COVID-19 UPDATE
March 11, 2020

The Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau (GBCVB) is working diligently to gather all pertinent information related to the coronavirus situation (see: Johns Hopkins map) and how it is impacting our industry. Governor Baker yesterday declared a State of Emergency to bolster the Commonwealth’s response to this crisis. In concert with the MCCA, we are tracking lost convention center business, and we have also surveyed our hotel partners to report on lost room revenue unrelated to a citywide event. It should come as no surprise that the numbers are staggering. RevPAR projections for the United States in 2020 were already flat prior to the coronavirus outbreak, and now Destinations International projects RevPAR to decrease by 11.6% in 2020.

This week’s news – including the cancellation of major trade shows like IMEX and DNE and large conferences in Boston such as the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, National Science Teacher Association National Conference, and the American Occupational Therapy Association – sends shockwaves through the meetings and hospitality sector. Thus far, two dozen events that were set to occur at the Hynes or BCEC have been cancelled, postponed or moved to a virtual setting.

We understand how difficult it must have been for Mayor Walsh to call off an iconic event like the St. Patrick’s Day Parade and we commend the responsibility he shouldered in making that tough decision. We are in close communication with City Hall as it relates to COVID-19 and how big events may be affected.

We congratulate the MCCA on the safe and successful hosting of the Mizuno Boston Volleyball Festival at the BCEC last weekend. By all accounts, this was an exemplary case of partners working together to ensure that communication channels and public safety protocols were in place; the athletes and spectators enjoyed a great experience.
We continue to work with Massport, the U.S. Travel Association, Tourism Economics, and the CDC to develop educational campaigns and up-to-date messaging for our joint constituencies.

Several of our partners have created dedicated webpages to educate and update their various audiences. The City of Boston has developed a list of common questions related to coronavirus, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has created a landing page to share information and best practices. This week the MCCA rolled out a dedicated blog and webpage to keep their clients and the public abreast of any news. And the Boston Public Health Commission is constantly updating its blog to reflect real-time developments.

DINE OUT BOSTON EXTENDED

The GBCVB will do whatever we can to help mitigate the effect of lost business this month and beyond. As such, we have extended Dine Out Boston an extra week – now through March 20 – which will cover the date range when the Seafood Expo would have been here.

If you are running any special deals please send them to Glenn McGibbon and we will promote on our website and through social channels and dedicated campaigns.

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION TOOLKIT

Please review the U.S. Travel emergency response toolkit that includes:

- Facts and talking points for industry use with travelers
- Media holding statement and talking points
- Guidance for healthy travel habits from the CDC
- Sharable graphics from World Health Organization

EAST | WEST MARKETING GROUP

Our partner agency in China, East | West Marketing Group, is sharing weekly updates with the GBCVB and we will distribute this report to our members every Monday. This update also lives on our homepage.

AIR SERVICE

Major US carriers have suspended service to and from China through the end of April. Hainan Airlines suspended flights from mainland China to Boston in early
February. **Korean Air** suspended flights from Seoul on March 8. **Alitalia** is still flying its Rome-Boston route but has made reductions in service during March; Alitalia plans to go to daily service starting April 15. **Cathay Pacific** has reduced their daily service from Hong Kong to 3X/week. The anticipated March 29 launch of **Vienna-Boston** service with Austrian Airlines has been pushed back to June 2. **JAL service** from Tokyo has **not been impacted**.

**BUSINESS IMPACT**

We have heard from several industry partners expressing concern over **lost business and the uncertainty** surrounding major events, conferences and meetings scheduled to occur in Boston and Cambridge in 2020. We invite you to please **share with us** any examples of lost business – including room nights lost, dates, and industry sector impacted – so that we can track the impact of COVID-19 and collectively understand its effect. We encourage all of our partners – restaurants, retailers, museums and attractions, et al. – to share information with us. This week we distributed a **Survey Monkey to hotel partners** to gather data on lost room revenue. Dozens of hotel partners have responded. We of course understand that this information is proprietary, and we will not share hotel-specific information with any outside parties.

**INSURANCE POLICIES**

While we hope that the coronavirus situation is contained in short order, we would encourage all GBCVB members to **review insurance policies** and be prepared for lost business and cancellations.