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**Tuesday, January 6, 2026**  
**Monthly Staff Meeting Minutes**

Those in attendance included Maura Gast, Lori Sirmen, Carol Boyer, Susan Rose, Wendy Foster, Monty White, Marianne Lauda, Matt Tungett, Breanna Gallagher, Kathy Levine, Kayla Mansour, Kayla Perez, Breahn Fisher, Lori Forjtasek, Brice Petty, Cheryl Hopkins, Monica Soto, Anabel Espinoza and Brenda Lopez.

Meeting began at 9:02 a.m.

**1. Living Our Values Out Loud and Affirmations**

a) Staff sharing

- Trust, Respect, Communication, Personal Responsibility, Empowerment, Purposeful
  - Staff shared examples of teamwork and support, including collaboration on recent luncheons and holiday efforts such as Christmas cards, and appreciation for spreading activities across two weeks to increase participation. Leadership also acknowledged sales staff carrying additional workloads during absences and expressed gratitude for the team's efforts.
- AI Tool, please share
  - Staff discussed several examples, including summarizing resident sentiment survey documents and drafting communications using ChatGPT, rewriting messages to sound more professional, converting photo notes into meeting notes, and organizing trivia questions by category for future use.

**2. Executive Director**

- a) STAR Award Announcement - Maura introduced the semi-annual STAR Award program (twice per year) as an outcome of recent internal conversations, designed to celebrate outstanding contributions and reinforce teamwork and a culture of appreciation.
- The inaugural STAR Award recipient for the prior six months was Brenda Lopez, recognized for reliability, consistently performing beyond her job title, managing workloads during staffing shortages, coordinating with clients and office logistics, and embodying core values such as communication and integrity.
  - Brenda's recognition includes a designated STAR Award parking spot (next to the employee-of-the-month spot) and a bonus day off.

- Maura noted the building turns 15 years on January 27 and shared plans for a City Council work session proclamation recognizing the milestone (including key impact statistics).
- b) TMF Updates
- Jaxon, Shoals Smokehouse and Pistil Cocktail Lounge are officially closed. Brookfield is working on filling up empty spaces. Promoter-driven pop-ups were discussed, including a possible interim role for ASM in booking/operating certain spaces. Reservoir performance was noted as up over 40% year-over-year, and Bar Louie has seen traffic increases tied to Wells Fargo activity. Kitchen 101 is planning an 8-week shut down for a major refresh/new concept.

### **3. Financial Update**

- a) Approve December Expense Reports by January 12  
Reminders: Invoice Documentation- actual invoices need to be attached / Cell Phone Number – make sure to either highlight your phone number on the bill or add it to the notes / Rejections – check for pending items or for a rejection email
- Reimbursement checks will be processed on staff meeting days to ensure coverage after holiday disruptions
- b) Hotel Tax Update – October
- Approximately \$940,000 collected for October (vs. \$950,000 last year). DoubleTree was noted as paid through August/September (with October outstanding). Sheraton was noted as having paid March–July 2024 (still behind). Sandman, open since roughly August, has not yet paid, and the City is checking into it.
- c) 2026 Mileage Rate – 72.5 cents
- The IRS mileage rate increased from \$0.70 to \$0.725 and was updated in Certify; staff were asked to verify the rate when submitting mileage.

### **4. Community/Business Development and Projects**

- a) New hotels in the pipeline?
- No new hotels were reported as newly added to the pipeline. SureStay Collection by S. Western was noted as a flag change (former Fairfield Inn, Las Colinas). The Courtyard/Residence Inn combo near 114 is targeting a June opening; existing Courtyard/Residence Inn properties were discussed as being sold/re-flagged (timing and final flags TBD).
- b) Ribbon cuttings or new businesses
- Discussion confirmed that website hotel/restaurant listings are driven through SimpleView updates. Staff emphasized marking venues

“closed” (rather than removing entirely) to help the public find accurate status.

- Punchline and Sushi Sakana are now open.
- Angelos was noted as applying for liquor license after 60 years in business.

c) Staff travel

- Southwest Showcase was canceled for this year (with possible return next year). Lori S. shared upcoming travel to New York for IMM/SAE and a SATW mixer. Maura also noted an inbound Destination Symposium group arriving on the 21st.

## 5. Department Updates

a) Sales and Services

- The team reported a solid start to the quarter, though still slightly behind for the year. A shout-out was given to Kayla Perez on her promotion and hospitality leadership.
- Cotton Bowl activity was reviewed, including media support and hotel coordination; the need to contract more rooms was discussed after one group was walked to the Marriott due to demand. Texican Court reported being full and expressed interest in hosting again next year. A lunch recap with Cotton Bowl stakeholders is planned.

b) Marketing and Communications

- Marketing shared results for the 3rd Annual “12 Days of Holiday Giveaways” campaign, including strong increases year-over-year: 81,870 website sessions (up 319%), 57,362 giveaway entries (406% increase), and 25,988 entries on the Cotton Bowl ticket giveaway day. Social and paid metrics included crossing 27,000 Instagram followers, 73,000 organic views, over 1 million paid impressions and 56,000 clicks (~\$0.11 CPC), and 1,777 new newsletter subscribers (153,128 emails delivered during the campaign).
- The team also noted that sales team support helped reduce duplicate asks by dividing partner outreach between hotels and other partners.
- Blanket mailer: Blankets are in-house; artwork is expected this week and distribution will follow soon. Staff were asked to notify Monty of any last-list changes.

c) Finance and Administration

- Travel Policy Effective January 1 (email sent from Maura 12/2/25 at 3:12 pm)
  - Available in the staff portal
- Monday, January 19 is a city/staff holiday
- I Win Points – Earn 15 points

- January 19 to February 13 (email from Dara Chapman Friday, 1/2/26 at 9 am)
  - Brice reminded staff not to postpone Windows 11 upgrades; Windows 10 support issues were cited as a concern. To verify if you have made the update, your Start button should be in the middle of the screen.
  - Carol shared she will email benefits updates, including notes and flyers (Crossover Hub). Staff were encouraged to share benefit suggestions.
- d) ICC GM Report
- Kayla Perez shared that the Grab and Go is targeted to open for DECA, with an initial product mix that may adjust after launch; an employee discount code will be provided for checkout.
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- **GROUP PICTURE**

Meeting ended at 10:04 a.m.

**Team Irving Vision**

Irving will be a uniquely vibrant destination attracting visitors of all kinds for unforgettable experiences.

**Team Irving Mission**

The Irving Convention and Visitors Bureau enhances Irving's economy and quality of life by marketing and advocating for the development of Irving as a premier destination.

**Team Irving Values**

**TRUST**

Trust is our foundation: We trust in each other, our teams and the process and know each of us is true to our word.

**RESPECT**

Everyone and everything deserve my respect.

**COMMUNICATION**

I Listen, I Hear, I Respond, I Act.

**PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Do the right thing.

**EMPOWERMENT**

Do what needs doing when it needs to be done.

**PURPOSEFUL**

We are deliberate in our actions towards the common purpose of making Irving stronger.