerie Garcia**
 - Valerie A. Garcia, Director of Sales traveled to Miami, Florida May 1-3 to attend the SMART Meetings Conference. Valerie secured 22 one on one appointments with meeting planners that represented companies such as Microsoft Corp and the American Society of Interior Designers.

- Valerie A. Garcia, Director of Sales, traveled to Little Rock, Arkansas May 4-7 with Nickole Rodriguez, Community Development Program Manager at the City of El Paso. They attended the Neighborhood USA Conference to meet with conference board members where El Paso was awarded the 2023 conference. This conference focuses on the development of partnerships among neighborhood organizations, government, and the private sector for the goal of strengthening every neighborhood. The Neighborhood USA Conference will have an estimated economic impact of \$656,000 and estimated 600 hotel room nights.
- Valerie A. Garcia, Director of Sales, traveled to Las Vegas, NV to attend the HelmsBriscoe Annual Business Conference and Partner Fair on May 9-11. The Partner Fair is a reverse marketplace and networking session where she had the opportunity to secure 15 one on one appointments with meeting planners. These meeting planners represented clients from the following segments: association, women's groups, and educational conferences. The HelmsBriscoe Annual Business Conference and Partner Fair focuses on fostering connections, building business and allows to establish relationships between HelmsBriscoe Associates and industry leaders.
- Ray Valles, Senior Convention Sales Manager, attended the Texas Society of Government Meetings Professionals Reception (SGMP) on May 12th in Austin. He was able to make promising connections with meetings planners have multiple events around the state.
- Raymond Valles, Senior Convention Sales Manager met with SMART Meeting's planning team members while in Austin on May 19th in Austin. They invited Ray to submit a proposal for their 2023 or 2024 SMART Conference. SMART Meetings events offer high quality, with a great mix of planners and suppliers making connections and doing business.
- Leanne Hicks, Convention Sales Manager and Coles Weber, Sports Sales Manager traveled to Arlington, TX May 2-6. They participated in the Sports Events and Tourism Association Summit. This Summit connects hundreds of sport tourism professionals and industry partners to exchange time, resources, strategies, solutions, and more. Leanne and Coles achieved 50 one on one meetings with various sporting groups and planners during the tradeshow. They partnered with other Texas CVB's and Sports Commissions to host a networking reception to increase meeting planner engagement for the team to connect and build relationships to gain future sports business.
- Four site visits were conducted: Texas Council of Deliberation, Texas Association of Regional Councils, US Dairy Export Council and Intelligent Transportation Services.
- **Venue and Event Management: Jose Garcia**
 - Sun City Craft Beer Fest was a successful event with attendance of over 3,000 attendees. Over 200 beers were served and was a welcomed event that was brought back after the pandemic. Cool Canyon Nights has received positive response to band selection from patrons and continues to have a strong partnership with Townsquare. Jose shared news of the Pollstar rankings 63 & 69 Pollstar rankings for the Plaza Theatre and Abraham Chavez Theatre (ACT) respectively. Katherine asked if there is talk about renovating the ACT. Jose shared that it could run between 80-90 million to rehab it. City Council has not approved at the moment. There was mention that building something new would be less than a renovation which drew some opposition. Deborah asked about different stages of venue rehab if it's possible. Jose shared about asbestos abatement and Brooke added that the current fire suppression systems would need to be redone as well. City Council voted to protect the

ACT. Johnny asked what the funding sources are to finance, which was explained as different resources including but not limited to meter parking, community foundation. With the announcing of the new Broadway series which will include a third subscriber night solidified the benefit of having the Chavez when Plaza is being used for long run shows at the Plaza. Deborah asked is advocacy for some of these situations should be considered. Danny suggested speaking to the City Representatives. Karla added that there might be an opportunity to be able to give a "recommendation" to council. Need to look at ordinance. Danny's opinion is that it needs to be brought up which Katherine disagreed. Additional discussion included putting together a special meeting to develop a plan to which Danny added that the plan should include not only the ACT, but the Convention Center as well Karla added that City council would be discussing convention center renovation in future bond project. Jose added that they have sleeping rooms downtown, but now don't have the meeting space to accommodate. Katherine added that there had been talks about a ballroom on top of administrative building for a total of three floors.

- **El Paso Water Parks: Jose Garcia**
 - Soft openings were done for each park, one per weekend to much success. Hired close to 300 seasonal associates and completed training. Memorial Day weekend all four water parks opened. Reporting that they currently have enough staff to keep all the parks open which is not the norm with other water parks/pools in the area due to hiring issues. Reported that the only closings of the parks in the month were due to lighting, storms, and insects.
- **Floor open for questions.**

***Adjourn 4:57pm**

***The next meeting will be on Thursday, July 28 at 4:00 PM in person**