

County of Tarrant
City of Grapevine
State of Texas

MINUTES

The Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors met in Regular Session on Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 8:00 a.m. at the Stephen W. Stinson Boardroom of the Grapevine Convention and Visitors Bureau, 636 S. Main Street, Grapevine, Texas with the following persons in attendance:

Joe Szymaszek	Chairman
Mark Terpening	Vice Chairman
Cynthia Blankenship	Board Member
Iain Scouller	Board Member
Chuck Pacioni	Board Member
Dan Weinberger	Board Member
Jeff Babcock	Board Member
Mike Oakley	Board Member
Debi Meek	Board Member

Constituting a quorum, with the following liaisons and staff members present:

Leon Leal	Council Liaison
Paul W. McCallum	Executive Director
Leigh Lyons	Assistant Executive Director
Becky Roberson	Executive Assistant

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chairman, Joe Szymaszek, called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.

NEW EMPLOYEE INTRODUCTION

Director McCallum introduced Erin Pellet, Communications Coordinator.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Board Chairman Szymaszek called for a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. With a motion from Mark Terpening and seconded by Debi Meek, the minutes from the December 10, 2024 meeting were approved 9-0.

SALES AND MARKETING REPORT

Executive Director McCallum reported that the sales team had a record-breaking calendar year in 2024 with almost 2000 group leads sourced which is an increase of 13% year over year. Group meetings booked in 2024 was up 30% year over year. The team conducted 95 site inspections, attended 14 trade shows and hosted three familiarization tours over the course of 2024. All of these activities were strategic in bringing business to local stake holders.

Director McCallum reported on recent sales missions, familiarization tours and trade shows. Codi Missimo conducted a sales mission to New York December 3, 4 and 5. New York is an important market as it encompasses many corporations and corporate meeting planners. While in New York, Ms. Missimo attended a holiday event hosted by the Northeast Convention and Visitors Bureau which gave her access to twenty-seven corporate meeting planners. She also used the opportunity to conduct site inspections for an upcoming sales mission and conducted one on one appointments with current and prospective clients.

Connie Ash attended Destination Southwest December 4, 5 and 6. Destination Southwest is the premier hosted buyer event. This event brings together qualified meeting buyers with top destinations, hotels and resorts, Destination Management Companies, Convention and Visitors Bureaus and tourism offices from Texas, Arizona, Colorado and Mexico. Ms. Ash partnered with Great Wolf Lodge and together, they had twenty-five appointments and returned with three requests for proposal.

Throughout December, Heather Egan hosted ten motor coach tours. She also hosted thirteen travel agents from Australia and New Zealand as part of the Fiji Airways inaugural flight familiarization tour. In addition, she hosted the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport international gate managers and a group of flight crew members from Qantas Airlines.

On December 17, Codi Missimo hosted a local client event with thirteen meeting planners. From this event, there has been a signed contract for a conference to take place in 2025 and one lead is being tracked.

Assistant Executive Director Lyons gave an update on recent media. It was reported that in December the Christmas Capital of Texas events page more than doubled in page views from 2023 to 2024. The Christmas Capital of Texas homepage was up 5% from 2023. The official Facebook page had a 15.2% increase in followers from 2023 to 2024, whereas Instagram had a 39.6% increase year over year. In December alone, Facebook and Instagram covered a variety of topics including Peace Plaza Ice Rink, ICE! at Gaylord Texan, Small Business Saturday and Holiday Hideaway at Chicken N Pickle, driving more than six million impressions.

The Communications staff hosted eleven travel writers for a media familiarization tour. The writers came from both the United States and international destinations of Australia and New Zealand. These writers were able to experience all that the Christmas Capital of Texas has to offer and Grapevine has already been highlighted in three separate publications with many more expected.

ONGOING BUSINESS

Director McCallum presented an overview of the Christmas Capital of Texas. He shared feedback from a multitude of local stakeholder businesses whom all expressed great satisfaction about overall visitation. One Main Street merchant reported that her business had guests from all over the United States and they were eager to make purchases as they wanted to take something home to remember Grapevine. Another merchant reported that every day felt like a Saturday thanks to the robust crowds. Still others reported record sales that was attributed to consistent foot traffic. Off of Main Street, a large stakeholder commented that this Christmas season was the strongest of the last five years. Some retail stores reported sales gains almost reaching double digits over the previous year. It was noted that holiday shopping appeared to be a family experience this year.

The Peace Plaza Ice Rink, sponsored by Baylor, Scott and White had a successful season but did experience some challenges. Due to higher than usual temperatures and humidity issues, multiple skating sessions were cancelled. Staff made every effort to reschedule skaters at their convenience.

Santa's North Pole Express debuted an all new tent show that featured elves from the North Pole. The elves played an integral role in greeting guests upon arrival and throughout the new onboarding experience. With the addition of three days and eighteen post-Christmas excursions, overall ticket sales were up from last year. Standby ticket sales saw an increase of 32% over 2023 as team members focused every effort to get standby visitors on an excursion to take the place of those that were unable to ride due to illness or experienced a change of plans.

Throughout the Christmas capital of Texas season, more than 74,000 visitors came through the Convention and Visitors Bureau lobby and Grapevine Main Visitors Center. The exhibit, Hometown Christmas welcomed more than 15,000 guests. The Elf Adventure which was hosted at the Settlement to City complex, had almost 2,200 ticket sales. This is a small increase from the previous season. The observation tower at Grapevine Main had more than 5,000 guests.

Santa's North Pole Express General Store had a successful season. Some of the most popular items sold in the store included branded train whistles, Christmas themed novelty headbands and holiday 3D glasses that transform lights into magical, holographic scenes.

There were expanded vendor opportunities at both the Town Square Gazebo and the North Pole Neighborhood. The gazebo showcased a new market layout that included canopies with storefront facades for individual vendors. The improved layout created a fluid and natural traffic flow throughout the artisan vendors without impeding the Christmas décor and photo ops in the area. Nineteen vendors were added to the North Pole Neighborhood area. These

vendors increased foot traffic throughout the grounds and offered guests shopping and food opportunities.

The Palace Theatre held seventy six events and welcomed more than 18,200 guests throughout the Christmas season. There were twenty five live performances with nineteen selling out. The theatre showed twenty eight classic Christmas movies and staff hosted twenty three Cartoons and Crafts events over the course of forty days.

Marketing efforts for the Christmas Capital of Texas were focused in the outer markets within a two to five hour drive. The goal of this campaign was to drive hotel room nights and length of stay to expand visitor spending across the city. A local Dallas Fort Worth area campaign focused on the two Monday night Merry and Bright drone shows. This campaign centered around social media channels, eblasts and interviews. The recent designation as Best Christmas Town by Newsweek magazine was fully utilized in all marketing campaigns. As a result of various marketing tools, feedback from retailers and restaurants has been positive.

NEW BUSINESS

2025 marks the 40th season of the End of the Runway Players. The season began in the fall of 2024 and will run through the summer of 2025. The End of the Runway Players exists to promote entertaining theatre in a welcoming environment. Many of the cast live in the general area but not Grapevine. They come to Grapevine regularly to build sets and rehearse. They also make efforts to bring their circles of influence to Grapevine to catch performances, dine and shop. Actors and supporters of End of the Runway players volunteer at local events. At the most recent GrapeFest, they volunteered more than 442 hours at the People's Choice Wine Tasting Classic. Vice Chairman Terpening spoke to the importance of the volunteers at these iconic festival events. The group requested \$29,611 to assist with costs for rights and royalties, publicity, set construction and props, costumes and production expenditures. The End of the Runway Players reported that ticket sales have not fully recovered since the pandemic and that ticket sales alone do not cover their overall costs.

Following discussion, Board Chairman Szymaszek called for a motion to fund the grant request of \$29,611 benefiting The End of the Runway Players.

Motion: Cynthia Blankenship

Second: Debi Meek

Chuck Pacioni left prior to the vote.

Approved: 8-0

HOTELS/ATTRACTIONS/ACTIVITIES

Assistant Director Lyons shared that Air India is now offering flights to Dallas Fort Worth International Airport seven days a week. Dallas Fort Worth joins New York, San Francisco, Newark, Chicago and Washington DC as Air India's sixth location in the United States.

Avelo Airlines will add flights originating from Dallas Fort Worth International Airport and going to Connecticut in March. Avelo is based in Houston and began operation in 2021. The flight to the New Haven airport will begin at \$89.

Black Sheep Coffee will soon take over the former Wendy's Restaurant on Hall-Johnson Rd. This will be the third location in the United States for the London based company. Black Sheep Coffee offers a range of coffee products including whole beans, ground coffee, recyclable coffee pods as well as signature drinks, smoothies, shakes and food items like Norwegian waffles.

Grapevine Mills is now home to Happy Beauty. This store boasts makeup, skincare, fragrances, hair care goods and bath and body products for \$9.99 or under.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Chairman Szymaszek called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 a.m.

Motion: Mike Oakley

Second: Mark Terpening

Chuck Pacioni left prior to the vote.

Approved: 8-0

ATTEST:



Becky Roberson

Executive Assistant

APPROVED:



Mark Terpening

Vice Chairman