

**Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority
Meeting held Thursday, February 23, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.
Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority
4065 S. Virginia Street, Board Room, Reno, Nevada**

The Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority Board of Directors met at 9:00 am on Thursday, February 23, 2023. The meeting was properly noticed & posted in compliance with the Nevada Open Meeting Law.

A. OPENING CEREMONIES

A1. Call to Order

Chair Charlene Bybee called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

A2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Bybee asked Board Member Chapman to lead the pledge.

A3. Roll Call

The Clerk of the Board took roll call.

Board Members Present:

Councilwoman Charlene Bybee, RSCVA Chair
Stephan Ascuaga, RSCVA Board Member
Andy Chapman, RSCVA Board Member
Shannon Keel, RSCVA Board Member **[Arrived 9:08 am]**
Rick Murdock, RSCVA Board Member
Mayor Hillary Schieve, RSCVA Vice Chair
Jessica Sferrazza, RSCVA Board Member **[Via Zoom]**
Ann Silver, RSCVA Board Member **[Arrived 9:24 am]**

Board Members Absent:

Commissioner Vaughn Hartung, RSCVA Board Member

RSCVA Executive Staff Present:

Charles Harris, President & CEO
Courtney Jaeger, Vice President, Finance
Trent LaFerriere, Vice President, Facilities
Mike Larragueta, Vice President, Sales
Christina Erny, Vice President, Marketing
Art Jimenez, Executive Director of Tourism Sales

RSCVA Legal Counsel:

Benjamin Kennedy, Dickson Wright

Board Clerk:

Lisa Farmer, Executive Assistant to the President & CEO

B. COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR BY THE PUBLIC

Mr. Jeff Church, RenoTaxRevolt.com, provided a handout (Attachment A) to the Board and spoke in opposition to a proposal for the City of Reno to increase stormwater utility fees.

Chair Bybee thanked everyone for trekking along icy roads to be in attendance. She shared that she recently attended a training with Board Member Ascuaga and Mr. Harris in Texas focused on DMO Board governance. She was looking forward to working together as a team in a positive, respectful manner.

C. CONSENT AGENDA:

- 1. Approval of the Agenda of the February 23, 2023, Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors**
- 2. Approval of the Minutes of the January 26, 2023, Meeting of the Board of Directors**

Board Member Chapman noted one correction on page 5. The vote should show that three Board Members were voted in opposition to the motion, it was inaccurately reflected that the three members abstained. The Clerk noted that would be corrected.

Motion: Move to approve consent agenda items C1 and C2 as amended.

Moved by: Board Member Chapman

Seconded by: Board Member Keel

Aye: Board Members: Ascuaga, Bybee, Chapman, Keel, Murdock, Schieve, and Sferrazza

Nay:

Absent: Board Members: Hartung and Silver

Abstain:

Vote: Motion passed 7-0-2

D. EXECUTIVE UPDATES

D1. Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority CEO Update

President and CEO Charles Harris recognized some members of the RSCVA staff: Lisa Farmer, Mike Morley, Andy Fox, Daniel Marquez, Robert Douglas, Ben McDonald, Adam Villa, Jack Nicholson, and Zach Stockinger. Mr. Harris gave a presentation to update the Board on current achievements, record tax revenues, share information from recent Board Leadership training, and discuss items provided in the recent CEO report.

Board Member Silver arrived at 9:24 a.m.

Mayor Schieve left the meeting at 9:24 a.m. and returned at 9:28 a.m.

Discussion followed regarding the Marketing RFPs and the upcoming legislative session.

E. PRESENTATIONS

E1. Presentation: Annual Plan Update - RSCVA Tourism Sales

Mr. Art Jimenez, Executive Director of Tourism Sales, gave a presentation to update the Board on the tourism sales and marketing and destination alignment key initiatives and goals as outlined in

RSCVA annual plan.

Board Member Keel left the meeting at 10:20 a.m. and returned at 10:24 a.m.

Under the annual goal for Tourism Sales and Marketing, Mr. Jimenez highlighted key initiatives included: Partnership Marketing, Sales Platforms, and Data Mining. The second goal he spoke about was Community Engagement, touching on key initiatives Regularly Scheduled Programming and Building Stronger Relationships.

Board Member Keel asked if the spend was shared equally throughout the year. Mr. Jimenez said they are constantly monitoring performance and may shift resources to areas that are getting better results or are higher performing, but the total amount of the spend is scheduled for the year.

There are plans for a FAM highlighting Washoe County April 25th thru April 29th one day would be spend in each city in the County – Reno, Sparks, Incline Village. Mr. Jimenez was happy to share that corporate travel is returning and would be at the 2019 levels soon. They were working on “bleisure” program with Travel Nevada, to convert business travelers to leisure travelers. His department continues to meet and share initiatives with area DMOs and enhance collaborative efforts. This type of collaboration has led to some wins, including \$20,000 in funding from Travel Nevada for the NTA convention held in November and \$10,000 from the Reno Tahoe Territory to pay for some FAMs during NTA.

Board Member Silver suggested also presenting and collaborating with the local Chamber offices. As the Chamber of Commerce for the area, they often receive calls from people looking to visit and find local activities and programs.

Board Member Ascuaga asked at the next meeting if the Board could be updated on the corporate mix and comparison to some historical data. Mayor Schieve agreed and said it would be interesting to find out what the conversion rate from business to leisure was for travelers. Mr. Jimenez said their tourism channels (OTA/third party sales) create about 30% of travelers. Board Member Murdock asked that the current airport mix of travelers be included as well. It would be helpful to have that information. Board Member Chapman asked if RSCVA was engaging with international representation. Mr. Jimenez said previously they were represented in China, but that was dialed down and then was significantly decreased during COVID. Mr. Harris said the success of that representation depends on international air lift. International travelers stay longer and spend more; however, visa wait times are too long. US Travel was trying to address this with policy makers and legislators.

Board Member Silver left the meeting at 10:38 a.m. Board Member Ascuaga left the meeting at 10:39 a.m.

Mayor Schieve asked for an example of how they turn that business traveler into additional night tourism traveler.

Board Member Ascuaga returned to the meeting at 10:41 a.m.

Mr. Jimenez said they work through the travel advisors to reach out to potential travelers with information about events or activities that would interest them. They also utilize all the materials coming out from Marketing to let people know different aspects of the area and capture their attention.

F. BOARD MATTERS

F1. Review and Discussion Related to the Reno Tahoe Visitor Profile Study Key Findings

Vice President of Marketing Christina Erny said this item was added to the agenda at the request of the Board to further discuss the key findings of the Visitor Profile Study presented at the last meeting by Destination Analysts. She was happy to answer and questions or review the one sheet. Marketing was already starting to shift some of their audience targeting and media placements for Spring and Summer based on the study results.

Board Member Silver returned to the meeting at 10:43 a.m.

Chair Bybee asked what finding was the most important or impactful to driving the decisions being made. Vice President Erny said the one sheet was the summary of the key findings, it was hard to drill down the 180 page report to the one sheet. The items listed on that page were the findings that the group wanted to focus on. One shift was a focus on TikTok and reel style videos that are super popular. They were working on increasing engagement via those type of videos on the social media and YouTube platforms.

Discussion followed regarding some of the shifts shown in the study results related to average age of visitors and focus on potential visitors. Board Member Silver thought the biggest hurdle was air transportation, which was reflected in the study feedback. Discussion followed regarding nonstop flight awareness efforts.

Board Member Murdock requested that a gaming influencer be added to future Marketing initiatives. He agreed that air service was a challenge, but it was based on population. Board Member Sferrazza said there also challenges with aircraft and pilot shortages. Discussion followed regarding sharing the message that Reno was a great value for gaming visitors. Mr. Harris said he was working with local casinos to come up with different ways to share the value message.

Board Member Sferrazza asked that this information be shared with whatever vendor gets the bid for the upcoming regional Master Plan project. It would also be helpful to get the presentation out to local agencies that are working on land use and development planning.

Board Member Keel asked that everyone be mindful of skewing advertising to millennials too much as the average visitor's age was beyond that 42 year old mark. She understood trying to market to the younger demographic for future travel but didn't want to overlook focusing on those particularly interested in gaming in a bit older age bracket.

F2. Discussion and Possible Action to Approve the Recommendation from the Executive and Legislative Committee to Commence Discussions with Charles Harris, RSCVA President and CEO, in an Attempt to Extend the Term of Mr. Harris' Employment Agreement

Board Member Keel (Chair of the Executive and Legislative Committee) asked Legal Counsel, Mr. Ben Kennedy, to review the policy as it related to renewal of the CEO's contract. Mr. Kennedy reported that the CEO's three-year contract was set to expire on October 31, 2023. The policy outlined that discussions on potential contract extension should start by May 1st. If the Board decides not to renew the contract, notice must be given by July 1st.

On February 2, 2023 the Executive and Legislative Committee Chaired by Board Member Keel met to address two questions: 1) Should the RSCVA pursue discussions to renew the CEO contract? and 2) If so, what process does the Committee recommend to proceed with contract renewal? Mr. Kennedy clarified that the agenda item for this meeting was not to discuss the renewal terms, salary, benefits, or length of the contract. The Committee at that meeting took action to recommend the RSCVA Board of Directors pursue renewal discussions and that Board Member Keel would serve as the designated individual to communicate with the CEO and discuss terms.

Once decided the terms would go back to the Committee for review and from there a recommendation could be made to the full Board of Directors to approve the terms of a new contract.

Board Member Keel reassured the Board that she would be in contact with all Board Members prior to any recommendation being considered or made by the Committee. She wants to collect input from all Board Members and would share information on negotiations with Board Members throughout the process. She did point out that Board Members Sferrazza, Silver, and herself had terms that would potentially expire at the end of June. There were options available to negotiate the contract and have the terms set before that time with an effective date in October or to negotiate the contract and move the start date earlier and be effective before the Committee Members depart.

Chair Bybee said she has asked Board Member Keel to start the process early in order for the Board to have adequate time to negotiate and not feel pressured. It was a more relaxed pace than waiting until May 1st. She reiterated that this agenda item was twofold: 1) to decide whether to pursue contract negotiations and 2) to decide the process for contract negotiations.

Mayor Schieve asked for information on who was on each committee and what the committee does. She felt the committees were a little siloed and wanted additional information about how members were selected. She was feeling disconnected. Discussion followed regarding how the committee memberships were appointed by the Chair. Chair Bybee said the committees were formed to do the in depth work and make recommendations to the full Board. She appreciated Board Member Keel offering to serve as the contact and keep all the Board Members involved in the process.

Board Member Sferrazza said she could not support this. As she previously stated during discussion related to the CEO's bonus and merit increase, the majority of the Board was not seated during the original contract negotiation. Five of the members were new. She agreed that having the Executive and Legislative Committee negotiate was creating a silo.

Board Member Sferrazza said this contract was one of the highest paid in the State and she thought it would be beneficial for the entire Board to weigh in at a public meeting. She didn't feel comfortable not knowing how the Committee was selected. She wasn't on the Board for the original contract and it contained items that she wouldn't have voted in favor of. She personally did not want to delegate the negotiation to the Committee. She would like to hear from the other Board Members, but would need to sign off soon (as she was attending Zoom). This is the one employee that the Board has a say on, so it was important.

Board Member Ascuaga did not feel the same. He saw the value of starting the work at the committee level because there were some broad discussions happening. The committee meetings are public which shows transparency. He too had some concerns with the CEO's contract that was negotiated before his time on the Board. However, adding/changing Board Members is not going to change. He was confident that Board Member Keel will openly communicate with all the Board Members. From a Board governance point of view, the committees are where the Board can affect change and get some work done in the first phase. He agreed the full Board needs to weigh in on what is being proposed as a final outcome. For the sake of starting the discussion and getting the negotiations moving, he was in favor of utilizing the Committee.

Motion: Move to approve the recommendation as stated in Item F2.

Moved by: Board Member Chapman

Seconded by: Board Member Silver

Board Member Murdock asked when the Board would see the contract? Every Board Member needs to make sure that they read the contract. Mr. Kennedy said he would send the contract to the Board. Mayor Schieve said she would like to have an attorney/client meeting with Legal Counsel to talk about this. Having the committee start the negotiations and bring the resulting contract to the full Board for consideration was not an issue for her. She would like to have a discussion about an item that was an issue for her before the current contract was signed. Mayor Schieve was not supportive of the current contract at the time and expressed significant concerns. Unfortunately she was not able to attend the meeting at which the current contract was approved. Because of that, she would not be supporting the motion.

Mr. Kennedy said because the CEO's position, the Board can't have a closed meeting to discuss the contract. An attorney/client meeting is not allowed in the context of the CEO's contract or employment issues. Everything had to be discussed in an open meeting per statute. Mayor Schieve said she would bring the items she wanted to discuss to the full Board instead. Mr. Kennedy clarified that Board Member Keel would be reaching out to everyone to collect input. He would have procedures in place to make sure there would not be a walking quorum, to allow her to get input from the Board without violating the Open Meeting Law.

Board Member Silver said she was on the Board at the time when the CEO contract was reviewed and approved. She wasn't contacted by anyone for input. The Board needed to do a better job to make sure everyone is included and informed about the negotiations. She was in favor of the Committee working to start the process and do the leg work.

Chair Bybee agreed and said Board Member Keel had agreed to collect input and keep the Board up to date on the negotiation discussions.

Aye: Board Members: Ascuaga, Bybee, Chapman, Keel, Murdock, and Silver

Nay: Board Members: Schieve and Sferrazza

Absent: Board Member Hartung

Abstain:

Vote: Motion passed 6-2-1

G. BOARD MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS, REPORTS, AND UPDATES

Chair Bybee reminded everyone about the upcoming VIP reception and USBC opening ceremonies at the National Bowling Stadium. Board Member Murdock said it was important that the airport and everyone in town welcome the bowlers. Discussion followed the length of the agreement with USBC.

Mayor Schieve thanked the Chair for going back to monthly meetings. She asked when the Board would be hearing from the new Director of Sales for the National Bowling Stadium about his plans and ideas for marketing the facility. Chair Bybee said it was scheduled for the March meeting.

H. COMMENTS FROM THE FLOOR BY THE PUBLIC

Chair Bybee opened the floor to public comment. There was none, public comment was closed.

I. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bybee adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

The meeting may be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/TrQgvH12ILM>