
Minutes City Council's Tourism & Recreation Committee February 13, 2008

Minutes of the City Council's Tourism and Recreation Committee held on Wednesday, February 13, 2008, 3:00 p.m., in the 3rd Floor Council Conference Room, Tempe City Hall, 31 E. 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Committee Members Present:

Councilmember Mark Mitchell, Chair
Councilmember Ben Arredondo

City Staff Present:

Tom Canasi, Comm Services Mgr
Shelley Hearn, Comm Relations Mgr
Jan Hort, City Clerk
Mark Richwine, Parks & Rec Mgr
Chris Salomone, Community Dev Mgr

Guests Present:

Brian Belkin, TCVB Sports Marketing Manager
Mike Chismar, ASU - Athletics
Stephanie Nowack, President/CEO, TCVB
Virgil Renzouli, VP, ASU

Councilmember Mitchell called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

None.

Agenda Item 2 – Insight Bowl Recap

Shelley Hearn summarized that the event went well. It will be a long process, however, to get the level of involvement with the community, Insight and Fiesta Bowl.

- Attendance was over 49,000. Although they sold corporate packages, some didn't come to the game, so there were empty seats.
- Businesses felt they didn't get as much traffic as expected during that time.
- An estimated 100,000 attended the Block Party. They hope to improve the process so a better count can be done next year.
- The media center went well, but it was slow and they ran out of packets in the first few days. More people show up right before the game, so the process will be shifted next year.

- There was discussion about a media reception, but she suggested including the media with the event with the Diablos at the Art Center.
- Continue to evaluate each area.

Councilmember Mitchell asked Stephanie Nowack about the hotel sales.

Stephanie Nowack responded that she didn't bring that information but will email it to him.

Ms. Hearn added that the hotels were busy New Year's Day, but not as busy leading up to the game or after the game. One of the things they will try to do is work with the hotels to do more advance promotion. The hotels around here were busy, but others were not. There was also a problem with the taxis and Orbit needs to be promoted.

Councilmember Mitchell asked, once the hotels are built around the Lake, could we contract with Insight to have one of the teams stay here.

Chris Salomone responded that would be our goal.

Ms. Nowack added that Anthony Aguilar and Sherry Henry are preparing a list of requirements for the teams. As soon as that is available, we will get that to anyone who needs it. The coming hotels need to know that to help in their planning, such as meeting space, workout facilities, etc.

Councilmember Arredondo suggested that it is important to include ASU as part of the media. He also suggested that Virgil Renzouli help with a lunch or breakfast for football, basketball, baseball, and softball coaches. It should also include the TCVB, DTC and the Chamber of Commerce. Let them know we recognize them and that the City Council is proud of them. We need to forge this and get people together to say thank-you. It could be hosted here or at ASU.

Virgil Renzouli agreed with locking in the key coaches, but invite all of them.

Ms. Hearn continued that the other event will be the thank-you party. This year we will invite the Fiesta Bowl, ASU, Diablos, Insight, TCVB and City employees in March or April for breakfast. Ginny Belousek is working on it.

Mr. Renzouli added that retail sales were up in January but were off 4% in December. We need to look into that to determine whether some of that had to do with national economics rather than the game.

Ms. Hearn added that it was hoped that tying retail to the game and the block party would help. The fencing went up so early and access was so restricted early in the day that it hurt the business. A better way needs to be developed. All but two of the games in the next eight years share the same day.

Ms. Nowack added that retail sales were down, but restaurant sales were up. We need to look at more numbers.

Councilmember Arredondo added that it's not too early to work on ASU homecoming and see what we can do to help.

Mr. Renzouli added that the School of Arts & Sciences has had an open house that is very successful. He suggested that the City take advantage of that to display things about the City.

Agenda Item 3 – Super Bowl Recap

Tom Canasi summarized the NFL event held at the TCA.

- NFL Saturday Night was an unadvertised event held for corporate CEO's.
- There were about 4,000 top executives in attendance.
- The NFL spent a significant amount of money and transformed that facility.
- Three acts were brought in and were simulcast throughout the building.
- There was catering throughout.
- It was the NFL's chance to thank their corporate execs and it was our chance to showcase Tempe.
- Comments were very complimentary to the City.
- The NFL has already sent a check for the facility rental with one more coming for the catering.
- We will follow-up with a letter from Mayor and Council to a mailing list of the execs. We have hired a photographer to take photos of the TCA and a photo of the TCA will serve as a thank-you. A list of key contacts will be added with encouragement to return for business or relocation. It will be simple and classy with impact.

Councilmember Mitchell added that the event was a showcase and it was first class. He thanked Mr. Canasi. He asked that the mailing list be provided to Sheri Wakefield-Saenz as well.

Councilmember Mitchell added that it will be important to plan ahead and be proactive to keep names and businesses updated on Tempe information.

Mr. Renzouli added that the NFL spent \$10K a day on each of the executives.

Ms. Nowack added that Tempe had over 10,000 room nights for the Super Bowl over a three-day period. There are 4900 rooms in the City and more than half of the hotels were totally sold out.

Mark Richwine added that besides the phenomenal event at the TCA, the only significant free event in the Valley was at Tempe Beach Park with 15,000 to 20,000 people in attendance. Mill Avenue was extremely busy. Tempe was the place to be on Super Bowl Saturday Night. Besides the two premier events, there were private SunCor events as well.

Agenda Item 4 – Spring Training/Angels Event

Mark Richwine summarized that last week the Diablos were present at the City Council meeting with TCC to distribute a large quantity of spring training tickets. The Angels have indicated there is no limit. The intent is to try to fill the stadium for the opening day on February 28th. All proceeds from parking, tickets and concessions go to the Boys and Girls Club. The Angels and Diablos have adjusted the game time to 3:05 to create an opportunity for kids to attend. We are hopeful we will come close to filling stadium. Preliminary numbers show advance sales are up significantly over last year. Last year was a record with over 106,000 people, and the sales are above last year at this point in time.

Ms. Nowack added that the TCVB does extra promotion around spring training and inserts extra flyers in the ticket packages to all season ticketholders. They also did it for the Oakland A's as well. There will be full page ads in the programs and on-field signage at Diablo. A representative was also sent to Oakland for Fan Fest to market there as well.

Councilmember Arredondo suggested giving some tickets to ASU for students. The students are likely to come over to the game.

There was a suggestion to make sure the tickets can't be resold.

Councilmember Arredondo suggested giving some tickets to the Town Council at Guadalupe.

Councilmember Mitchell asked about including the Little League.

Mr. Richwine stated that he will contact them and work to get to other organizations. The focus is on groups that might not have the opportunities to attend. He will work with Mr. Renzouli and Stephanie Salazar.

Mr. Renzouli suggested packaging something for Tempe and offer tickets to see, perhaps, twelve different teams play in Tempe.

Mr. Richwine responded that each of the respective teams handling ticketing, so it might be difficult.

Agenda Item 5 – Rock 'n' Roll Recap

Mark Richwine summarized that it was a tremendous success. There were approximately 39,000 runners, with the majority finishing. Team Tempe raised over \$200K which will go to various human service agencies in Tempe. It was the single largest recipient locally of charitable dollars from this particular event. Over \$6M was raised in general, but on the local level, this was the one most successful organization.

Ms. Nowack added that Bruce Skinner from Elite Racing facilitated a meeting early on with members of various Tempe-based charities. As a result, some of them with their own programs, added to Team Tempe, set a great example. Room nights were at about the 3,000-3,100 over the two days. The contract was just renegotiated for the next five years.

Councilmember Mitchell asked how that compares to Scottsdale and Phoenix.

Ms. Nowack responded that Scottsdale does about triple that amount, or about 10,000 room nights.

Councilmember Mitchell asked if that will be increased by having more properties.

Ms. Nowack agreed that it can, but added that many people just like Scottsdale. Elite Racing is always looking for hosts headquarter hotels which are put at the top position on their website. We are limited, but down the road, we can add to that.

Agenda Item 6 – Sports and Group Planning Guide

Stephanie Nowack distributed the new “Group & Sports Planning Guide.” This has a new format and information. The first sheets list the hotels with numbers of rooms. The last section is a summary of all the sports facilities, including ASU. This will be used with meeting planners. If we are trying to target meetings, we can specifically give the appropriate sheets. Everyone doesn’t have to receive everything.

Councilmember Mitchell added that years ago he asked for a way to get the information to the ASU campus. This is the way. There are so many planning groups at each college.

Mr. Renzouli stressed the importance of getting these books into the hands of the event planners at ASU and other colleges.

Ms. Nowack added that they are hopeful it will be user-friendly. Last year a binder was mailed to all PAC10 schools for every sport, and this will be a follow-up to that.

Chris Salomone asked if ASU did a room-night study on their seminars.

Ms. Nowack responded that she recalled surveys were distributed, but wasn’t sure if it was ever tabulated.

Mr. Renzouli added that Columbia and NYU actually created their own mini-hotels because of the great number of nights they were bringing people in.

Agenda Item 7 – Hotel and Conference Facilities Update

Chris Salomone summarized that there is a potential for 1,600 to 2,000 new hotel rooms.

- A-Loft is underway.
- Marriott (Bandersnatch) is underway.
- The DDA deadline was extended for Le Meridien, with a start date in April.
- Suncor received responses to their RFP for a 400-room hotel, and they are negotiating with the finalist.
- Lumina will break ground in April.
- Pier will begin horizontal construction in two weeks, and will start vertical construction in 2009. They do not yet have a hotel.
- Paragon will go to Council on April 6th for approval of the PAD. It will include 85,000 sq. ft. conference space.
- DMB Marriott Club Sports facility – no date.

He added that the hotel industry is not slowing down in this economic slump, but continues to move forward.

Agenda Item 8 – ASU/City Facilities list

Mark Richwine summarized that he had been looking over the inventory of fields between the City and ASU and thanks to Stephanie, this is done. We need to determine how we can let more people know what amenities Tempe has.

Mr. Renzouli added that what hasn't been done is a determination of usage. We need to know availability for practice or events. The Mexican National Soccer Team will be here this weekend at a field where 500 people will stand on the side. If we had had leadtime, we could maybe have found a better space.

Councilmember Mitchell added that ASU had a collegiate match at Mesa High because they didn't have a place. We would like them to look at what Tempe has. We can never have enough soccer fields. We want to make sure we have top facilities for ASU, too. We want ongoing communication.

Ms. Hearn suggested that a good marketing campaign would be to utilize all of the events that come here with the package of what we have available.

Agenda Item 9 – Future Agenda Items

- Mechanism to get a head start on events
- Usage of facilities
- Spring football game
- Retention of ASU students through events
- Kajikawa update

Meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Prepared by: Connie Krosschell
Reviewed by: Shelley Hearn

Jan Hort
City Clerk