

## **MINUTES**

**Irving Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors**

**Monday, December 18, 2023 at 11:45 AM**

**Irving Convention Center – Junior Ballroom C-D**

**500 W. Las Colinas Blvd.**

**Irving, Texas 75039**

Attendance: Richard Stewart, Jr. – Board Chair; Herb Gears – Board Vice Chair; Michael Basoco, Stephanie Booker, Beth Bowman, David Cole, Stephanie Fenley-Garcia, Colvin Gibson, Todd Hawkins, Chris Hillman, Nydia Hoskins, Cambria Jones, Kim Limon, William Mahoney, Greg Malcolm, Hammond Perot, Joe Philipp, Sam Reed, Brad Watson, and Council Liaison Kyle Taylor – Board Members; Assistant City Manager Philip Sanders, Senior Assistant City Attorney Christina Weber, Chief Financial Officer Bret Starr, Mayor Rick Stopfer, Councilman Mark Cronenwett, and Councilman Al Zapanta – City of Irving; General Manager Tom Meehan and Assistant General Manager Jeremy Pierce – ICC Staff; Carol Boyer, Lori Fojtasek, Maura Gast, Marianne Lauda, Brice Petty, Diana Pfaff, Susan Rose, Matt Tungett, and Monty White – ICVB; Guests: City Secretary's Office Operations Manager Cecelia Castillo.

Board Chair Richard Stewart, Jr. called the meeting to order at 11:48 a.m. and inquired if there were any citizen comments; there were none.

### **SWEARING IN OF NEW AND RE-APPOINTED BOARD MEMBERS**

The City Secretary's Office Operations Manager Cecilia Castillo presented the oath to new and reappointed Board members. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- Approving ICVB Board Meeting Minutes for November 13, 2023
- Reviewing the Hotel Occupancy Tax Collections
- Accepting the ICC Financial Reports – October 2023

Stewart called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. On a motion from Board member William Mahoney, and a second from Board member David Cole, the motion was unanimously approved.

### **BOARD CHAIR REPORT**

- The Board Committee assignments were presented, and Stewart asked to advise if there were any concerns with an assignment.
- The State of the City event is scheduled for January 23. Any Board member wishing to attend should let Executive Director Maura Gast know as soon as possible.
- A draft of the 2024 ICVB Board and Activities calendar is included in the packet.
- The next Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 22 at the Irving Convention Center.
- Stewart recognized new Board members Stephanie Booker and Cambria Jones, also new Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce Chair Brad Watson.
- Required Board member training is mandatory, and Stewart asked when completed to send a copy of the certification to Gast and the City Secretary's Office.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Board and Business Development

Committee Chair Sam Reed reported:

- The Committee met on December 8 with a full agenda. Discussion was held on new Board Orientation planning, Board Homecoming Luncheon review and future plans, and a review of the Committee's Strategic Plan. It was a very productive meeting and he encouraged Board members to attend.
- The next Committee meeting is TBD.

### Community Engagement Committee

Committee Chair Colvin Gibson reported:

- Gibson participated in the Board Homecoming Luncheon and the December 2 Holiday Parade. The High Spirited Citizens who participated, ICVB staff and Board members were engaging with attendees to make it a big celebration for all segments of Irving's diverse community. He hopes there will continue to be opportunities to reach out to all segments of the City and advocate for this organization that assists in reducing taxes that might otherwise accrue to citizens based on conventions and meetings. Gibson invited Board members to give their all to execute the Strategic Plan for 2024.
- The next Committee meeting is TBD.

### Destination Development Committee

Committee Chair Greg Malcolm reported:

- The Committee meets once a quarter for informative conversation, debates, and innovative ideas. He invited Board members to join the Committee and contribute.
- The next Committee meeting is TBD.

Stewart added the trip to EpicCentral in Grand Prairie was an eye-opening meeting and he looks forward to other similar events with the Committee.

## CITY REPORTS

Councilman Kyle Taylor reported:

- City Council will continue with the lawsuit for delinquent Hotel Occupancy Taxes and the request for more discovery items. The court hearing date has been pushed back until March 2024, and the City's legal team and their out-sourced representation continue to work through the discovery requested.
- Future Council discussions will include short term rentals, especially in apartment complexes.
- Taylor, Councilman Brad LaMorgese and the Boards and Commissions Committee have discussed a more robust training program. A new onboarding process will include explanation of roles, how to work with City Council and City staff.

Councilman Al Zapanta reported:

- Wishing everyone a happy holiday season and he is looking forward to a new year.

Councilman Mark Cronenwett reported:

- The City has purchased land at Hwy 161 and Rochelle for tournament baseball fields, and recently approved cricket fields with more potential opportunities for tourism via tournaments.
- The upcoming Council meeting will include discussion of land uses.

Mayor Rick Stopfer reported:

- The City has many opportunities for residents and visitors over the holiday season with the Arts Center and Recreation Centers.
- The Parks Department over the weekend held an event for children to rent booths and sell goods. It was well attended and a wonderful opportunity to see young ones make some money.
- The City is moving forward with upgrading and building pool facilities, parks and acquiring new equipment.
- Water and sewer projects are ahead of schedule and systems are being replaced along the way.
- Economic Development is a high priority and Irving continues to be at the table. There is a significant amount of interest in data warehousing and artificial intelligence.
- Continuing to see progress and development in the Wells Fargo project, which is about 1.5 months ahead of schedule.
- There is a lot of discussion around the Planned Unit Development (PUD)6 land. There will be more information coming later. There are deed restrictions that are in place and will be evaluated.
- The economic development process has many layers to it, and the Mayor has said that his goal is to be more involved throughout the process, to get to know the broker side of the relationships better. The City should be at all the tables for any discussions about any projects anywhere in Irving, even though some brokers may not understand that. Ultimately, the incentives required by many companies can only be provided by the City Council.
- The Ritz Carlton will raise its flag at the newly renovated property toward the end of January. He is excited about the new opportunities it brings, and the next two phases of the project will be starting soon.
- Stopfer thanked volunteers, employees and staff for their efforts and support. He gave his special gratitude to the ICVB and ICC team and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Board member Michael Basoco applauded the Mayor and City's taskforce that are working with the homeless situation. There are signs at Belt Line Rd. and Hwy 183 for non-profit organizations to help shelter people in the upcoming colder weather. Stopfer added it is a joint effort with Irving's non-profit organizations. The taskforce is overloaded and teams up with the Irving Police Department to handle the calls that come in and has made over 14,000 interactions. The focus is to get funds and donations to the non-profits to let them continue with programs.

City Manager Chris Hillman added the mental health response team started five years ago with an initial grant for one taskforce and now there are three teams. The Irving Fire Department is included for medical calls. Arrests have been reduced by 85% because of resources, trained staff and following up on calls. Working in tandem with the non-profit organizations is a great accomplishment.

Hillman reported:

- The delinquent Hotel Occupancy Tax court hearing is set for March 28 and staff is continuing to comb through the discovery process and is in communication with the other legal team. Chief Financial Officer Bret Starr added since August small payments have been received off and on for both delinquent hotels. The last payment for either property was November 28, and the current balance is \$656,000, down from \$1.2 million. Progress is slow.
- The City is working with Toyota Music Factory management team Brookfield Properties. There is a special session tonight to review the points of the agreement. There was a public presentation in September and the final agreement with improvements should be concluded by the end of the year. The partnership is strong with needed and exciting, significant improvements at TMF.
- The “Let’s Play Irving” program is in the final aquatic design for the Lee Park pool. It will be under construction through next year and will open May/June of 2025.
- Continuing to work on final plans for Senter Park with a multi-generational facility at Mustang Park. The year-round facilities should be completed in 36 months and open the summer of 2026.
- Southwest Park updates with \$3 million in new amenities – starting next year and completed in summer of 2025.
- Irving Boulevard project is 95% completed with bushes and trees being installed late spring 2024.
- The last City Council meeting directed staff to move forward with a bond program for a new City Hall. There will be more details on the project coming next month. An Open House at the current City Hall building will allow people to see how the 50-year-old City Hall looks and operates and see the vision for the future. City Council toured the whole building in October and their comments afterwards centered around “claustrophobic” and “depressing.” Council will be presented an agenda item in February to call for an election in May. The recommendation to build on other city-owned land in the Heritage District was met initially with hesitancy; Council had significant discussion about building instead on the current site. The building was built 50 years ago when Irving was half the size it is today.

## BUREAU MANAGEMENT AND STAFF REPORTS

### Bureau Management

Executive Director Maura Gast reported:

- Headshot photographs of the Board and staff are scheduled for today and tomorrow, and additional time slots will be available in conjunction with the January Board meeting.
- A document in follow-up to the ICC audit is included in the packet, in response to questions raised after the last Board meeting. Gast reiterated that no issues were identified in the audit findings and the opinion was that of a good, clean audit. It was a record-setting year for the ICC team and expenses were up because of food, labor, and equipment costs. The ICC will return over \$800,000 back to the ICC Capital Improvement Fund. Gast opened the item up for questions, and there were none.

Assistant Executive Director Sales and Services Lori Fojtasek reported:

- Fojtasek announced the promotion of Matt Tungett to the new ICVB Director of Sales.
- The team is slightly below target for the month. The holiday season is historically slow.

- Fojtasek pointed out new items on the Sales and Services report in the Board packet.
  - Leads by Source shows Cvent as the number one source. For the last three fiscal years, incoming leads are 3,842 and 1.6 million requested room nights. However, in reviewing the Conversion Rate, Cvent is near the bottom of the chart. She explained third party planners often use Cvent to “window shop” for meeting locations.
- Events:
  - The National Physique Competition was recently held and generated 1,100 room nights.
  - The Cotton Bowl Association media will be in Irving over the holiday and will gladly welcome them back to Irving, especially during this slow period of the year.
  - Hilti will hold an event in January with 2,400 room nights.
  - Insurance Meeting Network has 1,000 room nights.

Gast added the Director of Sales position has been vacant since 2010 and it has been a priority to have it back and funded in this year’s budget. The position was created by re-classifying a vacant sales position for no increase in total head count.

Assistant Executive Director Marketing and Communications Diana Pfaff reported:

- The Marketing team will add a specialist position to their team in the next few months.
- The November report shows a slight decrease from the previous month in marketing prospects. There were 210 prospects, 108 from Cvent, 75 from website and 27 were email prospects.
- Website traffic in November had 83,876 total sessions and 47,067 engaged sessions.
- Blog traffic reports 6,332 pageviews in November.
- Social media added 2,849 new followers, which brought total influencers to 161,161 followers.
- Advertising, paid search, and digital marketing campaigns generated 4,595 referrals and the micro-campaigns generated an additional 1,675 hotel referrals.
- A “12 Days of Holiday Giving” promotional campaign ran from December 1-12 with \$15,000 in prizes and generated 6,500 entries opting into the newsletter mailing list and leisure database.
- The Marketing Team added an additional three Adrian Awards. The international competition honored two awards for the Southern Travelers Explorer Conference and one award for SXSW activation program.
- The January edition of the ICVB Leisure newsletter will be sent to Board members in January.

Administration and Finance

Assistant Executive Director Finance and Administration Susan Rose reported:

- The AirDNA reports for October:
  - There were 667 available listings, which is a 20.4% increase in listing over last year’s figure of 554.
  - The Average Daily Rate was \$216.44, which was a decrease of 1.42% over last year.
  - Occupancy percentage of 53.1%, which was a decrease of 5.44% compared to last year.
  - Hotel comparable subset reports an Average Daily Rate for October was \$118.65, a decrease of 1.24% from last year, and Occupancy was 56.5%, a decrease of 0.83%.
- The Administration and Finance team continues to update the Board portal for 2024.
- A calendar notice program is being developed to deliver calendar notices to Board members and will roll out in January 2024.
- Converting the expense software system, as the current program is no longer being supported.

- Continuing to work with City staff on year-end reports and will have FY2022-23 year-end financials in the January Board meeting packet.
- The ICVB and ICC teams held festive activities all last week and ended with a potluck lunch and gift exchange.
- The Admin/Finance team rang bells for the Irving Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign at Hobby Lobby in Grapevine and generated close to \$500 in five hours. Other teams from ICVB and ICC will be ringing in shifts during December.

The ICVB and ICC teams donated over \$600 in gifts to The Salvation Army Angel Tree program in Irving for those in need in our community. The team's donations focused on forgotten angels for teens and older adults who often get overlooked.

#### CONVENTION CENTER MANAGEMENT

General Manager Tom Meehan reported:

- ICC October financials are included in the packet. October is the first month of the year and beat budget significantly, and the forecast looks solid for the rest of the year. The challenge now is how to achieve the same level of success.
- The ICC received the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) re-accreditation, which is the highest industry standard for cleaning. The certification is an annual award and re-applying is a great team effort.
- Hired a Sous Chef who has worked with Chef Alvarez previously. He comes on board just in time as January business ramps back up.
- Projects in the building:
  - Working on outside lighting of the grand staircase in front of the building and other lighting projects.
  - The monument sign on Hwy 114 will be completed soon.
  - Experimenting with a new scent profile that works through the HVAC system. The fragrance will rotate with new seasonal scents.

#### HOTEL INDUSTRY UPDATES

Board member Greg Malcolm reported:

- Reporting for South Irving:
  - Occupancy in November shows 74.9%, down 4%.
  - Average Daily Rate \$138.97
  - RevPAR \$104.14.

Board member Kim Limon reported:

- Reporting for Hampton Inn Las Colinas:
  - STR for November shows Occupancy at 68.4%
  - Average Daily Rate of \$118.93.
  - RevPAR is 107%, up for the year.
- The team will celebrate the holidays this week on Thursday with a party.

Board member Nydia Hoskins reported:

- Reporting for the Omni Las Colinas:
  - November was a great month with an Occupancy of 66.2%.
  - Average Daily Rate \$215.93

- RevPAR at \$140.38.
- Statistics for the full calendar year will be available at the next Board meeting.
- The Ballroom renovation is complete and will have its first group on January 12.
- The 2024 budget has been approved and it is a renovation year. Guest rooms will begin construction at the end of May for six months. The model guest room is open to view at any time.
- The Omni team is ringing bells for the Irving Salvation Army at Grapevine Hobby Lobby on Wednesday.

#### INDUSTRY-AT-LARGE UPDATE

Board member Stephanie Fenley-Garcia reported for the Trade Show industry:

- The holiday season is slow, but January will kick off the Consumer Electronics Show, PPAI Expo and World of Concrete trade shows; all three shows are in Las Vegas.
- Trade shows continue to see growth, with upgrades to convention facilities and aesthetic improvements.
- Artificial Intelligence and what it brings to the industry is an issue on the horizon.
- If COVID and airlines continue to be safe, it should be a good year.

#### RESTAURANT INDUSTRY UPDATES

Board member David Cole:

- The Texas Restaurant Association finalized their budget for 2024 and it has been approved.
- The Texas Restaurant Association Dallas Chapter will hold a retreat in January and the Texas Board meeting will be in Dallas in February.

#### PARTNER ORGANIZATION AND STAKEHOLDER REPORTS

Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce:

Chamber Chair Brad Watson reported:

- The Chamber will have its annual planning session and focus on the implementation of a five-year strategic plan, *Forging Our Future*.
- An Australian company, Acquire BPO, has chosen Irving for its first main U.S. office and plans to add more than 130 new jobs with 17,000 square feet of space.
- The Chamber's Equity and Inclusion Fellowship will accept applicants through December 31.
- Unemployment decreased to 3.4%, Texas is 3.8% and the national rate is 3.6%.
- Economic Development team participated in ECONOMIX in Atlanta, Georgia with 24 national site consultants that included roundtable discussions and networking to share Irving's story.
- The State of the City event with Mayor Stopfer is scheduled for January 23 and will highlight the accomplishments of 2023 and future opportunities for 2024.

Irving-Las Colinas Chamber President Beth Bowman added her appreciation for Watson and his involvement globally in business. The 2024 pipeline is strong, and the team is working on 327 prospective projects, which equates to 200,000 job opportunities and \$70 billion in capital investment, with 1.7 million square feet of potential new commercial space. She thanked Gast and the CVB team for their partnership and the Board in sharing the community story.

#### IRVING ARTS AND CULTURE

Executive Director Irving Arts and Culture Todd Hawkins reported:

- Hawkins expressed his gratitude for the new partnership with Brookfield management at the Toyota Music Factory and their willingness to involve local artists in the project.



- Irving Arts Center
  - The Ruth Paine conversation on November 20 at the Dupree Theater had the most zip codes recorded in attendance ever.
  - Encouraged all to attend Ann Hampton-Callaway event on January 5 at 7:30 p.m. in the Dupree Theater.
- January 19, *The Beat Goes On*, starring Lisa McClowry as Cher.
- The Arts and Culture Department is committed to scheduling events with groups that generate room nights. Last month a group from Alaska visited.
- Thanked Gast and Hillman for their efforts in funding issues and working toward long-term solutions.

#### LAS COLINAS ASSOCIATION

Las Colinas President Hammond Perot reported:

- Perot expressed his appreciation for the recognition of holiday lights at Hwy 114 and O'Connor.
- The LCA 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was a success and now in event planning for 2024 to carry over some events on Mandalay Canal and through the Urban Center.
- Focusing on year-end financials and interviewing new board members for installment in the Spring.
- The Brookfield Properties team has interesting plans for the Toyota Music Factory and will highlight the opening of Rayleigh Underground. It is an exceptional venue and should bring more events and guests into the Urban Center.

Stewart reminded the Board they are ambassadors for the City of Irving. The Board's role is to make sure the right information goes out into the community. He noted that Perot and the LCA staff and City Manager are easy to work with and excellent partners in telling the story. Stewart also acknowledged Board member Joe Philipp. Philipp is a former voting member of the Board, and City Council member, and is a wealth of knowledge and an excellent ambassador for Irving.

Stewart wished everyone happy holidays. With no further discussion, Stewart adjourned the meeting at 1:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Maura Allen Gast, FCDME

Executive Director