

MINUTES OF THE HATTIESBURG TOURISM COMMISSION BOARD MEMBERS & MANAGEMENT

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:

December 11, 2019

Be it remembered that on the 11th day of December, 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 for such meetings. Frank James, Chairman of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, called the meeting to order at 11:35 a.m. The following Members of the Board were found to be present:

PRESENT

Bonnie Warren
Frank James
Fei Xue, Ph.D.
Melanie Archer
Anthony Harris

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

Marlo Dorsey, Management
David Ott, Counsel
Kristen Brock, Programs and Promotions
Paige Hunt, Sales
Paige Robertson, Communications
Berkley Young, Young Strategies

Citizens Forum

With no public guests present, citizens forum was not held.

Minutes from Previous Board Meetings

After full review and upon motion by Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Fei Xue, there was unanimous favorable vote of the board to approve October 2019 meeting minutes. Also presented by David Ott were Executive Session minutes from October 2019. Following a full review and upon motion by Bonnie Warren, duly seconded by Anthony Harris, there was unanimous favorable vote of the board to approve October 2019 Executive Session minutes.

Financial Report

Marlo presented the financial report. Included was a document with updated tax receipts for the commission's 2% special hotel levy. As of November 30, the report showed year-to-date received revenue at \$237,204 for the first two months of FY2020. November 2019 tax income of \$177,732 includes revenue from the MS Department of Revenue to compensate for tourism tax dollars mistakenly sent to the Hattiesburg Convention Commission.

The claims dockets for the months of October and November were presented. October expenditures include annual memberships, grant distributions, and other one-time costs associated with each fiscal year. After full review and discussion and upon motion by Anthony Harris and duly seconded by Fei Xue, there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve financial reports as presented.

Reconciled balances of all Hattiesburg Tourism Commission assets through November 30, 2019 were presented with a total balance of \$1,522,793.87. Included on the report were details of each account with financial institution, current interest rates, and maturity dates listed.

Old Business

Chairman James turned the meeting over to Berkley Young, President of Young Strategies, to share findings and recommendations for VisitHattiesburg's long-term strategic plan. After months of research and visits to Hattiesburg, a full, five-year plan, developed by Young Strategies, was presented to the board. Each person in attendance was provided with a physical plan, including details of the overall mission and vision for VisitHattiesburg as the area's destination management and marketing leader.

Young reported that destination management and marketing organizations throughout the country have increasingly important roles, sharing that VisitHattiesburg must fulfill its strategic goals as a forward-looking economic development entity working in partnership with the City of Hattiesburg, Forrest & Lamar Counties, the Area Development Partnership (ADP includes the Chamber and EDC), and the Hattiesburg Convention Commission. He stated that, upon its adoption, the plan calls for the Tourism Commissioners to fulfill the vision for Hattiesburg in 2025 in partnership with the City and other economic development groups through goal setting and committee work. After full review and discussion and upon motion by Bonnie Warren, duly seconded by Melanie Archer, there was a unanimous favorable vote to adopt the strategic plan as presented.

Marlo reported that work continues for office lease options. After touring various spaces in Midtown and Downtown, it was determined to continue looking for a better suited space prior to the Visitors Center lease ending in April. Further lease discussion and action was tabled until the February 2020 board meeting.

New Business

King CPA, the firm historically chosen to perform the Commission's annual audit, presented a bid of \$8,075 for the FY2019 annual audit. After full review and a motion by Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Fei Xue, the board unanimously approved to move forward with King CPA's proposal.

Marlo presented a plan from Sound Diplomacy that includes a proposal for a music ecosystem study of Hattiesburg to engage tourists with local musical offerings. She asked the board to prepare for the future possibility of a consultant coming in to discuss the plan and VisitHattiesburg's support of this project at the February board meeting.

The board continued discussions on the purchase of a company vehicle to serve as a mobile Visitors Center and transportation to sales and marketing events for VisitHattiesburg. A request for proposal was sent to all local dealerships and all five responses received were presented to the board for consideration. After reviewing all proposals and upon motion by Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Anthony Harris, the board approved a maximum total purchase of \$25,000 for a minivan and will leave the final purchasing decision to Marlo with Frank's guidance.

Marlo briefly provided a marketing update, including information on the upcoming New Years Eve celebrations in Hattiesburg, including Midnight on Front Street, with which VisitHattiesburg is partnering as a presenting sponsor through

the Tourism Grant Program.

Paige Hunt presented a sales update including recent and upcoming activities including Travel South Domestic Showcase in St. Louis December 2-5 and the MS Society of Association Executives annual meeting with five Hattiesburg partners participating November 17-19 in Mobile, AL.

Kristen Brock provided a programs and promotions update, reporting that Round 2 of FY2020 Tourism Grants will begin in February. Hattiesburg Alliance for Public Art, under the umbrella of VisitHattiesburg, will begin a focus on downtown murals after the first of the year as well. Brock also provided a Mississippi Miss Hospitality program update, including a list of events that include strong participation in inauguration activities for Governor Tate Reeves in January.

Marlo presented next steps for the Strategic Plan process, which includes developing a process to begin the plan's task as well as determining how to disseminate the plan's information to stakeholders.

Upon motion by Melanie Archer, seconded by Fei Xue, there was discussion to consider entering Executive Session followed by a unanimous favorable vote to enter Executive Session for the purpose of personnel updates. During Executive Session, personnel matters were discussed resulting in the commissioners approving a salary increase for the current Executive Director effective the following pay period.

Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:33 pm.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission:

Frank James, Board Chair

Attested:

Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director