

# MINUTES OF THE HATTIESBURG TOURISM COMMISSION BOARD MEMBERS & MANAGEMENT

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Minutes of a regularly scheduled meeting of the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission of the City of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, held at Hattiesburg's Holiday Inn and Suites on:

**July 10, 2019**

Be it remembered that on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of July, the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission met in a regular meeting in the conference room of the Holiday Inn Hattiesburg, being a place fixed by law for such meetings. A quorum was not met, so discussion ensued with formal business being deferred until the scheduled August 2019 board meeting. Frank James, Chairman of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, called the meeting to order at 11:42 a.m. The following Members of the Board were found to be present:

**PRESENT**

Bonnie Warren  
Frank James  
Anthony Harris

**ABSENT**

Fei Xue, Ph.D.  
Marshall Bell  
Torsky Williams  
Melanie Archer

**ALSO PRESENT**

Marlo Dorsey, Management  
David Ott, Counsel  
Kristen Brock, Programs and Promotions  
Paige Hunt, Sales

**Citizens Forum**

No guests were present for a Citizens Forum during this meeting.

**Minutes from Previous Board Meetings**

Because quorum was not met, April minutes will be reviewed and voted on at the August 2019 board meeting.

**Financial Report**

Marlo presented the financial report. Included was a document with updated tax receipts for the commission's 2% special hotel levy. The report showed month-to-date revenue up 4% from the year prior. Hattiesburg now has a total of 3,067 hotel rooms with the Avid Hotel also under construction off of North 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The VisitHattiesburg staff will work strategically to keep high occupancy numbers.

The claims dockets for the months of May and June were presented, along with reconciled balances of all Hattiesburg Tourism Commission assets through June 30, 2019. Based on previous discussions of the board, two Money Market accounts were closed, and those funds were transferred to one, higher-yielding CD at Region's Bank. As of May 31, 2019, total assets for the Commission were \$1,415,812.84. This includes \$2,506.19 from the new Region's CD, which totals more interest in 2 months than what was collected from all accounts in FY2018. Bonnie Warren suggested looking at all lower-yielding accounts and researching rates at BancorpSouth and Trustmark to see if the funds should be

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transferred for a higher return. Marlo will research these additional options.

Because quorum was not met, May and June financials will be reviewed and voted on at the August board meeting.

### **Old Business**

The board entered discussion regarding future office space more appropriate to meet the needs of VisitHattiesburg. Marlo reported that research was being done on locations in both Downtown and Midtown Hattiesburg.

Marlo provided an update on the strategic plan process for VisitHattiesburg. In 2018, the Board approved a \$50,000 allocation to be spent on a long-term strategic plan process for Hattiesburg and, after a full Request for Proposal process, Young Strategies was the selected provider. The process officially began in June, when Young Strategies visited Hattiesburg to perform several stakeholder sessions with groups including hoteliers, restaurants, elected officials, artists, educational institutions, economic development officials, and City of Hattiesburg staff. A timeline was presented that showed research and additional visits will continue through September, with a final report and suggestions to be presented by Young Strategies in October 2019.

### **New Business**

Marlo presented an update on the FY2019 budget, which shows that income and expense projections are on-track. At the August 2019 board meeting, a preliminary budget for FY2020 will be presented to the board. After the board's review and approval, the final budget will be presented to City Council in late August.

Marlo and Kristen provided a brief overview of recent special projects, which included a successful National Travel and Tourism Week in May and the launch of a new website, logo, and collateral for the Longleaf Trace, a project on which the Trace and VisitHattiesburg collaborated.

Kristen provided an update on the 2019 Mississippi Miss Hospitality competition slated for later this month, which will host 43 contestants - the most in more than a decade. Last week, contestant Lake Little was in a plane accident that took her life. The program will honor Lake and her family through a scholarship program, on-stage dedication, and keepsake pilot's wings for each contestant to wear during the week.

Paige Hunt announced she has been named an ex-officio member to the Midtown Hattiesburg Association. Anthony asked the VisitHattiesburg staff, in both those meetings and elsewhere, to discuss infrastructure and street issues being faced across Hattiesburg.

Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

### **Hattiesburg Tourism Commission:**

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Frank James, Board Chair

### **Attested:**

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Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director