

**Minutes**

**Destination El Paso Advisory Board Meeting**

**Wednesday, March 24, 4:00 p.m.**

**Destination El Paso**

<b>Board Members Present</b>	<b>Board Members Absent</b>	<b>Destination EP Staff</b>	<b>City of El Paso</b>	<b>Public</b>
Daniel J. Veale*	Gabriel Ayub	Jose Garcia	Ignacio Troncoso	Genesis Melendez
Veronica Hernandez*	Genevieve Torrez	Brooke Underwood		Jose A. Melendez
Bernie Olivas*		Rene Wong		
Pifas Silva*		Veronica Castro		
Rene Hurtado*		Daniel Arizpe		
Ken Gorski*		Jose Gil		
Jennifer Gonzalez*				

**I. Call to Order**

- The meeting was called to order at 4:05 PM by Rene Hurtado.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

- Motion by Rene Hurtado to approve February minutes, seconded by Bernie Olivas. Motion passes.

**III. Department Updates for February 2026**

- **Updates: Jose Garcia, President/CEO, Destination El Paso**
- **Occupancy/Financials: Jose Garcia, President/CEO, Destination El Paso**
  - Hotel occupancy and revenue metrics show positive week-over-week growth, trending toward 2025 levels.
  - Occupancy increased by 4.2% week-over-week.
  - Average Daily Rate (ADR) increased by 1.2% week-over-week.
  - Total revenue increased by 4.5% week-over-week.
  - El Paso occupancy reached 63.8%, compared to 53.2% for Texas and 52.4% nationwide.
  - ADR remains slightly below the Texas average.
  - El Paso continues to lead in revenue per available room.
  - Total revenue is approximately \$1.6 million ahead of year-to-date budget.
  - Financial performance by division includes:
    - Visit El Paso approximately \$689,000 over budget.
    - El Paso Live approximately \$1.7 million over budget, contributed to increased revenue and inflation.
    - Water Parks approximately \$31,000 under budget due to off-season operations.
  - After accounting for the City subsidy, the organization is approximately \$318,000 over budget.
- **Tourism Development: Veronica Castro, Visit El Paso**
  - Amigo Man's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration and community appearances were highly successful, generating over 2,800 engagements. The anniversary event drew approximately 400 attendees and featured 20 local mascots.

- The Chihuahua City Visitor Information Center participated in three key events – Expo Educate, a 5K race, and Expo Bodas – resulting in over 1,500 engagements.
- Community partnerships continued through initiatives such as the monthly downtown cleanup with the BOSS program and a Military Spouse Black History Tour with approximately 15 participants.
- Dania Bandas, our Military Liaison was selected as Vice President of Community Relations for the AUSA El Paso Chapter.
- Public programming remained well received, including monthly Mission Trail tours, the new Sunday Harvest Farm Tour, and the Black History Lecture Series, which drew approximately 70 attendees. Additional activities such as guided hikes and a Self-Love Workshop reached approximately 400 participants.
- Trade show participation generated strong engagement. The Phoenix show resulted in approximately 550 interactions, including interest from Canadian travelers. At ITTA, staff conducted one-on-one meetings with inbound tour operators.
- Earned media efforts generated significant exposure. A visit from “Rachel and the Julies” resulted in a 15-minute ABC television segment, with social media value exceeding \$6,000.
- A Texas Monthly feature on El Paso generated nearly \$800,000 in earned media value.
- **Advertising: Rene Wong, Destination El Paso**
  - The Digital leisure campaign exceeded performance benchmarks, generating over 2 million impressions and more than 20,000 website visits.
  - Paid social media was the top-performing channel, producing approximately 7,500 clicks.
  - Top organic content highlighted Black History Month, the El Paso Marathon, and recognition as the #4 Best Arts District.
  - Print advertising included placements in “El Paso Made”, Group Tour Magazine, and Texas Highways, positioning El Paso as a key West Texas destination.
  - The Meeting Planner campaign generated approximately 460,000 impressions and more than 8,300 website visits, with LinkedIn identified as a highly effective platform.
  - The Mexico digital campaign delivered strong performance with 167,000 impressions and over 3,500 website visits. Paid social generated more than 22,000 clicks.
    - Target markets included Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey. Print placements included ABC Turístico, La Devi, and El Norte, with a focus on Semana Santa promotion.
- **Convention & Sports Development: Brooke Underwood, Visit El Paso**
  - Participation in industry events generated multiple qualified leads.
  - IPEC in Phoenix, AZ: 22 pre-scheduled appointments.
  - RCMA in Lexington, KY: 32 appointments with religious meeting planners.
  - Select Traveler Conference in Williamsburg, VA: 35 face-to-face appointments.

- Austin-based sales efforts remain critical for securing state association business, with meetings now conducted at neutral locations due to remote work environments.
- Major future events confirmed include:
  - 2028 Libertarian Party National Convention: 1,200 attendees, \$2.1 million economic impact.
  - 2028 TABE Conference: 1,200 attendees, 800 room nights, \$1.3 million economic impact.
  - 2026 Texas Managing Editors: 60 attendees, \$50,000 economic impact.
  - The Most Valuable Promotions (MVP) boxing event was secured for May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at the El Paso County Coliseum, with 743 room nights and an estimated \$1.5 million economic impact.
- A site visit was hosted for the Latino Arts Now Conference, expected to bring approximately 300 attendees and \$500,000 in economic impact.
- **Special Events/Venue and Event Management: Chris Puga, Destination El Paso**
  - Venues experienced strong attendance and multiple sellouts during February.
  - A total of 12 sold-out shows have been recorded year-to-date.
  - Recent sellouts include:
    - Conjunto Primavera with 2,400 attendees.
    - Matt Matthews with 2,300 attendees.
    - The Wix with over 6,000 attendees.
  - During February, 16 events were held over 24 event days, drawing nearly 53,000 attendees.
- **El Paso Water Parks: Daniel Arizpe, Destination El Paso**
  - Preparations for the 2026 season are underway.
  - Recruitment efforts are ongoing at multiple high schools.
  - A regional lifeguard instructor course was completed, with 30 new lifeguards certified.
  - The "Love Struck" season pass promotion (BOGO 50% off) launched to drive early sales.
  - Three group sales bookings have been secured.
  - An open records request may result in media coverage regarding operational costs, similar concerns previously resulted in an unmodified independent audit.
- **Floor open for questions/comments**

\*Adjourn: 4:43 pm

\*The next meeting will be April 28, 2026, at 4:00 pm

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

