



May 22, 2017

Larry Schooler  
Visitor Impact Task Force  
Austin, Texas

Mr. Schooler:

In response to the letter you and the task force received on May 18 from Ms. Rebecca Melancon, I feel there are several items that need to be addressed due to the misconceptions that were presented about me, the Visit Austin organization, and staff.

Issue 1: When referring to meetings with AIBA, I was referring to the Visit Austin staff and yes, they have met with her on multiple occasions. The last communication Ms. Melancon sent to our staff outlined request for a cash contribution to her organization and for advertising in her guides. That request was countered by Visit Austin with other opportunities for collaboration with no response received from AIBA (see attached email):

- “We would like to continue running the complimentary AIBA banner ads on our website – originally committed thru end of 2013 – through end of year 2014.” *Despite no response from AIBA’s team, Visit Austin fulfilled this offer.*
- “In addition, our Film Commission will continue to work with your team to highlight AIBA members in our Film Vendor discount program.”
- “We will also continue to highlight AIBA members in the individual listings on our website. We are likely due for a refresh of that content; Amy do you have a spreadsheet you can provide with all members that we can cross reference with our database? Any that are missing or not coded as AIBA members can then be updated.” *Despite no response from AIBA’s team, Visit Austin fulfilled this initial offer and on an annual basis, we update our database with AIBA’s latest members lists using the IBIZ brochure(s) as a guide.*
- “In addition to the above, we are running a shopping ad buy with Texas Monthly in August and would love to highlight an AIBA member or two. Attached is the creative – I was thinking Amelia’s or Room Service might be good options (to replace one of the existing mentioned businesses; keep in mind this is a draft of creative). I’ll let you know what we finally land on, but this is a great example of the type of one-off projects we can partner together on to promote AIBA membership.”

Issue 2: We do not promote the “IBIZ” districts by name specifically. We do promote AIBA business members that are relevant to the visitor in a variety of ways. NOTE: The general consumer is not familiar with “IBIZ,” nor are they looking for a business alliance when they

are in town, and will not search using those terms. See attached list of members, added to the website in spring 2017, as part of our annual efforts to include AIBA/IBIZ members. NOTE: this is not a comprehensive list of all AIBA members listed on Visit Austin's site – only those recently added.

- We list and promote in a variety of ways, a majority of AIBA's member businesses across Visit Austin channels. As far as their members, we do promote heavily and they can easily be found on our website and other channels by searching by individual business name or by category of service.

Issue 3: We do promote all Austin businesses that would be of interest to the visitor, not just those that are members of her organization. In addition to the marketing opportunities we have offered her organization, we provide the following AIBA and IBIZ promotion at our Visitor Center (see attached images for reference):

- Distribution of TWO brochures in the Austin Visitor Center. AIBA marketing tents are on display on the counters and their marketing cling is prominently displayed on the window at the Visitor Center. AIBA has participated in our program since 2008.

What Ms. Melancon is missing is an understanding of how to market to potential visitors. Visiting locally owned business is usually a decision that is made while in market and is not the primary reason they visit a destination. Through our marketing efforts, we inspire visitors to choose our destination, and during their planning process (and while in market), to select attractions, businesses, and events that will complete their itinerary.

Ms. Melancon points out in her latest communication (see attached flyer), that Visit Austin in fact does promote local business. Specifically, she states: **“Even ACVB uses our local business community to attract both tourists and conventions. Take a look at these pages from ACVB's Visitor Guide. What do you see? Local businesses. Why? Because local business sells Austin.”** Exactly, we are already promoting AIBA member businesses.

Issue 4: I take personal offense to her accusations that I have provided deceptive information or have denied the task force members opportunities to consider all of the NINE legal uses of Hotel Occupancy Tax. I respectfully request time be permitted to me at the meeting on May 18, to address these erroneous accusations.

Sincerely,



Tom Noonan  
President & CEO