

# Visitors Center evaluates events

By **Jolene Guzman**  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The Dallas Area Visitors Center is evaluating its annual slate of events to make sure they are meeting the mission of the organization.

Dallas Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Center CEO JD Shinn presented an update to the Dallas City Council at its July 17 meeting, demonstrating what the community is getting in return for the hotel taxes given to the organization to promote tourism.

Shinn said the technical definition of “tourist” is someone who stays overnight in at a location. Those visitors spend the most money in a community.

“Currently, as we look at our events, we’ll not really drawing a lot of tourists by that definition,” Shinn said. “We do get some, but we are not drawing a whole ton. We get a lot of same-day visitors who love Dallas, and love to come and take part in our events.”

He said estimates on attendance at events all year is 54,200 and that measures “attendances,” which could count one person more than once if they visit an event multiple times.

Shinn said the chamber receives about \$82,000 in hotel taxes and doubles that money through sponsorships and fees to host events.

By that measure, each time a person attends an event, it costs \$3.03, Shinn said.

He said the organization and board want to take a closer look at the events it is spending that money on by asking, “Are we doing the right stuff?”

“This is a big transition year,” he said. “You all know I’m new to the position, seeking to create a new culture and taking where we are at and moving it further beyond what we’ve been doing in the past.”



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer file

**Summerfest draws an estimated 17,000 attendances each year.**

He said Polk County Bounty Market — the weekly farmers market that runs May through September — is a good program.

Freedomfest is growing, especially with reinstating the barbecue contest this year.

Summerfest, Dallas signature event starting Thursday, draws the biggest crowds, estimated at 17,000 attendances.

Shinn said it’s tough to provide solid numbers on that event, and he will ask police and fire departments for estimates this year.

Winterfest, the kick off celebration for the Christmas season, appeals mostly to Dallas-area residents and pulled in about 1,500 people in 2016, in what Shinn said is a conservative estimate.

He said Winterfest could benefit through a partnership with the Dallas Downtown Association, which held a Christmas bazaar a few weeks after Winterfest. He said planning the events for the same time could broaden interest.

Shinn said preliminary evaluation reveals some



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer file

**Winterfest attracted about 1,500 people in 2016.**

questions about the Old-Timers Reunion Picnic and the trick-n-treat event.

He said the Old-Timers Reunion has potential.

“If we can make the right tweaks and changes, (it could) have a lot of impact in terms of drawing people back into Dallas who are Dragons and want to show their Dragon pride and come and say, ‘I graduated from here 40 years ago. I want to come back and enjoy my community,’” he said.

Trick-n-treat he wasn’t so confident about.

The Halloween event held

each year at Morrison Campus Alternative School has a pattern of declining attendance.

Shinn added he has a plan if the organization finds it doesn’t fit anymore.

“So, is this one mission-centric? It doesn’t look like it, but I don’t want to take it just because it doesn’t look like it. I want bring more data to see if that is something we want to do,” he said. “If we do cut it, I would like to pass it on to someone else who can run it and be community-minded about it.”

# City to ask residents about public safety facilities options

By **Jolene Guzman**  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — City officials say the Dallas Police Department and Fire & EMS need new or upgraded facilities, especially the police department, which shares space in Dallas City Hall.

“Anyone who has been in our (police) facility knows that they are spread across three or four different areas,” said City Manager Ron Foggin. “As we continue to grow, EMS and the fire service, those facilities are also in desperate need to grow.”

The price tag on providing new facilities gives some members of the city council pause, so much so that they would like more public input before moving forward.

The city hired Portland architectural firm Makenzie to evaluate two options for upgrading the police and fire and EMS departments.

The first had the police department moving to the former Department of Human Services building on the corner of Church and Oak streets near the Dallas Post Office.

That building and the fire station on Shelton Street would both be remodeled at an estimated cost of nearly \$14.7 million.

The second option upgraded the fire station with a new building for police attached at an estimated

cost of about \$14 million. Both options include a combined emergency operation center, community room and training facility at the fire station.

To reach those figures, Makenzie asked each department for current space needs, what amenities they needed but didn’t have, and how much growth is anticipated in the next 20 years, said Cathy Bowman, a project manager with Makenzie.

For police, that meant having department administrators close to police operations and secured parking for patrol vehicles. Fire & EMS needs a bunk room to provide 24-hour coverage, and would like to have fire and EMS operations in the same building.

Bowman added the new police station would need to meet “essential facility” seismic standards.

Councilor Micky Garus asked during Makenzie’s presentation on July 17 if the current owner of the DHS building completed the necessary upgrades, without having to pay prevailing wage to workers — a requirement for the city — if the cost would come down.

Jeff Humphreys, Makenzie’s director of architecture, said yes, by about 10 to 15 percent on the police remodel, not enough to close the gap between the two projects.

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