

# MINUTES



**Meeting:** Board of Directors  
**Meeting Date:** May 16, 2019 ▪ 12:00pm  
**Prepared By:** Elizabeth Anderson

*The original agenda was prepared and posted in compliance with the provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act noting that board action may occur on any identified agenda item.*

## I. Call to Order

A meeting of the Board of Directors of Visit Sacramento was held at The Sawyer, Sycamore Ballroom, in Sacramento, CA. Board Chair Scott Vandenberg called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm. It was established that a quorum was present, and the following attendance was recorded:

### PRESENT

#### Directors

Alex Rodrigo

David Huber

Doug Warren, *Past Chair*

Emily Baime Michaels, *Ex-Officio*

Heather Andrade-Neumann

Henry de Vere White

Joe Chiodo

Kathleen Gilbey

Mable Salon

Nikki Carlson

Patrick Mulvaney

Phil Garcia

Rick Pickering

Sami Qureshi

Scott Vandenberg, *Board Chair*

Terry Harvego

#### Industry Advisors, or Their Designees

Michael Ault, *Downtown Sacramento Partnership*

Mark Davis, *Sacramento County of Airports*

#### Guest(s)

Jose Hermocillo, *Hermocillo-Azevedo Comm.*

Ben Gumpert, *Republic FC*

#### Visit Sacramento Staff

Mike Testa, *President & CEO*

Nick Leonti, *Director of Tourism*

Sonya Bradley, *Chief Marketing Officer*

Mike Sophia, *Director of Sports Commission*

Kari Miskit, *Vice President of Communications*

Dan Santucci, *Director of Accounting*

Elizabeth Anderson, *Convention Sales Coordinator (Recording Secretary)*

### ABSENT

#### Directors and Industry Advisors

Bay Miry

Christine Calvin

Dennis Raymond

Josh Nelson

Lance Richard

Royce Pollard

Shelly Moranville

Steve Young

Amanda Blackwood

Howard Chan

Jody Ulich

Nav Gill

Kim Nava

Darrell Steinberg

Scott Whyte

Kelly Rivas

Matt Voreyer

**II. Public Comments – Matters Not on the Agenda**

Board chair Scott Vandenberg called for public comment on items not listed on the agenda; there were no matters presented.

**III. Approval of Board Meeting Minutes: April 18, 2019**

Vandenberg shared that there was a suggested change to page 11 line eight from “governor’s office” to “several state agencies and the administration”

***MOTION: Rick Pickering motioned to approve the minutes with the change notated above; Kathleen Gilbey seconded. [Vote: Unanimous]***

**IV. Presentation: Ben Gumpert, Republic FC, President**

Vandenberg introduce Ben Gumpert the President of Republic FC to the board. Gumpert shared that he was at the meeting to update the board on the status of the possible Major League Soccer (MLS) team, stadium, and to answer any questions the board may have. The goal of Republic FC is to elevate Sacramento as a community and globally. They have seen what the Kings have done with Downtown Commons and the Golden 1 Center. Gumpert continued that they are hoping to do the same thing a few miles up the road in the railyards.

Gumpert then spoke about the MLS national soccer officials and how they are still in discussions to get a team in Sacramento. Gumpert shared he would be in New York next week to meet with the officials again. They are working on every detail very closely with MLS including camera angles and locker room sizes. Gumpert has also had discussions with the MLS marketing team on a launch plan. Publicly the commissioner is working on naming another by the end of July or August.

Gumpert added that he doesn’t want to wait that long for a decision and is pushing forward to get the stadium built. He shared that the goal would be to build the new stadium to be able to handle multiple sports and not just soccer. He believes that there is an opportunity in downtown for a world class soccer venue that is versatile. Gumpert continued that MLS also has an All-Star Game that is not as strict on room night requirements as other major league sports and they are working on adding in the contract for Sacramento to host in a few years. He added that MLS is an international sport and that the current league has players from 67 countries. He believes that this stadium and possible MLS team can do a lot of good for Sacramento and drive visitors. Gumpert then opened the floor to questions.

- Michael Ault asked for Gumpert to expand on the plan for the railyards past the stadium. Gumpert shared that the vision is to help grow Sacramento. There will be a 14-acre stadium with outside areas. Then additional there will be 16 acres on the east side to build and entertainment district. Then a Kaiser will be built in a few years.
- Doug Warren asked if there is a plan to build additional sports fields? Gumpert said that there is a plan as they will also need to build a training facility for the team. They are looking at different sites around Sacramento and that proximity is important.

Gumpert added that there is a youth soccer academy team that are top class players who will also need a facility to train. He continued that there are over 100,000 registered youth players in the regions which is one of the largest numbers in the country. They want to build additional fields near the training center to drive room nights for visitors with youth tournaments.

Testa added that Visit Sacramento sees huge potential in this as there are tournaments we cannot bid on as we do not have available space. The priority of Visit Sacramento during the Convention Center expansion and renovation is to focus on sports while the center is closed. Testa told Gumpert to let the group know how they can help, and they will get data ready for what is needed to build additional fields.

- Sami Qureshi asked when the first season would be. Gumpert stated their goal is for 2021 which would be a tall order, but that is where the focus is. The seasons start around March 1<sup>st</sup> each year. The goal would be to have the 2021 season start on the road to have the stadium ready. If it is delayed until 2022 that is ok, but he wants to continue to raise Sacramento as soon as possible.
- Mike Sophia added that USA Rugby is extremely interested in working with Gumpert and the possibility of using the stadium for their tournaments. Gumpert shared that they are looking into rugby as well and what tweaks would need to be made to the stadium.
- VandenBerg asked if the expectation is still a 1 team expansion. Gumpert shared that in the April 18 meeting they were to create to 30 team and they currently have 27. He knows that they are working with St. Louis in addition to Sacramento.

## **V. Chair's Report**

VandenBerg welcomed Mabel Salon from UC Davis to her first meeting back as a board member. Salon thanked VandenBerg and shared that she believes UC Davis has a great role to play. VandenBerg then introduced Heather Andrade-Neumann to the board. Andrade-Neuman shared that she is thrilled to be involved and sees the strong partnership. VandenBerg shared that he did not have any further information to report and would add information into the Presidents' Report.

## **VI. President's Report**

### **A. STID Lawsuit**

Testa shared that he and staff had been working on the STID for a little over a year. He shared that the plaintiff and Visit Sacramento have signed paperwork and within six to eight weeks it will be presented to a judge to approve. The ballroom is still currently on schedule.

B. CCJW Update

Testa spoke about Christian Congregation of Jehovah Witnesses (CCJW) and how they are a valuable piece of business and have been in Sacramento for many years. They do not celebrate holidays and normally hold their conventions over need times. CCJW was originally looking to expand to 14 weekends in Sleep Train Arena in 2020. Unfortunately, they have had a change of plans and will be reducing to eight weekends and shrinking their footprint. Testa added that the decision came from the New York headquarters of CCJW and that they have decided to move to smaller worship houses.

Testa continued that he had a very direct conversation with the contact and the contact wrote and email stating the decision was solely based on needs and not due to anything Visit Sacramento had done. The lose of the additional weekends means that approximately 23,000 room nights are being lost.

C. Room Night Goal

VandenBerg shared that CCJW does not sign contracts until the November before the event so none of the forecasted bookings were definite yet and the cancellation does affect the numbers. The executive committee agreed on Monday that the 190,000-room night goal would be reduced to 170,000 in anticipation of these programs not occurring. All of the new monthly reports will reflect this change, goals for next year will also be re-evaluated. Testa added that the 23,000 room nights were factored into the original goal. The two concerns the executive team has was not wanting to lose team moral and miss goal by 23,000 room nights.

D. Sponsorship Update

Testa shared that many event sponsorships are sold year round. A sponsorship was signed with Sutter Health for Amgen and Junior Olympics. We have also sent them a proposal for sponsorship of the Farm-To-Fork festival. Yolo County, Bank of America, Acura and Dignity Health are also signed on as sponsors. Visit Sacramento are looking to grow the Farm-To-Fork festival and new sponsorships is how to do it; the event is free to everyone except Visit Sacramento. Last year we added Friday night to the festival and saw an additional 15,000+ attendees. Adding in a second day to the Festival came from wanting to drive room nights.

E. Michelin in LA

Testa shared with the group that on June 3<sup>rd</sup> Michelin will announce who is in the California guide and who has received stars. Testa asked Michelin if he will be happy or mad at the announcement and they stated he would be happy but would not tell him anything else. He shared that he did a 30-minute phone call with the Washington Post the morning of the board meeting about how California got the Michelin guide and the process that Visit Sacramento went through. He continued that there was a concern that people would say that you must pay to be in the Michelin guide. Michelin has been doing this for 120+ years and in the past, they did not get paid to rate restaurants. Now with the times changing and how their business was structured they had to make it a “pay to play” model to survive. To clarify you cannot buy a star or the credibility of what they award.

Testa continued that if anyone in the room was asked if Sacramento paid for a star if one was awarded, he suggested that they respond by inviting them to come and try the food. He wanted to ensure that everyone understands that if we do get stars that we will defend our restaurants. He believes some media will be questioning this, but Michelin does not do anyone any favors. We did not give Michelin money for the guide; we hosted the press conference that was for the announcement of the Guide in California. It is very exciting to be involved and have Sacramento as part of the conversation.

F. Tower Bridge Dinner

Testa informed the board that the Tower Bridge dinner chef would be shared at the Annual Lunch on June 27, 2019 but wanted to share the information with the Board. When looking at the Tower Bridge Dinner and driving national attention Visit Sacramento needed to bring in largely known Chef's. Last year Chef Jeremiah Tower was able to help bring more publicity. When making decision for this year we wanted to look at what was relevant nationally. We saw a trend with female wine makers, farmers, and chefs. Chef Suzette Gresham was introduced to Visit Sacramento via Michelin and we invited her to be our head chef for the dinner. She then called Patrick Mulvaney to discuss the invitation. He helped to reassure her that this would be a great thing and framed the discussion and expectation. When we went to San Francisco to meet with her she was very excited. Testa recognized Mulvaney and thanked him for his help with Chef Gresham.

Mulvaney added that Chef Gresham was nervous to take on such a large group event. The purpose of her coming here is to lift up the women in the region. Mulvaney was honest and told her that three years ago he would have told her not to come, but now you will see that everyone will be excited to see her and have her as the Chef. Mulvaney shared his excitement for the event and Chef Gresham.

Testa added that along with Chef Gresham there will be Chef Casey Shideler, Chef Allyson Harvie, Chef Tokiko Sawada, Chef Molly Hawks and Chef Brad Cecchi. Additional chefs who have helped in the past will also be present as we wanted veterans in the kitchen to run the machine. Mulvaney's wife Bobbin was very instrumental in helping us to pick the chefs and who we should bring in. The dinner will be on September 29, 2019.

G. Annual Lunch

Testa shared that the Annual Lunch will be held on June 27, 2019. As a Board Visit Sacramento does not ask you to fundraise on behalf of the organization. The only ask is that you come to the annual lunch and sponsor a table. Testa asked the group to sign up for a table, if they were able to attend, on the sheet being passed around the table.

Sonya Bradley shared that the event would capitalize on Visit Sacramento's new brand position of Nothing in the Way. She continued that they wanted to intertwine that statement with all of the new activities that are taking place. The lunch will be held in

the Memorial Auditorium and it will be quite a show. Testa add that they will talk about more than just conventions, we want to talk about visitation as well.

H. Partner Program

Testa shared that the program used to be membership and it is now partnership. We have changed the program dramatically. Many other organizations have seen a decline in the membership/partnership department, and we are taking a big approach to change that for us. The program we are creating is where people and businesses are paying for the benefits they are receiving. When Verna Sulpizio approached us on this, she said it was different than everyone else. We want to be different and not do things just because we always have. Testa continued that Visit Sacramento wants to provide value to the partners and show why it is important to work with us. We don't want to sell things to people that we shouldn't. There will be a revenue decline at first, but it will be made up down the road.

I. Staff Reports

Mike Sophia shared that he attended the National Association of Sports Commission conference the week of AMGEN and returned in time for the event. The AMGEN team presentation was held on Friday night followed by a Chairman's dinner at The Citizen. On Sunday there was a primetime broadcast of the finish. Sophia continued that the Sports Commission's next focus is the NCAA West Preliminary Championship for Track and Field. He added that NCAA had reached out in regard to sites for the basketball tournament and we are currently doing well, the next bid cycle will begin in August. Testa added that Visit Sacramento is talking to AMGEN about 2020 and believes that Sacramento will be the finish location for the next event.

Testa shared that during Downtown Sacramento Partnership's board meeting they discussed the homeless ordinance and asked Michael Ault to update the group. Ault shared that those who played a role in passing the ordinance were told that the City office has been involved and where taking a different approach on how to handle the aggressive behavior effectively. He continued that on Tuesday night the courts ruled that the ordinance was to far reaching and did not meet the standards for enforcement. Now that other ordinances have been removed and this one has been repealed there is nothing in place to manage the street population and environments.

Ault continued that we are losing business and the ability to manage what we are seeing downtown. The City Managers Office wants to get a new ordinance in place and this summer we will be getting a homeless shelter in the downtown core with no ordinance to manage it. Previously we had been in lock step with the community and now we are scrambling to put something in place. We do have a camping ordinance and it is only effective to tell people they cannot camp on the streets if you have a place to put them. Ault added that a shelter did close last week and if you saw the news last night Sacramento was featured, and it didn't look good. We are running a business district, and this is a challenge. We are working on it the best we can as there is not a lot we can do.

Testa added that the Police Department has said to keep calling and reporting incidents so they can measure what is happening. The calls will help if this goes to court, please do not just call Downtown Sacramento Partnership or Midtown association.

Testa asked Joe Chiodo to speak about Best of Sacramento. Chiodo shared that the event will take place on June 20, 2019 and that there were two tickets for each board member.

**VII. Committee Reports**

Finance/Executive Committee:

- Strong position
- Good Cash position
- YTD income ahead of budget and expected to continue
- STMD City portion 7.5% ahead of budget and 9% ahead of last year

**VIII. Staff Board Reports**

The April 2019 department report was e-mailed to the board for their review prior to the meeting.

**IX. Calendar of Events**

Upcoming events are listed on the Agenda for Board review.

**X. New Business**

None to report at this time.

**XI. Adjournment**

Board chair Scott VandenBerg adjourned the meeting at 12:54pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Elizabeth Anderson  
Convention Sales Coordinator  
(Recording Secretary)



Mike Testa  
President & CEO