Visit Bakersfield
Minutes
Meeting of October 16, 2019
Visit Bakersfield, 515 Truxtun Avenue
Regular Meeting
8:00 AM

I. Call to order

Visit Bakersfield Board of Directors convened in the Visit Bakersfield Board Room on this 16th day of October 2019 at 8:03 a.m.

II. Roll call

Jenny Hlaudy conducted roll call.

Directors Present:
Tamara Baker       Jenny Hlaudy       Beth Brookhart-Pandol
Steve Hughes      Kim Schaefer       Lori Labare
Jessica Ramirez    Kenneth “Ziggy” Siegfried Denise Taylor-Connor
Ryan Uhles

Directors Absent:
Ed Dorsey
Chris Huot
Randy McKeegan

Others Present:
David Lyman, Visit Bakersfield
Andrea Marroquin, Visit Bakersfield
Matt Billingsley, Visit Bakersfield
Nick Ortiz, Greater Bakersfield Chamber

III. Public Statements

Nick Ortiz gave a presentation on the rebranding of the City of Bakersfield, Kern County, Kern EDC and Visit Bakersfield.

IV. Minutes

A. Approval of July 17, 2019 Minutes.

Motion by Steve Hughes, seconded by Denise Taylor-Connor. All in favor. Motion approved.

V. Treasurer’s Report

A. Approval of Treasurer’s Report of July 17, 2019

Motion by Beth Brookhart-Pandol, seconded by Steve Hughes. All in favor. Motion approved.
VI. Staff Report

A. Manager’s Report. David Lyman provided the following updates:

• Smith Travel Report (STR):
  o The past three months are up compared with 2018. On average, occupancy is up 2.3%, ADR is up 5.8%, RevPar is up 8.2%, Demand is up 4.5%, and Revenue is up a whopping 10.6%. Supply also is up 2.2%, due to the opening of the former Clarion Hotel as a new Fairfield Inn and Suites by Marriott.

• Matt Billingsley provided the following sales updates to the board:
  o USA BMX Golden State Nationals; We have submitted a proposal to host the Nationals again next year and have been informed that we’re likely going to be awarded the Fall Nationals the first or second weekend of October. They plan to formally announce at the beginning of next year.
  o Jet Jam Racing; The Season Finale was held at Lake Ming the last weekend in August. Over 100 racers showed up with teams, crew and family members. We worked with County General Services to ensure a smooth event. We heard nothing but positives from the event organizer about the facility, staff and our city.
  o NSA Westside Bullets; We just hosted the second of six tournaments for the year, which saw 41 teams participate over three days. The next tournament will be held at Mesa Marin Sports Complex next month.
  o NSRA Western Nationals; The lead for next year’s Nationals went out to the hotels last week. This is the first year working with a new contact so we’re hoping we’ll get some new ideas to freshen up the event. Last year we hosted the continental breakfast on Friday morning. We’ll be exploring that again for next year as well as working with Bette Addington to gauge interest in possibly doing a cruise again.
  o Stealth X football camp; Currently working with a contact I met at Connect Marketplace to host a three day football camp for approximately 250 youth athletes during spring break of next year. Our original thought was the KP Sports Village, but they need some classroom space for breakout meetings so we’re exploring costs from BC, Garces and BCHS.
  o Apostolic Pastor Retreat; This is a lead from a religious show I attended a few years back. They are looking for meeting space and sleeping rooms for 150 for three days and two nights next month.
  o International Slow Pitch Softball; With the expansion of the Mesa Marin Softball Complex scheduled to be completed either Fall or next year we’re working to host a 5-day 100+ team tournament in early 2021. We have been speaking with this event organizer for a few years and he told us that when
we get eight fields at one complex we’ll be able to host his southwestern regional qualifier.

- International Flying Farmers; Group of 90-100 farmers planning to come to Bakersfield in January of 2022 asked for assistance finding agri-tourism. We’ve put them in contact with several farmers and recommended speakers for their event.

- Bay Farm Tours; We had an interesting request last week, A tour of farmers from the UK were in town and called us desperate for ideas or contacts to fill the afternoon on Saturday. They had a tour of a local farm lined up but the farmer had to cancel last minute. After quite a bit of calling around we weren’t able to find them an actual tour with the late notice, but thanks to Beth we were able to recommend a driving route that would take them through a variety of the crops grown here in Kern County. I bring this up because we’ve started to see more and more of a demand for agri-tourism and the supply just isn’t out there currently.

- Bakersfield Marathon; We assisted the race promoters with finding group blocks for this event. In past years they had all the hotels contact info listed with no rates. This year they selected three partners and are promoting them exclusively on their website.

- Mr. Lyman gave a brief update on the Jehovah’s Witness 2019 conventions in August. Visit Bakersfield provided assistance regarding parking. The group is planning to return to Bakersfield next year.

- Mr. Lyman made a presentation to the Greater Los Angeles Airstream Club on October 9, 2019. The gathering took place at the Bakersfield RV Resort. 70 rigs/140 people were in attendance.

- Mr. Lyman gave presentations at Leadership Bakersfield, September 13; Dick Taylor radio show, October 9; and Economic Development Course at Fresno State the week of October 21st.

- Hiring update: Senior Sales Representative. We have made an offer and the tentative start date is October 28th.

- Lure brochure is nearing completion. The brochure will be distributed near nearby national parks and 122 locations throughout Las Vegas. This project was partially funded through the Kern County Tourism Promotion Grant Program.

- Visit Bakersfield will be advertising in the National Park Journal. Bakersfield happens to be on several designated routes. Each time someone asks for information about a route we are on, they get sent information on Bakersfield.

- Developed cooperative ad with River Run RV Park for a program for an event in January 2020.

- Bakersfield is featured in The National, Amtrak’s on-board magazine. This will be on Amtrak trains system wide through November 2019. Visit Bakersfield took out a half-page ad to accompany the article.
• The Padre Hotel was featured in an article on the Wine and Weekends blog. We have been seeing more positive articles about Bakersfield recently.
• We continue to receive visitors in our lobby from throughout the world. Since the first of August, we have had visitors in our lobby from Italy, Canada, Argentina, France, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Germany, the U.K., Czech Republic, Thailand, Austria, Spain, Mexico, Sweden, Uruguay, and the Netherlands.
• Governor Newsom signed SB 742. Beginning January 1, 2020 passengers will no longer need to purchase a train component to ride Amtrak’s in-state trains.
• A challenge continues to be how to get to Bakersfield and Los Angeles if you don’t want to drive. Until January 1, 2020, you will still need to purchase a train component to take Amtrak. There is no scheduled air service. Kern Transit now operates from Bakersfield to Santa Clarita Metrolink Station. Airport Valet Express now runs only between Bakersfield and Van Nuys Fly Away Bus terminal.
• New exterior signage has been added to the Visit Bakersfield building. We have removed CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU and replaced it with larger and more legible VISITORS CENTER lettering, along with the large “i”, the international symbol for “information”. This has made the building more visible both from Truxtun Avenue and from the Amtrak station.
• The City issued a Request for Qualifications and Proposals for a new electronic sign outside the building. Unfortunately, no bids were submitted. So we are in Plan “B,” which is to explore going directly to a firm and negotiating a price.
• We have continued to run into issues with the renovation of the former Board of Trade tourism sign along the bike trail next to the 99 freeway.
• We expect to soon receive the Request for Proposals for CIF Wrestling beginning in 2020. We will be working with Mr. Dorsey and his staff to submit another hopefully-successful proposal to bring this outstanding event back to Bakersfield. CIF’s upcoming event in Bakersfield will be the fifth of its five-year commitment.
• Mr. Lyman was invited to write an article for Kern Business Journal. Those articles also are appearing in the Bakersfield Californian, and the article was in the paper a week ago Sunday. Its focus was new hotel construction, hotel renovation and increases in hotel spending. Thank you to Lori Labare from the Doubletree by Hilton who provided me with details about her hotel’s major renovation, along with artist’s renderings of what is proposed.

VII. Old Business
None

VIII. New Business
A. Approval of assistance to the Jehovah’s Witnesses Congregation (JWC) in the amount of $15,000 per convention for five conventions to be held between June and August of 2020, and for up to six conventions to be held between June and August for years 2021-2024. Payment for 2020 not to exceed $75,000 and the
subsequent years $90,000. Total compensation for the agreement not to exceed $435,000.

*Motion by Tamara Baker, seconded by Kim Schaefer. All in favor. Motion approved.*

B. Approval of meeting calendar for 2020.

*Motion by Denise Taylor-Connor seconded by Steve Hughes. All in favor. Motion approved.*

IX. **Board Statements**

None

X. **Closed Session**

None

XI. **Adjournment**

Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:13 a.m.