



## **MEETING MINUTES August 16, 2023**

### ***GFLCVB Marketing Advisory Committee (MAC)***

***9:00AM – 10:30AM***

***Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center  
1950 Eisenhower Blvd., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316***

#### **Members Present:**

Arienne Glassman, Bobby Rodriguez, Chris Bielski, David Muir, Ina Lee, James Pancallo, Jenni Morejon, Kara Lundgren, Marie McKenzie, Matthew McNeil, Melissa Milroy, Meredith McCleary, Michael Cook, Ron Drew, Tim Petrillo

#### **Members Absent:**

Christine Soverns, Elaine Fitzgerald, Joellyn Fellmeth, Keith Blackburn, Raelin Storey, Thomas Parke

#### **Remote Members:**

Robert Kessler, Von Freeman

#### **Intro:**

Tim Petrillo called the meeting to order at 9:00AM. Roll call was conducted by Tammy Moye and a quorum was confirmed. Approval of previous meeting minutes was moved by Ina Lee and seconded by Tim Petrillo; all were in favor and approval of the minutes passed unanimously. Camila Clark gave a welcome message and provided a recap of the meeting agenda.

#### **Overview:**

- Ted Botimer, Vice President of Research, Strategy & Revenue Management, presented on year-to-date hotel metrics for January 1<sup>st</sup> through July 31<sup>st</sup>. Metrics include the following: ADR is over \$200, with 75% occupancy; RevPAR is roughly \$152, which is 8% above 2022; we are seeing relative strength for 2023; hotel forecasts were aspirational, with actual performance being between 1% – 3% less than forecasted. TDT revenue collections are slightly under 2022 figures with outperformance in Q1 of the calendar year. Fort Lauderdale International Airport passenger volume is 12% higher than YTD 2022, but still below 2019 figures by about 7%. Recovery efforts in the airline industry are slower due to several factors, but we are moving back to normal. Cruise passenger volume is up 77% this year, but still below 2019 figures by about 19%. Recovery efforts are industry wide, with 2024 projected to be “back to normal” with prospective gains.

- Mike Pouey, Vice President, Business Development & Sales Operations, provided updates on Meetings/Group Sales. Discussed assisting hotels in driving Group recovery since the pandemic. The market has seen year-over-year gains with awarded RFP's up by over 20%, RFP value up by over 25%, and awarded room nights up by over 24%. Greater Fort Lauderdale was ranked #19 of meeting destinations in North America. As part of the Convention Center expansion, we launched new sales efforts for the new OMNI. We booked 41 Events equating to 84K room nights in the new space for 2026 and beyond. Historically, we have always operated in 2-3 years, and now we are talking about 10-12 years into the future. Working on a new meeting planner toolkit to highlight the newly improved convention district. We received excellent media coverage through interviews and articles in Southeast Meetings, Convention South, and Meetings Today. Seatrade came to Fort Lauderdale this year as the largest event since the reopening of the Convention Center (10K attendees, 5K room nights, and \$37 million in economic impact). We received a powerful testimonial video from Seatrade to use as a sales tool. The timeline for the opening of the expanded Convention Center and the OMNI were discussed, with final completion projected for early 2026.
- Glen Allen, Vice President, Sports & Entertainment, provided updates on key moments in Sports & Entertainment and how they will help position us for targeting new business. In January the Fort Lauderdale Aquatic Center reopened following renovations and unveiled their new dive tower that includes both a 27-meter and a 20-meter dive. We are the only destination in the western hemisphere with towers of this height; there are only three total in the world. In May we hosted the World Aquatics High Dive World Cup, and we are already working with USA Diving and World Aquatics on potential FY 2024 opportunities like the Olympic Trials, Pan Am Games, and Junior Nationals. We hosted two major NHL events including the All Star Game in February. The Saturday All Star game was sold out by a crowd of over 19K people, generated over 14K room nights, and \$10 million of economic impact. Over 7K from outside of our destination traveled to Greater Fort Lauderdale for this event. A few months later we hosted the Stanley Cup Playoffs with two games in Sunrise that drew a crowd of nearly 40K attendees. We will continue working with the Florida Panthers in recruiting more amateur ice hockey events to their venues. We hosted 18 events at the Convention Center representing ten different sport disciplines, bringing in over 100K attendees. We now have Lionel Messi on the Inter Miami team, and everyone wants to be in Fort Lauderdale to see him play. We are trying to bring more attention to Greater Fort Lauderdale vs. Miami; we are doing our best to tell that story.
- Tracy Vaughan, Senior Vice President, Global Trade Development, presented updates on Global Trade Development. We added a position and now have three Business Development Managers on the Global Market Team. The Team participated in 28 trade shows (domestic & international), seven missions that included representation from 11 countries, 12 webinars, 16 marketing co-ops, 21 FAMs, and over 800 face-to-face appointments. We had 225 partners join us this year. We had 6.9 million in value from co-op (trade and consumer) participation. Digital efforts included the following: over 1K registered for the Lauderdale Loyalist program; receiving over 2.5K followers on Hablo; we have been linking our platforms with #LeisureLauderdale, reaching over 3K followers and a total reach of over 13.5K. We participated in IPW 2023 alongside 12 partners. We are bidding on IPW 2026; final decisions will be made in September. Participated in a six-month long co-op with Hotelbeds that generated 30K room nights and \$5.3 million in revenue. Looking to further leverage cruise opportunities, including with new and luxury cruise lines coming into the destination. We did a program with Celebrity and partnered with Virtuoso in-market at the Conrad, which were luxury related.

- Neki Mohan, Vice President, Multicultural Business and Community Engagement, presented updates for Multicultural Business. Played a Sizzle Video created to show how we continue to welcome, “Everyone Under the Sun” in all we do. We partnered with the Cultural Heritage Alliance for Tourism, who brought in black influencers to promote our destination to people from all over the world. Neki elaborated on our targeted media efforts, having presence in Essence, Legacy, Latin Biz Today, Latino Leaders and Telemundo. Two large events brought in a lot of impressions: Orange Blossom Classic and South Florida Book Festival.
- Camila Clark, Senior Vice President, Marketing & Communications, discussed our new content development that included our 101 Days of Summer program and Dine Out Lauderdale. Played our Dine Out Lauderdale video. Discussed our custom video content developed with Good Morning America, Life on the Water, The Balancing Act with Montel Williams, and Latin Biz Today. Our paid media resulted in 728 million impressions and \$5.9 million in added value. We launched the new brand campaign with impactful placement, such as the digital board in Times Square. Public Relations efforts have resulted in an estimated 4.5 billion reach and an estimated ad value of \$42 million. Social Media continues to garner positive results has reached a new milestone with 106K followers on Instagram. Presented visuals of our top performing content that showcases authentic and organic experiences you can get only in Greater Fort Lauderdale.
- Camila Clark presented updates regarding Inclusion & Accessibility on behalf of Richard Gray, Senior Vice President, Inclusion & Accessibility. We are committed to equality and diversity. Our commitment to this is displayed through creating an inclusive and welcoming environment, addressing specific needs of travelers, and creating positive social change. We had a record year with four back-to-back LGBT Cruises that held 11.5K total passengers and generated \$8 million in economic impact. Richard was recently recognized in Brazil at the LGBT+ Turismo Expo, where he was awarded the Brazilian Tourism Award. We hosted the Deaf Seniors of America Conference in Greater Fort Lauderdale and partnered with Access Now, Wheel the World, and Travelability, which are all leaders in the industry. Presented a video on accessibility that was created in conjunction with the Deaf Senior of America.
- Camila Clark presented our FY 2024 Marketing Plan: Us. Amplified. We are still “Everyone Under the Sun,” (EUTS) but amplified. Our objectives are to maximize ROI, evolve our EUTS brand, include paid media innovation, continue with the message that we are Florida’s most welcoming destination, utilize improved research/metrics/analysis, and formulate comprehensive Public Relations and Social Media efforts across all market segments. The direction of amplifying our brand celebrates the concept of personal freedom (Come Be You). Presented preliminary story boards as a sneak peak into our direction. Our plan and messaging will include creating fresh video content and print ads, while continuing to utilize our current brand assets. We are creating new sales collateral/tools to support meeting planners and maximize event attendance. We will continue to explore meaningful and impactful media placements, use social media for storytelling, develop partnerships with brands and influencers, and participate in several activations to include the 2024 Rose Bowl Parade and collaboration with Brightline. We are evolving our Business Participation Program to provide unique opportunities for our partners and municipalities. Discussed the details of our paid media budget for the new fiscal year.

Approval of the FY 2024 Marketing Plan was moved by Ina Lee and seconded by Tim Petrillo; all were in favor and the 2024 Marketing Plan passed unanimously.

## INDUSTRY UPDATE:

- Chris Bielski, Marriott Harbor Beach, discussed that leisure travel has waned, but group has increased. Major renovation will be taking place in all rooms and meeting spaces.
- Ari Glassman, City of Fort Lauderdale, noted that they are getting ready for the next fiscal year. Hispanic Heritage month is approaching. There will be an ice-skating rink added at Las Olas Oceanside Park for 8 weeks in the winter.
- Matthew McNeil, Broward Center, reported that they will end 2023 as the second biggest season since they opened in 1999.
- Ron Drew, Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance commented on the unemployment rates being the best it's been as far as labor forces at 2.9%. New businesses are not being able to move here with interest rates at 6-7% and housing costs being way too high; businesses are concerned that their employees are not able to afford the \$600K-\$700K housing costs. Elimination of incentives and enterprise Florida is also having an impact.
- Michael Cook, Margaritaville Hollywood Beach reported less traffic and a decrease in group leads for the back half of the year. For 2024/2025, booking is moving fast through the system. They are hitting forecasts, but not hitting budgets. Broadwalk is very quiet this year. He would like to see more analytical results regarding the tactics and updates from Aqua/Visit Lauderdale.
- David Muir, Island Syndicate reported that they are doing well. Currently working on Explore Magazines and keepsake books. They are working with a few local businesses that are keeping them busy; there is a large demand for content. They are also working on a lot of conference related photography, as well. Their new location inside of the mall has brought in a lot more foot traffic.
- Bobby Rodriguez, Bobby Rodriguez Productions reported that the Renaissance Festival had over 100K attendees this year. He will be expanding his budget to target out of town attendees. Pirate Fest in Downtown Fort Lauderdale is moving to June, and they are considering doing an off-season event. They are also planning to add a jazz festival to take place next summer.
- Marie McKenzie, Carnival Corporation reported that they now have a global fleet of 92 ships visiting over 700 ports with their nine global cruise brands. In 2022 they carried almost eight million passengers. Over 300 guests and crew are sailing on board the fleet at any given time. Q2 performance closed June 30<sup>th</sup> and returned \$4.9 billion in revenue, exceeding 2019 peak levels. They have 12 new ships since 2020 with new, unique amenities. As they are the largest Caribbean cruise provider, many of those cruises sail out of our local ports. They are making new efforts towards sustainability, with 25% capacity being of newer and more efficient ships.
- Von Freeman, Audacy Media reported projected impressions and noted that they have a Wounded Warrior Project event coming up on November 1<sup>st</sup> called Stars & Strings at the Hard Rock Live. The Riptide Music Festival will return to Fort Lauderdale beach on December 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>, with over 27 acts.
- Meredith McCleary, Ebony Heritage Travel, thought the Marketing Plan was exceptional and commented on groups that are discouraging travel to Florida.

Tim Petrillo made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Meredith McCleary.

**Meeting Adjourned 10:31AM**