

River's Edge Convention Center Advisory Board

Meeting Notes – December 12, 2017

Present Jodi Domeier, Patty Gaetz, Marty Mahowald

Not Present Ibrahim Abdi, Julie Lunning, Alvin Yu

Staff Present Rich Gallus, Tony Goddard

1. The meeting was convened at 5:05 pm at the Convention Center.
2. The Board considered the minutes of October 10, 2017. Domeier moved acceptance of the minutes as submitted; Gaetz seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
3. Goddard summarized the proposed departmental budget, which was included in the meeting packet. There are no dramatic changes from the current year budget. Final approval by the Council will occur on December 18, following the required public hearing.
4. Goddard and Gallus provided summary and background for the draft report on occupancy that was circulated. The report includes several components: further refinement of the building occupancy tracking that staff has been reporting for more than a year; a catalog of new and lost events over the last five years; industry reports on trends in similar-sized convention centers; and ideas for new and augmented sales and marketing initiatives. The report looked at current projections of exhibit hall occupancy for 2018. The first quarter is essentially at full occupancy; there is only one available date. The other quarters are significantly lower, especially summer, the perennial slow period. The survey of new events showed that virtually all come from organic growth, not from existing marketing. The report included types of events gleaned *Convention Center Advisor*, a trade publication.
5. Following the review of the occupancy report, the board discussed potential targets for new events and methods of marketing. Brief descriptions:
  - Reach out to similar convention centers in different markets for peer-to-peer discussions about event patterns
  - Identify target affinity groups and market with off-season discounts
  - Woodworking shows
  - Market our location for summer events as “the gateway to Minnesota’s lake country”
  - Weddings – Gallus described our intent to boost wedding marketing in 2018
  - Craft distilleries – a segment growing similarly to beer and cider – are there state-wide shows?
  - Farm-to-table focus; organic products, gluten-free, healthy eating
  - Minnesota wineries – there is a state organization that may be ripe for a state-wide expo
  - Kids programming – is there a niche that would attract local families away from the big shows in the Twin Cities?
  - End-of-life conference – a growing level of interest
  - Snowmobiles, jet skis, ATVs
6. Gallus presented his idea of investing in higher grade furniture and equipment for one or more board rooms and targeting local corporate meetings; the board was supportive.

7. Gallus provided an update of operations at the facility since the October meeting. We anticipate more than 47,000 patrons during the fourth quarter attending 112 separate events. Earlier this month was another successful Holly Ball – the premiere social event of the year.
8. Next Meeting: Tuesday February 13, 2018, 5:00 pm
9. Adjournment at 6:40 pm.

Submitted by Tony Goddard