



ORANGE COUNTY MAYOR

Jerry L. Demings

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January 10, 2020

To: Commissioner Betsy VanderLey, District 1
Commissioner Christine Moore, District 2
Commissioner Mayra Uribe, District 3
Commissioner Maribel Gomez Cordero, District 4
Commissioner Emily Bonilla, District 5
Commissioner Victoria P. Siplin, District 6

From: Mayor Jerry L. Demings

Subject: Executive Director, Orange County Convention Center

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Mark Tester as Executive Director of the Orange County Convention Center. Mr. Tester comes to Orange County from Austin, Texas. He is originally from Duluth, MN and grew up in the convention industry. His father ran convention and visitors bureaus in Wisconsin and Alabama.

In Austin Mr. Tester managed every aspect of the Austin Convention Center and the Palmer Events Center as Director. In addition, he served on the Executive Committee of Visit Austin and as President of Austin Convention Enterprises; the Board that oversees the City financed 800 room Hilton Austin. Prior to Austin, Mr. Tester spent 13 years working in the Chicago convention community holding senior positions at both the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau (now Choose Chicago), and the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority, the owner and manager at that time of McCormick Place, the western hemisphere's largest convention facility. His resume is attached.

I believe Mr. Tester's goals of creating high-end customer service and driving economic impact through sales and marketing aligns perfectly with my expectations for what the Orange County Convention Center can be both now and in the future.

The acquisition of the ideal candidate for this position was longer than anticipated. We discovered our compensation package as a government agency is not as competitive with the other top-tier markets we routinely compete against for shows where most convention centers are privately owned, managed, and operated. Private enterprises have more flexibility with respect to compensation packages (salary, bonus potential, relocation benefits, etc.) For example a recent survey of nine national tier 1 convention centers revealed an average compensation package of \$321,529, not including additional benefits such as car allowance and stipends. After our first recruiting effort we partnered with *Search Wide Global*, an executive search firm with specific expertise in this industry, to assist us in canvassing the entire country to find the right fit.

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Search Wide Global was able to generate a very strong candidate pool. We also collaborated with community partners in the tourism, hospitality and hotel industry and invited these stakeholders to participate in the interview process. It was this collaborative process that has produced Mr. Mark Tester, an individual who we believe can lead us to the next level as we compete globally for conventions, meetings, and trade shows.

In his new role Mr. Tester will be responsible for the overall planning, marketing, operations, and activities of the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC) and to ensure a positive economic impact on the community. Mr. Tester will also provide the leadership required to ensure that short and long term economic impact goals and strategies are achieved. Mr. Tester is joining a team that is striving to achieve a level of unparalleled customer service while seizing opportunities to increase the number of events, expand the use of available convention space, and maximize the demand for room nights in area hotels.

Pending your confirmation, Mr. Tester's first day of employment will be Monday, February 10, 2020. His starting annual salary will be \$249,995.20.

ACTION REQUESTED: Confirmation of the Mayor's managerial appointment of Mark Tester as Executive Director, Orange County Convention Center.

JLD/ldb

Attachment: Resume

cc: Byron W. Brooks, County Administrator
Randy Singh, Deputy County Administrator
Chris Testerman, Deputy County Administrator
Danny Banks, Deputy County Administrator
Roseann Harrington, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

MARK D TESTER

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SUMMARY

Top producing visitor industry leader seeks opportunity to take a progressive organization to the next level.

SKILLS

- Revenue growth
- Accomplished public speaker
- Long Range Planning
- Face to face marketing expert
- Assct Management
- Development of Operating and Capital Budgets
- Sales and Sales Management
- Marketing and Public Relations
- Organizational Development
- Government Relations
- Fiscal Oversight, Contract Compliance and Internal Audit function
- Organizational Development

EXPERIENCE

CITY OF AUSTIN (AUSTIN CONVENTION CENTER DEPT)

Austin, TX

Director

01/2008 to Current

- Director of enterprise department for City of Austin
- Responsible for all aspects of Austin Convention Center, Palmer Events Center, and three parking garages with Fiscal 2020 budget of \$118 million (\$66 million operating budget)
- Manage staff of 301 full-times employees and over 400 temporary employees
- Increased revenue generated through facilities and services to record levels in each of last seven fiscal years
- Room nights generated through convention center bookings have increased 58% on an annual basis compared to 2008 figures
- Achieved high Customer Satisfaction goals on annual basis
- Executive committee member of Board of Directors of Visit Austin, Board Advisor to the Austin Hotel Lodging Association and member of Safety and Security Committee for Downtown Austin Alliance (Chair 2009-2011)
- Austin Convention Center became just 2nd convention center to achieve the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED-EB Gold certification
- Hosted largest Professional Convention Management Association Convening Leaders convention in 60 year history of association

AUSTIN CONVENTION ENTERPRISES

Austin, TX

President

01/2008 to Current

- Board President for 800 room city owned, Hilton Austin
- President of Austin Convention Condominium Association that includes the Hilton Austin (ACE), the 555 Condominiums, and the Austin Chamber of Commerce
- Actively involved in annual operating and capital budgets
- Completed 5 year Capital Plan that totaled \$53 million in improvements, including complete renovation of sleeping rooms, complete re-design and branding of all food and beverage outlets, and complete renovation of lobby and ballroom and meeting space
- Successfully negotiated long term dispute with 555 Condominiums reaching settlement and ending litigation
- Led city processes to gain approval for Overhead Walkway that connects Hilton Austin directly into Austin Convention Center on ballroom levels (Completed Fall 2018)
- Hilton Austin awarded The Connie Award as top producing Hilton in chain (2016)

METRO PIER & EXPOSITION AUTH (MCCORMICK PLACE)

Chicago, IL

Senior Director, Convention Sales And Marketing

03/2005 to 12/2008

- Member of executive team of Western Hemisphere's largest convention center with direct involvement in all aspects of facility.
- Managed annual contract with Choose Chicago, including implementation of production goals and incentive plan.

- Responsible for developing convention calendar that generated \$100 million in convention center revenue.
- Developed and approved rental strategies on all negotiated deals.
- Created "Collaborative Selling" program that redefined responsibilities of bureau and convention center sales teams.
- Developed sales strategy for McCormick Place West Building expansion, which opened in 2007 with 76 definite events.

CHOOSE CHICAGO (CHICAGO CONV. AND TOURISM BUREAU)

Chicago, IL

Vice President Of Convention Sales

06/2003 to 03/2005

- Executive staff member with daily involvement in all aspects of organization.
- Sales team produced highest annual room night production in history with over 3.2 million room nights.
- Developed and implemented new sales plan for selling of McCormick Place and Navy Pier convention facilities.
- Negotiated annual sales contract, including goals, with the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority, the owners and operators of McCormick Place and Navy Pier.

CHOOSE CHICAGO (CHICAGO CONV. AND TOURISM BUREAU)

Chicago, IL

Assistant Vice President

06/2001 to 06/2003

- Reporting to President, responsible for management of 20 sales and support professionals.
- Developed Needs Assessment for proposed expansion of McCormick Place.
- Revamped Sales Incentive program to help maximize production.

CHOOSE CHICAGO (CHICAGO CONV. AND TOURISM BUREAU)

Chicago, IL

Senior Director

06/1999 to 06/2001

- Responsible for team production of new business for McCormick Place and Navy Pier.
- Chair of McCormick Place Scheduling Committee.
- Management of Washington, D.C. Sales office with 5 direct reports.
- Conducted monthly New Business reviews with 14 sales professionals.
- Booked largest new annual event in organization history which represented 122,000 total room nights on annual basis.

CHOOSE CHICAGO (CHICAGO CONV. AND TOURISM BUREAU)

Chicago, IL

Director Of National Accounts

06/1995 to 07/1999

- Responsible for soliciting and capturing convention business for Chicago, McCormick Place, and Navy Pier convention facilities.
- Concentrated efforts on development of new business with emphasis on the for profit trade show market.
- Partnered with the Mayor's Office of Special Events on capturing sports related events such as Big Ten's Men's Basketball Tournament and the Women's World Cup.
- Exceeded booking goals on annual basis.

SONESTA INTERNATIONAL HOTELS CORPORATION

Atlanta, Ga

Regional Sales Manager

12/1992 to 06/1995

- Directed all group sales efforts for chain of hotels, resorts, and cruise ships in assigned territory.
- Experience in selling offshore, incentive, and high dollar business.
- Developed strong client base in market without previous chain exposure.

SONESTA VILLA RESORT

Orlando, Fl

National Sales Manager

11/1991 to 12/1992

- Directed all sales efforts for Midwest and Northeast markets.
- Gained extensive experience in both domestic and international tour and travel markets.
- Negotiated contracts with inbound operators/wholesalers.

INDIAN LAKES RESORT

Bloomington, IL

Sales Manager

11/1989 to 11/1991

- Responsible for generating association, corporate and SMERF group business for high volume group resort.
- Primary focus on Chicago and Midwest markets.

UNITED STATES RESORTS

LaGrange, IL

Regional Sales Manager

02/1989 to 11/1989

- Headed up Chicago group sales office for the Grand Traverse Resort of Traverse City, Mi.
- Handled all group market segments in Chicago area.

SHERATON INTERNATIONAL AT O'HARE

Chicago, IL

Convention Services/Catering Manager

10/1987 to 02/1989

- Coordinated all meeting and food and beverage requirements for all incoming conferences and meetings at major airport hotel.
- In charge of meeting room/ballroom set up
- Managed staff of 12 full time employees.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

BACHELOR OF ARTS: COMMUNICATION

Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN