

**Minutes**

**Destination El Paso Advisory Board Meeting**

**Tuesday, January 27, 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*	Veronica Hernandez	Brooke Underwood	Ignacio Troncoso	
Jennifer Gonzalez*		Valerie Garcia	Karina Brasgalla	
Rene Hurtado*		Rene Wong		
Genevieve Torrez*		Chris Puga		
Gabriel Ayub*		Daniel Arizpe		
Bernie Olivas*				
Pifas Silva*				
Ken Gorski*				

**I. Call to Order**

- The meeting was called to order at 4:03 PM by Rene Hurtado

**II. Approval of Minutes**

- Motion by Rene Hurtado to approve the November minutes, seconded by Gabriel Ayub and Pifas Silva

**III. Department Updates for December 2025**

- **Updates: Brooke Underwood, Executive Director, Visit El Paso**
  - Noted Jose Garcia's absence due to Destinations Texas Travel.
  - Confirmed next regular meeting moved from February 24 to February 25 due to travel conflicts (no objections were received).
- **Occupancy/Financials: Brooke Underwood, Executive Director, Visit El Paso**
  - Monitor hotel performance trends following seasonal softening: ☐
    - Weekly hotel occupancy at 58.5% (down from 62.5% week-over-week).
    - Average Daily Rate (ADR): \$110
    - Hotel revenue is down 9% week-over-week, attributed to post-holiday lull (no immediate concern).
  - El Paso leads major destinations at 67.6% occupancy, compared to Austin at 63.7% and other markets at 61% or lower.
  - Continue tracking key demand drivers contributing to room nights:
    - Federal contractors (Air Marshals, National Guard, Border Patrol).
    - Project Jupiter (Santa Teresa Data Center).
  - The total revenue was \$1,081,719. El Paso Live: \$1,072,809. Water Parks: \$8,900.
  - Year-to-date revenue is 1.2 million over the budget.
  - Total November expenses: \$1.1 million. Expenses are \$766,000 over budget YTD. Visit El Paso November expenses are \$364,970, approximately \$5,600 under budget. Water Parks November expenses are \$264,000, \$39,000 over budget YTD.
  - Despite expense overruns, total expense variance reflects \$448,000 under budget overall.
  - Adjusted net income YTD (including city funding) is \$280,000.
- **Tourism Development: Veronica Castro, Visit El Paso**

- Veronica reported that Amigo Man activities generated over 2,800 engagements across multiple community events.
- Fort Bliss initiatives produced over 1,300 engagements, including the Tree Lighting, Iron Summit Military Conference, and International Spouses Tour.
- The Visitor Information Center (downtown) recorded approximately 12,842 visitors in December; free train rides served approximately 1,200 riders, with donations collected for a nonprofit.
- Ongoing Mission Trail tours continue the first Saturday of each month; a Texas Tech group tour hosted approximately 65 attendees.
- Sun Bown Fan Fiesta engagement estimated at 6,000 attendees, with 300 direct visitor interactions.
- Visit El Paso hosted Chef Edna Alaniz (Mexico) for a second visit; strong performance reported on TikTok and Instagram.
- Earned media goal of 7 million impressions noted; currently nearing 5 million (approximately 70% of goal).
- Veronica reported that influencer costs average \$1,500 - \$1,700 per activation; additional interest reported from New York-based influencers.
- Planning underway for a future Mexico-market influencer FAM tied to an upcoming major event.
- Amigo Man 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plans reviewed:
  - Celebration scheduled for Thursday, February 19, 4:00-6:00 PM
  - Monument to be reinstalled; merchandise with new logo planned.
  - Community participation encouraged; creator (UTEP professor) to be honored.
  - Additional activations planned during National Travel and Tourism Week.
- **Advertising: Rene Wong, Destination El Paso**
  - December strategic pause implemented for digital display and native advertising; SEM continued with 59,000+ impressions and 17% CTR.
  - New top-performing keyword identified: "*Tourist attractions in El Paso.*"
  - Social media delivered 138,000 impressions and 1,700+ engagements, with the strongest performance on TikTok, followed by META.
  - Top organic content included UTEP's Forbes ranking, Sun Bowl recap, Lucchese Boots feature on ABC World News, and El Paso's nature ranking (191% search increase per HomeToGo).
  - Print placements included AAA Explorer New Mexico, Authentic Texas, and True West.
  - Meetings and conventions campaigns showed seasonal declines in impressions but improved CTR; top drivers were PPC and LinkedIn.
  - Mexico campaign performance reported:
    - 500,000 impressions, 20,000+ clicks, 120,000+ video views.
    - TikTok CTR of 14.3%, print placements in El Heraldo, ABC Turistico, and Publitur.
  - Board member Bernie Olivas shared Sun Bowl broadcast updates:
    - At least one guaranteed CBS spot; additional spots near halftime observed.

- Viewership down approximately 7% year-over-year (2.7M vs. 3.0M); ratings 1.7 vs. 2.0 last year.
- Local attendance remained strong; noon kickoff favored local engagement.
- **Convention & Sports Development: Valerie Garcia, Visit El Paso**
  - Destination Southwest generated 5 leads.
  - Texas Society Association Executives luncheon resulted in new contacts and follow-up sales calls with multiple associations.
  - West Star – Don Haskins Sun Bowl Invitational generated 423 room nights and significant economic impact.
  - Site visits hosted: 
    - Texas Council of Community Staff (mental health and developmental disabilities focus).
    - National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) site visit and Kwanza participation; verbal confirmation received for convention hosting (around 250 attendees; 245-283 room nights).
  - Verbal confirmations also received for:
    - Ultimate Pickleball League (around 300 attendees, 800 room nights).
    - Johnny O. Jackson Bodybuilding Qualifier.
- **Special Events/Venue and Event Management: Chris Puga, Destination El Paso**
  - Winterfest Ice Rink hosted over 19,000 skaters, with approximately 80,000 total visitors across the Convention Center Plaza.
  - Specialty theme nights included Retro Night, Christmas and The Grinch.
  - December events included:
    - *El Paso Symphony Orchestra* (1,932 attendees).
    - *Verity Academy Ballet Recital* (1,900 attendees).
    - *Mrs. Doubtfire Broadway Musical* (~4,500 attendees).
    - *The Nutcracker and Magical Christmas Ballet* (5,600 attendees, two sold-out shows).
  - Total for the period: 19 events, 58 event days, 44,000 total attendance.
- **El Paso Water Parks: Daniel Arizpe, Destination El Paso**
  - Hosted bilingual CPR certification classes to support safety initiatives.
  - Partnered with Winterfest Ice Rink to promote early season pass sales and holiday bundles.
  - Expanded apartment community outreach partnerships.
  - Planning underway for 2026 with focus on guest experience, extended programming, and consistent community engagement.
- **Floor open for questions/comments**
  - Brooke Underwood proposed moving the February regular meeting from February 24 to February 25 due to travel conflicts.
  - No objections were received; meeting date adjusted accordingly.

\*Adjourn: 4:50 pm

\*The next meeting will be February 25, 2026, at 4:00 pm

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

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

3-25-26