

MINUTES

HOUSTON FIRST CORPORATION

**Joint Tourism Committee
May 23, 2019 – 9:30 A.M.
Partnership Tower, 701 Avenida de las Americas, Ste. 200
Houston, Texas 77010
HFC BOARD ROOM**

The Joint Tourism Committee ("Committee") of Houston First Corporation (the "Corporation" or "HFC"), a Texas local corporation created and organized by the City of Houston as a local government corporation pursuant to TEX. TRANSP. CODE ANN. §431.101 et seq. and TEX LOC. GOV'T. CODE ANN. §394.001 et seq., posted a meeting at Partnership Tower, 701 Avenida de las Americas, Houston, Harris County, Texas, 77010, on Thursday, May 23, 2019, commencing at 9:30 a.m.

Written notice of the meeting including the date, hour, place and agenda for the meeting was posted in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

The following Committee members were present for the meeting: Council Member David Robinson (Co-Chair), Patricia Voss (Co-Chair), Carlos Gutierrez, Irma Diaz-Gonzalez, and Ryan Martin.

The meeting was called to order at 9:34 a.m.; no quorum was established.

1. **Public Comments.** None.
2. **Review and approval of minutes from prior meeting.** [This item was not discussed and no action was taken].
3. **Tourism Quiz.** The tourism quiz included questions about the Freedom Over Texas 4th of July event.
4. **Presentations and Reports.**
 - A. **Comicpalooza Recap.** Michael Heckman gave a presentation regarding the success of Comicpalooza. According to Mr. Heckman, Comicpalooza had over 45,000 people in attendance representing 46 states and 16 countries. Attendees also had the opportunity to see "Game of Thrones" actresses Emilia Clarke and Nathalie Emmanuel.

Mr. Heckman explained that Comicpalooza includes a film festival, a live art charity auction, and a maker's space so there is something for everyone to enjoy. He further explained how Comicpalooza increased its social media presence this year with 83,000 followers, namely due to Emilia Clarke's courtside appearance at the Rockets game.

Comicipalooza also partnered with ESPN to host the Collegiate ESports Championship, Quilts, and Saint Arnold's brewery for the Party on the Plaza after-party event.

In conclusion, Mr. Heckman informed the Committee that next year Comicipalooza will be held May 22-24, 2020.

Council Member David Robinson suggested use of the full campus to expand the show into an indoor/outdoor event. He also suggested that additional signage be utilized to inform attendees of all the activities at Comicipalooza.

Frank Wilson inquired about branding and marketing Comicipalooza to other cities.

- B. New Welcome Center on the Avenida. Sydney Dao gave an update on the new Welcome Center located at the George R. Brown Convention Center ("GRB"). Ms. Dao explained that the Welcome Center will answer the needs and demands of a lot of visitors as the space will include a visitor's center, retail space, and a grab-and-go food concept. The new Welcome Center will be located in the space formerly occupied by McAlister's Deli and will be approximately 4,000 sq. ft.

Ms. Dao further explained that the new grab-and-go food concept will be managed by Levy and GRB staff. Additionally, the tourism department will manage the visitor's center and her staff will manage retail. Ms. Dao stated the Welcome Center will be open 7 days a week, however, the hours have not yet been determined. Peter McStravick further explained that the Welcome Center will likely have three different levels of staffing during the day to meet the demands of visitors.

Council Member Robinson asked if there would be any artwork or signs for visitors to take photos and Ms. Doa explained that a large mural will be painted by artist Daniel Anguilu on an interior wall in the Welcome Center.

- C. Hotel Demand Update Report. Cindy Decker informed the Committee that the demand for hotels looks good for the summer and the current demand is being tracked in the Houston market inside the one-year window. Ms. Decker also stated that the demand is down for the fall, but she is working with the tourism department to review a compression calendar to target transient visitors.
- D. Domestic Tourism Update.
- i. Tourism Summit Recap. Jorge Franz provided a recap of the Tourism Summit. Mr. Franz reported that the Tourism Summit was a great success and that expenses decreased this year as sponsorship support increased. He noted a slight drop in attendance this year due to logistical challenges and an increase in ticket prices, however, the findings of the event survey noted that 80% of attendees found the Tourism Summit valuable.

- ii. Houston Experience Marketplace Sales Update. Ashley McKenney gave an update, explaining that sales are up a lot from last year from \$6,802.50 to \$24,728.14 through April 30, 2019. Ms. McKenney further discussed the new summer campaign that will include the Houston Zoo, Typhoon Texas, and the Houston Bites & Sites Food Tour.

Ms. McKenney also provided a geographic sales breakdown and was excited to announce that tourism made its first sale through the Hola Houston market-direct consumer purchase system.

- iii. Houston Insider Program. Maureen Haley announced that the Houston Insider Program has experienced steady growth and is currently at 1,073 Insiders. She also explained that the program is looking to include more events with influencers and in-person certifications like the Tourism Summit, University of Houston staff, hotels, restaurants, and various chambers.

E. International Tourism Update.

- i. IPW Trade Show. Jorge Franz briefly discussed the event and announced that the IPW Trade Show is the largest trade show for inbound sales of products and will be held in Anaheim, California.
- ii. 50th Anniversary of Lunar Landing Activities. Mr. Franz announced that Space City Month is coming up in July.
- iii. Houston Texans vs. Jacksonville Jaguars game in Wembley Stadium, London November 3, 2019. Mr. Franz announced that the GHCVB will be sending a delegation to London for the Houston Texans game and they hope to create an activation for fans to enjoy.

5. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10:39 a.m.