**How GSAE Produced an In-Person Event for 113 Attendees – Board Decisions**

**Background – What we faced April 1, 2020**

**How Our Board of Directors Approached the Issues**

**Background – What we faced April 1, 2020**

GSAE’s Annual Meeting was scheduled for May 27-29 in Savannah, Georgia at the Hyatt Regency Savannah. As of March 11, 2020, we had 485 room nights, 130 registered attendees, full sponsor brackets and about 45 exhibitors. The Board of Directors approached the issue of cancellation versus postponement through the following lenses. This outline documents our journey from the beginning of the pandemic through our successful completion of our in-person event August 26-28, 2020.

**Board of Directors Decision Tree**

Lenses & Data – GSAE staff provided updates at each subsequent Board of Directors check-in meetings, beginning April 1.

* Governmental Restrictions – local, state, regional and the wider US situation
* Health – CDC guidelines, WHO recommendations, Georgia Department of Public Health
* Financial – Where we were for revenue and expenses
* Community – Most association offices had closed and had sent staff home to telework in March. Many hotels and meeting facilities were facing closures, furloughs, and layoff. During July and August, some association offices re-opened, but the majority were still closed and several had extensive travel restrictions.

**Data Points**

*COVID-19 Developments - Timeline graphic of decision checkpoints*

Dec 31, 2019 China alerted WHO to cases of unusual pneumonia

Jan 20, 2020 First coronavirus case in the United States

Feb 26 Global death toll neared 2,800 with 80,000 confirmed

Mar 11 WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic

Mar 14 30 Day restrictions on travelers from Europe to the US

March 24, 2020 Georgia Governor Kemp restricts certain residents, public gatherings.

School canceled through at least April 24

Various metro counties restrict movement of all residents

Most association offices close and send their workforce virtual

March 30, 2020 Virginia and Ohio governors extend stay in place orders into June

As of April 1, 2020 The number of cases in Georgia has risen to 4,638, with the number of coronavirus-related deaths now at 139.

*Savannah-specific Developments*

* Mayor Van Johnson first declared a local state of emergency for Savannah on March 19, and on Tuesday, March 24, Mayor Johnson issued a shelter-at-home order that exceeds the measures issued by Kemp on Monday, March 23. Johnson’s Tuesday directive, scheduled to expire on April 8, included a ban on all public and private gatherings, and limits travel to conducting essential activities or working for essential businesses.
* Furthermore, on Wednesday, March 25, Johnson announced that Savannah’s barbershops, beauty parlors, and nail salons also must close on Friday, March 27.
* We did not expect the City of Savannah to be open during our original dates, May 27-29.

*Financial*

GSAE had collected about $65,000 in sponsorships and attendee fees as of mid-March (versus an expected revenue of $93,000 and a net of over $30,000). A cancellation with the hotel was as yet an unknown quantity (particularly based on what we were hearing from other associations.). About 75% of our corporate supplier members represent the hospitality sector. 80% of our advertising and sponsorships are also from hospitality sources, including convention and visitors’ bureaus.

**Board Decisions & Additional Data Provided**

**April 1, 2020**

* The Board of Directors approvedsuspending $75 processing fee for any annual meeting cancellations.
* The Board of Directors approved moving the 2020 Annual Meeting to August 26-28, 2020 at the Hyatt Regency Savannah.

**April 15, 2020**

* Notices went out last week to all attendees; GSAE members informed via GSAE Update.
* *BIG unknown* – Hyatt is just canceling reservations this week. Jennie and I think this will cause a spike in cancellations.
* We have re-signed the courtesy block with The Alida. Waiting on Hyatt now.
* We are asking if cancellations want to keep their Foundation donation for the Beer Pour intact.
* General Manager, Amir Blattner, made a great welcome video for the Host Hotel
* Notes
* In MemberClicks – $70,022 posted; of that, $12,871 outstanding
* 134 registrants prior to March 10
* 118 registrants as of April 14, 2020
* 53 are association execs
* Only 28 slots reserved of 75 open tabletops
* All sponsors are confirmed “in” save one Beer Pour sponsor
* Shepard Exposition Services for signage is an *unknown* – could be $5,000 more
* Key speakers except Lowell Aplebaum, CAE, CPF, confirmed

**May 4, 2020**

Based on the current information, the Board of Directors voted to continue planning for the 2020 Annual Meeting in August.

* Hyatt Regency Savannah (we will do overflow, but not until we fill the Hyatt)
* Room block and registration are both open.
* Communications sent to current registrants, previous attendees and new members.
* We’ve had 10 more cancellations since announcing the new dates. Open invoices are about $11,476 now. 114 registrants.
* Adding a hosted golf option, bike ride, to activities
* We have 5 breakout spaces plus 1 more small group space for experimenting

**June 19, 2020**

Based on the current information, the Board of Directors voted to continue planning for the 2020 Annual Meeting in August.

* We are still around 115 attendees. Corporate supplier cancellations continue to flow in as our members return to work.
* I am going down June 28-29 to work through new room sets, food and beverage, and outdoor events.
* We lowered peak nights to 100. Current pick up before speakers and master list is added: 61.
* We are still unclear if we have comp AV support.
* Trade out with PMSI (Marty Bear) for PPE and sanitizer onsite.
* We have lost one break sponsor at $1409.

**July 13, 2020**

Based on the current information, the Board of Directors voted to continue planning for the 2020 Annual Meeting in August.

* We are holding steady again at 117 attendees.
* Assn execs – 58 (still missing 2 assn exec speakers)
* Corp suppliers - 50
* Other - 9
* Breakdown of cancellations below, plus refunded cash.
* Total cancellations since change date announcement on April 4, 2020: 31
  + 3 speakers
  + 14 association execs (not all had paid)
  + 14 corporate suppliers
* New registrants since change announcement in April: 28(a lot are speakers; some trade outs included)
* Reminder, we lowered peak nights to 100 each for a total of 300 – current pick up is 257
* The July Update included the updated safety measures. So far, we only received one wholly negative email response. We did get 3 cancellations that day plus 2 requests to move to 2021.
* ASAE announced free registration to their annual meeting for association exec ASAE members. NO. Words.

*Dollars & Sense*

* Total cash refunds: $9,453
  + 1 refund of $659 because now it’s a trade out for attendee bags
  + Again, 2 attendees asked to move their registration to 2021
* According to approximates – we are still owed about $5,800
* Net collected is right around $60,000 (not excluding Beer Pour for the Foundation)
* New expenses – increased AV from $5,000 to unknown *– call this week with provider*
* Paid Signage instead of free
* Lower room pickup means us paying for more in speaker rooms (we normally would have expected as many as 11-12 comp nights)
* We are moving some honorariums of current speaker payments to 2021 due to travel, but that savings will likely get eaten up with the higher master bill.

**08/01/2020 – Final Go, No Go Meeting**

Based on the current information, the Board of Directors voted to move forward for the 2020 Annual Meeting in August.

* Governmental Restrictions – Gov. Kemp’s executive order regarding conventions
* Health – CDC guidelines, WHO recommendations, Georgia Department of Public Health overview
* Financial –Current revenue and expenses; break even projections
* Community – City of Savannah mask mandates. Hyatt Regency Savannah mask mandate
* Liability issues and duty of care
* Site visit overview with new procedures, room set, safety protocols.