

Tuesday, July 7, 2026

Monthly Staff Meeting Minutes

Those in attendance included: Maura Gast, Susan Rose, Marianne Lauda, Lori Fojtasek, Matt Tungett, Wendy Foster, Kathy Levine, Lori Mansell, Carol Boyer, Monica Soto, Brice Petty, Thomas Gandy, Genesis Avila, Kayla Mansour, Breahn Fisher, Breanna Gallagher, Donna Groves, Elizabeth Agron, Anabel Espinoza, Brenda Lopez and Tom Meehan.

Meeting began at 9:03 a.m.

Living Our Values Out Loud

- ICVB Executive Director, Maura Gast thanked ICVB Senior Marketing Manager, Kayla Mansour, ICVB Graphic Designer, Genesis Avila and others involved in creating the new maps, rack cards and restaurant notes for the Irving Center circulator launch.
- Gast also thanked ICC General Manager, Tom Meehan and ICVB Director of Sales, Matt Tungett for riding the new circulator route with her in the July heat and helping learn the route experience firsthand.
- Meehan recognized Avila for quickly turning around updated logo concepts for the Grab & Go market. He said the designs were exciting, responsive to feedback and will look good once implemented.

AI at Work

- ICVB Technology Manager, Brice Petty shared that he used ChatGPT while moving. He photographed detailed labels for approximately 80 packed boxes, uploaded the information and created a custom GPT that can tell him which box contains a specific item.
- ICVB National Sales Manager, Lori Mansell said she used AI to research cataract lens options as she prepares for eye procedures.

Star Award

- Gast introduced the second Star Award, which was created to recognize outstanding contributions, dedication, hard work and excellence in teamwork.
- ICVB Marketing and Communications Specialist Breahn Fisher was nominated for exemplifying teamwork and positivity by supporting others, offering one-on-one guidance and helping create a welcoming and uplifting environment.
- Avila was nominated for her creativity, professionalism and initiative, including high-quality design work and development of a new request form to improve communication and workflow across departments.
- Mansour was nominated for leadership, creativity, communication, purpose and trust, including her work on the Romance Campaign and her support of team collaboration.
- ICVB Finance Senior Accountant & Purchasing Assistant, Monica Soto was announced as the Star Award recipient. Gast said Soto consistently manages responsibilities with

accuracy, efficiency and professionalism; takes pride in doing things the right way; and has stepped forward to learn complex processes that support the organization.

- Soto will receive a paid day off, a dedicated parking space in the parking garage for six months and recognition on the Impacting Irving Facebook page and in-office television screen.

Executive Director Report

- Gast reported that the Irving Center circulator launched July 6 as a free pilot program. It is currently scheduled to run from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.
- The route signs are temporary and may be adjusted over the next few months as ridership patterns are better understood. Questions and concerns should be directed to VIA or the City of Irving, not the CVB.
- Staff were encouraged to ride the circulator, learn the route and use the experience to help explain it to visitors, clients, hotel partners, office tenants and other users.
- The route is expected to be especially helpful for the Westin, Texican Court, Omni, Toyota Music Factory, Water Street and office tenants at 600 Las Colinas, where workers are farther from restaurants.
- The shuttle is not an on-demand service and is not intended to replace convention group transportation. The Citymapper app can be used to view the vehicle location and timing along the route.
- ICVB Advocacy and Community Engagement Manager Thomas Gandy said Marketing and Communications plans to film a video experience on the route and invited staff to participate.

Hotels, Openings and Staff Travel

- ICVB AED Sales and Services, Lori Fojtasek reported there were no new hotel or ribbon-cutting updates.
- Fojtasek said the Residence Inn/Courtyard combination property is now expected to open near the end of July.
- The Sandman property is still expected to build another hotel tower, but a firm timeline has not been shared. Staff noted that other Sandman projects may be ahead of the Irving project.
- Fojtasek also reported additional turnover at Hotel Indigo, where the new Director of Sales has already left the position.
- Gast said she will travel to Portland for Destinations International, and Gandy will also attend.
- ICVB Manager of Client Services and Events, Kathy Levine said she will be on vacation later in the week.

Sales and Services Report

- ICVB Senior Manager of Client Services and Events, Wendy Foster reported that she is servicing four hotel programs this week, with no staffing needs.

- Foster said the team got creative with a last-minute reunion request and was able to use surplus promotional items.
- Gast noted that the remaining Mardi Gras beads had been given to the symphonies because the beads included musical instruments.
- Levine reported that the CVB will service 7th Level and Texas Hunters Convention in the next two weeks. No staffing is expected for either group.
- Texas Hunters Convention is expected to use approximately 4,000 plastic bags, which will help move through older inventory that is not used as frequently as before.
- Staff clarified that the reunion was not a last-minute event, but the request came to the CVB late. The group is holding its 60th family reunion at Home2 Suites by the airport and has a detailed local itinerary and strong room block.

Finance and Administration

- ICVB AED of Finance and Administration, Susan Rose reminded staff that information and resources are available on the Team Irving portal and staff portal.
- Rose said one Fired Up initiative was to expand distribution of the weekly resume meeting to all staff. Diana Robles will send an optional meeting request for those who want to participate.
- School Supplies for Success donations are being accepted until Thursday and can be dropped off in Maddie Thornton's office.
- Rose reviewed a minor travel policy update. For airline tickets costing \$1,000 or more, excluding fees, staff should now obtain written approval from their respective Assistant Director, such as Fojtasek, Rose or ICVB AED, Marketing and Communications Monty White, instead of routing all requests to Gast.
- Rose reminded staff that mass emails to the ICVB staff distribution list should be sent to the sender and blind copied to the staff list to help prevent reply-all email clutter.
- CPR training will be offered July 28 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. and September 24 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. The training is optional, but staff are encouraged to participate if their supervisor approves.
- ICVB Accounting & Budget Director, Marianne Lauda said expense reports are due to her by July 13, which means employees should submit them to supervisors a few days earlier so approvals can be completed on time.
- Lauda shared a lighthearted American Express spending update for the past quarter. ICVB Marketing and Communications Coordinator Anabel Espinoza had the highest spend because of Threshold 360, Petty was second, Gast was third, and ICVB Office Manager Carol Boyer was also high because of Board meeting expenses at Hotel Indigo. Donna Groves was the first salesperson on the list.

Marketing and Communications

- Mansour reported that the team wrapped up the second quarter with strong digital momentum, including 665,000 website visits year-to-date, 97,000 sessions on the staycation page, 137,000 visitors to the deals page and a 331% increase in traffic to the meetings page.

- Mansour said the new Adgenuity campaign launched June 26 around FIFA. The campaign has already received 133,000 impressions and an 80% completion rate on the video component, which is above industry standard.
- Mansour shared food-focused videos created with a former Dallas Morning News writer to align with World Cup games and highlight Irving restaurants. The Empa Mundo video had 72,000 views, 83 reshares and had been sent to 1,686 people on Instagram.
- The Mr. Max video had 125,000 views, 171 reshares and had been sent to 7,534 people on Instagram. Mansour said the videos support a broader plan for a global cuisine microsite and additional hidden-gem restaurant storytelling.
- The team has created a webpage for the new circulator, and additional information, videos and updates will be added as the service develops. The circulator information has also been added to the sales portal.

ICC Building/Project Updates

- Meehan said the digital signage project is still in development, with October 1 as the target start date for installation because that is the start of the new budget year.
- The proposed signage will include interactive features such as restaurant listings, building maps, event information, touch-screen capabilities, camera-based usage analytics and potentially trackable discounts for nearby restaurants.
- Meehan said landscaping work is also planned because parts of the exterior landscaping are in poor condition.
- The Convention Center is doing well financially and is expected to end the year strong, though not at last year's pace.
- Meehan reported that the Grab & Go has already paid for itself and is being tracked separately from concessions. Additional graphics and possible merchandising are still planned for the space.
- Meehan said he will travel to the Legends Global leadership conference in Fort Lauderdale with David McMillan and Cori Black.
- Meehan recognized ICC Assistant General Manager, Kayla Perez for graduating from Venue Management School through IAVM.
- Meehan also recognized ICC Director of Food & Beverage, Cori Black for completing Legends Global's Executive Leadership Development class.
- ICC IT Manager Keyse Araujo was recognized for earning a Cisco Certified Network Associate certification, noting it is a significant networking achievement.

Budget and Marketing Plan Presentation

- Gast presented the budget and marketing plan overview that had previously been shared with the Board. Staff were reminded that budget books were available in mailboxes and additional copies were in the room. The digital copy of the budget book will be available on the staff portal.
- Gast answered staff questions and explained that the Board has approved the budget, but final approval still goes through City Council in August.

- Gast also discussed broader City budget pressures, including state limitations on property tax revenue growth, rising costs for services and equipment, decisions about trash service, commercial property changes and the impact of major companies leaving or moving within the region.

Meeting ended at 10:30 a.m.