

MINUTES
IRVING CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Irving Convention Center – Junior Ballroom C-D
July 25, 2022

Attendance: David Cole – Board Chair; Yasir Arafat, Michael Basoco, Dallas Burke, Karen Cooperstein, Tommy DeBeaudry, Stephanie Fenley-Garcia, Herbert Gears, Colvin Gibson, Todd Hawkins, City Manager Chris Hillman, Julia Kang, Kim Limon, William Mahoney, Greg Malcolm, John Nicks, Kelly O’Briant, Hammond Perot, Sam Reed, and Richard Stewart, Jr. – Board members; Mayor Rick Stopfer, Assistant City Manager Philip Sanders, Senior Assistant City Attorney Christina Weber, Councilman Al Zapanta, and Councilman Mark Zeske – City of Irving; General Manager Tom Meehan – ICC Staff; Carol Boyer, Lori Fojtasek, Maura Gast, Marianne Lauda, Brice Petty, Susan Rose and Monty White – ICVB; Guests: Irving Police Chief Derick Miller and Vice President of Governmental Affairs and Communications Erica Mulder, representing Beth Bowman – Irving Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce

Board Chair David Cole called the meeting to order at 11:45 a.m. and inquired if there were any citizen comments; there were none.

CONSENT AGENDA

- Approve the ICVB Board of Directors meeting minutes from June 27, 2022
- Accept the ICVB Financial Reports for June 2022
- Review of Hotel Occupancy Tax Collections – April and May 2022
- Accept the ICC Financial Reports for June 2022

Cole called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. On a motion from Board member Sam Reed and a second from Board member Julia Kang, the motion was unanimously approved.

BOARD REPORTS

Cole introduced Irving Police Chief Derick Miller and welcomed him to the meeting. Miller responded he was excited to be invited to the meeting and learn from the Board. He is thankful for the City and the generous support from the community.

COVID-19 / American Rescue Plan Act Update

Executive Director Maura Gast reported the current virus variant is causing some disruptions in Convention Center and meeting bookings but not at the volume that has been seen in the past couple of years. Staff is closely watching updates on the monkey pox virus. She noted there are concerns from industry experts with the increasing possibility of a recession compounded by business travel activity remaining slow.

CHAIR REPORT

Cole reported the next Board meeting will be held on August 22 at the Irving Convention Center and the Executive Committee meeting will be held on the same day due to the City’s Budget Retreat meeting schedule.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Board and Business Development

Committee Chair Richard Stewart, Jr. reported:

- The next Committee meeting is scheduled for Friday, September 9 at 9:00 a.m. He encouraged all Board members to attend and participate.

Community Engagement Committee

Committee Chair Karen Cooperstein reported:

- Cooperstein gave a recap of the July 12 Committee meeting:
 - The Committee reviewed changing the ICVB Irving ISD scholarship from a student application to a scholarship for teachers to help with training in the Culinary/Hospitality industry. Recipients will be invited to Board meetings in the future.
 - The High Spirited Citizen program will move forward as an annual luncheon. Looking at a February "Love for the Community" event, pending space availability. Language on the Visit Irving website will be updated.
 - ICVB 50th Anniversary will be recognized on November 9 with a reception at the Convention Center.
 - The Texas Society of Association Executives (TSAE) will hold a large event in September. There will be volunteer opportunities for Board members and staff.
- The next meeting is scheduled for October 11 at 9:00 a.m.

Board member Stephanie Fenley-Garcia noted that The Expo Group is reviewing scholarship opportunities as well for the industry. In response to a question from Board member Michael Basoco, Gast noted there were only one or two applications from Irving students in the past few years and not enough interest in the Hospitality industry as a major influence. Cole added there are 23 active Chapters in the Texas Restaurant Association and the number of students that apply for those scholarships is dwindling. The curriculum and qualified instructors are what is needed in that field. Also, the larger schools have funds to recruit students in their programs and students go out of state for college and then do not return to Texas. The Hotel Association has had issues as well in granting scholarships and students applying.

Destination Development Committee

- The next Committee meeting is scheduled for August 9 at 11:30 a.m.

CITY REPORTS

Councilman Mark Zeske reported:

- The Budget Retreat in August is the major focus for City Council.

Mayor Rick Stopfer reported:

- A major hotel fire pushed water use over the top to fight the fire, lakes are seeing evaporation, and the extremely hot weather is taking a toll on Water Department Staff.
- There are 17 staff job openings in the Sanitation Department and several staff members out due to COVID, as well as seasoned staff opting to take advantage of retirement opportunities.
- The DART Board reported being short-staffed by 65 police officers and 25 bus drivers. DFW Airport hourly staff will receive a 6% raise in addition to 3% cost of living increase for retention purposes.

- The Budget retreat focus will be staffing shortages, healthcare, maintaining the standard of the City and its services.
- The cost to do business is up tremendously due to maintenance and supply chain issues. For example, there are over 100 vehicles not being used because the parts are back ordered or cannot be received at all. The world today is reacting fast and speed to market is more important than ever in economic development.
- The Four Seasons Resort and Club Dallas at Las Colinas has new owners and Stopfer is meeting with them next week to review their goals and vision.

Cole asked for an update on the mishap with July Fourth fireworks. City Manager Chris Hillman replied one of the shells on a barge exploded and took out some of the wiring. There were a number of long pauses in the show. This was a new fireworks vendor, and the City will search for a new vendor for the coming year. Coordinating these big events in the City is an enormous task and Parks and Recreation Director Joe Moses and team do an excellent job. Occasionally, something goes wrong.

City Manager Chris Hillman reported:

- Solid Waste Department has 17 open positions, which is the highest number of unfilled positions ever seen and does not include COVID absences, Vacation or Workman's Compensation absences. The Collections team has 50% of their staff not out in the field today. The City is studying different operations and some changes that can be made. The Collections team received a raise and is the second highest Collections team in the state and will now match what the private sector is paying. The challenge will still be staff shortage in applications. Solid Waste Collection is on a regular schedule and recycling will be on Wednesdays and Saturdays – paying staff double pay for the schedule adjustment.
- Parks and Recreation service model is in review, particularly the aquatic centers. Two pools closed due to cracked pipes. It will cost \$2.5 million to fix both of those pools. The City Council toured other cities to view their service models and review how to use bond dollars. There will be policy discussions with feedback and community input.
- The Budget process has begun, and Hillman has discussed the ICVB goals with Gast to ensure ARPA dollars are available to complete and fill the Reserve goals. The City is hopeful the Hotel Occupancy Tax collections will be close to pre-pandemic numbers by the end of the year and continue to rise. Final ARPA dollar requests will be presented to City Council next week.

Board member Herb Gears noted the City has low property tax and does not think there would be much push back from the community if there was a property tax increase for services. If taxes are cut, there is never a way to catch up and expenses always rise. It was noted several City vehicles are on hold for repair and the increase in price for fuel are challenges being faced head on.

BUREAU MANAGEMENT AND STAFF REPORTS

Bureau Management

- Gast acknowledged the Irving Police Department and thanked Miller and Hillman for their assistance and support in the challenging routes for the upcoming Professional Triathletes Organization event in September. It is an international event and will include assistance from police, fire, streets, and traffic. Hillman and the City team have been great to work with and overcome the obstacles. Staffing for police at this event will require reaching out to other police departments in the area.

Sales and Services

Assistant Executive Director Sales and Services Lori Fojtasek reported:

- The Sales and Services team is on pace to make goal and Sports Market Sales Manager Debbie Roberts has already exceeded her annual goal at 125%.
- Corporate group travel has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- There were no cancellations due to COVID in the last two months. There were two cancellations due to budget restrictions, and one cancellation due to the new abortion laws in Texas.
- The TSAE event is a showcase for Texas Association planners and there will be several volunteer opportunities during the event.

Gast added there was a discussion at the Executive Committee meeting around the decision by some groups to not visit a particular destination due to political views, however, some will. All of these things trickle down to the challenges we are facing. There may be a universal booking contract in the future that clients will want to protect the right to cancel due to legislative issues. Fojtasek added the recession is also a major concern for her team.

Marketing and Communications

Marketing Director Monty White reported:

- June was an excellent month and website traffic broke another record with 115,654 sessions to both websites. This is the first time the Visit Irving website has exceeded 100,000 in a single month.
- Blog traffic also broke a record with 18,530 pageviews, the highest number to date.
- Social media added 1,750 followers and brings the total influence to over 134,000.
- Trip Advisor was the top performer for website visits in June, followed by MPI and Priceline. Paid search increased with 17,110 sites.
- Digital Campaigns:
 - Staycations generated 14,443 hotel referrals and a conversion rate near 50%. In the last year, the Campaign has generated 113,294 hotel referrals, representing over \$31.5 million in Potential Economic Value.
 - Meetings Campaign generated 13,697 website sessions and 239 meeting-sales inquiries in the last fiscal year.
 - Micro-Campaigns to date have generated 8,358 hotel referrals.
 - OTA Campaign this year with Expedia has generated 6,255 hotel bookings, 31,297 room nights and over \$3.5 million in direct hotel revenue.
- In the packet is an article from Southern Travelers Explore: "Five Things to Love About Irving." The Southern Travelers Explore conference is coming to Irving and the Texican Court in March 2023. There will be 50-60 people writing and posting about Irving. This conference was secured by ICVB Communications Manager Lori Sirmen.

Administration and Finance

Assistant Executive Director Administration and Finance Susan Rose reported:

- The STR report was not received in time for inclusion in this month's packet.
- The Administration and Finance team:

- Rose attended the Destinations International Annual Meeting along with 1,400 other attendees. It was her first time to attend the conference, meet peers and discuss best practices.
- Working on the ARPA funding process and working with the Legal Department on approvals.
- Accounting and Budget Director Marianne Lauda is continually working on the year end budget process.
- The administrative staff has been taking shifts covering the front desk phones with the departure of April Stallings.
- IT Manager Brice Petty has been working on installing new monitors and completing the required cyber security updates.

CONVENTION CENTER MANAGEMENT

General Manager Tom Meehan reported:

- There were 15 events, 41,736 guests in June.
- Received seven surveys with an average score of 91.4% and 94.4% for the year.
- The building is performing strong while painting a different picture than the past due to distinct types of events.
- Rental, Parking and Concession income is at an all-time high, while Catering is still down.
- Lost some Corporate business but adapting to public events and keeping labor in-house with staff as much as possible.
- Challenges are labor and food costs.
- Building projects include:
 - Working on the Grand Ballroom lighting between events.
 - Working on outdoor signs, mechanical system repairs and upgrades.
 - Addressing Food and Beverage needs and updating with newer ideas to keep our look modern.

INDUSTRY PARTNERS

Toyota Music Factory

Live Nation General Manager Tommy DeBeaudry reported:

- Approaching the busy season this month through the end of August – hosting 24 events.
- Highlights are: Big Time Rush and Leon Bridges.
- Irving ISD event on August 9.
- There are 110 promoted events and 25-30 private/rentals for the season.
- Staffing is at 75% - still slow in re-staffing.

In response to questions from the Board, DeBeaudry replied that the oversized fans in The Pavilion area provide air flow when the lawn area is open and there are HVAC units in the building for cooling. DeBeaudry confirmed there is 4G and 5G coverage inside The Pavilion and Verizon is the 5G wireless sponsor with stellar support.

Hotel Industry Updates

Board member Greg Malcolm reported:

- The STR report for Irving shows Occupancy at 74.3%, up from 64.6% last year, RevPAR was \$87.02 which was also up from last year. July is trending downward, and weekends are softening.

- Hilton Garden Inn DFW South is on the downside for both weekends and weekdays. The property is staffed but Occupancy is down. August is trending the same. Hopefully, traffic will pick up in September after school starts.

Board member Kim Limon:

- The Hampton Inn Irving/Las Colinas for June was at 77.6% Occupancy.
- Average Daily Rate of \$117.96, RevPAR grew 22%.
- July looks slow, and she is also hopeful September will be better when school starts in Texas.
- Pool renovation will hopefully be completed by the end of August.

Restaurant Industry Updates

Cole reported:

- The Texas Restaurant Show was in Dallas July 10-14. The Dallas attendance was great with more first-time and walk-up attendees than ever. Texas Governor Greg Abbott and U.S. Congresswoman Beth Van Duyne attended.
- Irving Restaurants: prices are rising for food and supplies in the restaurant industry.
- Staffing is still an issue. He reminded everyone to be kind and patient when visiting local restaurants.

PARTNER ORGANIZATION AND STAKEHOLDER REPORTS

DCURD

Board member Dallas Burke reported:

- DCURD projects underway:
 - Emergency Backup Generator Project will be substantially complete this month with final completion in August.
 - Levee relocation underway at the DCURD Main Office.
 - Lake Wall Pilot Wall Project begins August 1.
 - Working toward finalizing engineering for a pipeline relocation project for the DCURD Raw Water Supply. Project is estimated to be \$7 million. DCURD buys water through that pipeline to make up for the evaporation in the 58 waterways throughout the Las Colinas area. One billion gallons of water annually flows through that line to keep Lake Carolyn and the other waterways full.
- IFCD I - completed a dredging project in-house using DCURD labor and equipment saving 60% from the bid price received from outside contractors.
- IFCD III - several projects being engineered now. The DCURD Board has authorized engineering for the pump station discharge pipe rehabilitation.

Irving-Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce

Chamber Chair John Nicks reported:

- Economic team continues to maintain a strong pipeline, generating 43 projects which represent \$33 billion in capital investment and 39,000 jobs.
- Unemployment in Irving is at 3.6%, up from May at 3.2%, lower than Texas 4.1% and tied with the U.S.
- The Chamber is in the process of evaluating and crafting the 88th Texas Legislative Session business-industry priorities for January 2023 and will include Economic Development, Workforce, Healthcare, and Infrastructure.

- The State legislature will look different.
- July 26 Five Star Mixer at Corky's Gaming Bistro in Grapevine.
- Back to School New Teachers Luncheon is scheduled for August 3.
- The Chamber website lists all Chamber and Community events.

Irving Arts and Culture

Arts Board Chair Kelly O'Briant reported:

- The Irving Archives and Museum has won the 2022 Award of Excellence from the American Association of State and Local History. This acknowledgement was given for the permanent exhibit, "The Irving Story."
- Current exhibitions include:
 - *Women, Aviation and World War II* on display through August 12. There will be a scholar talk and book signing with Dr. Katherine Sharp Landdeck. She will be talking about her book "*The Women with Silver Wings.*"
 - Community collaboration – *Darshana: A Glimpse into the Hindu Civilization* on display through September 3.
- Irving Archives and Museum:
 - Free second Saturday – free for the whole family with special programming each month.
 - The Smithsonian's *Negro Motorist Greenbook* – the Museum's first blockbuster exhibition on October 15th. This is a ticketed event.
- Disney's "*Winnie the Pooh*" musical stage adaption will kick off its national tour at the Irving Arts Center on September 16. There will be five performances and tickets are selling fast.
- This is the last week for Irving Mainstage "*Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*" production.
- Recently hosted the opening reception for the 22nd Annual Art Connection Members Showcase. There are 130 artworks by 70 artists.
- WRR Radio Centennial Celebration Exhibition, highlighting the central position that WRR had played in Dallas and the North Texas community for the past 100 years.

Cole reminded the Board "Friends of the Museum" memberships are available.

Las Colinas Association

Board member Hammond Perot reported:

- Along with the reduced activity in the economy, architectural control committee activity is down 12%. Single Family renovation projects are happening but not one is approved for new construction. The slowdown may be affected by mortgage rates, the economy and supply chain slow down.
- There are 12 construction projects: five office buildings, four hotels, one condominium, one townhome development, and one multi-family project.
- There are nine new commercial projects through the remainder of the year.
- Commercial property sales are at 80% of last year's numbers to date, but single family is 42%.
- LCA sponsored events:
 - Fourth Annual Bowl-a-thon on September 14 benefiting the Irving Family Advocacy Center.
 - Paws Colinas 5K-9 on October 22nd.
 - Las Colinas Day of the Dead Canalside Celebration on November 1st.

- Holiday in the Plaza on December 3rd and 4th.
- Also working on an LCA 50th Anniversary celebration. A book will be printed and ready in the Spring with a special grand celebration event in October 2023.

Cole reminded the Board of the upcoming Committee meetings and requested their attendance if available: Destination Development Committee on August 9, Board and Business Development on September 9 and Community Engagement Committee on October 11.

Cole thanked Chief Miller for attending the meeting.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 1:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Maura Allen Gast, FCDME
Executive Director