

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 teleconference via GoToMeeting platform during COVID-19 on:

April 29, 2020

Be it remembered that on the 29th day of April, the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission met in a regular meeting via teleconference due to the gathering restrictions of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Frank James, Chairman of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.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

Citizens Forum

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

Minutes from Previous Board Meetings

After full review and upon motion by Bonnie Warren, duly seconded by Melanie Archer, there was unanimous favorable vote of the board to approve February 2020 meeting minutes. David Ott ask that Executive Session minutes from December 2019 be deferred to the next in-person commission meeting.

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 March 31, the report showed year-to-date received revenue at \$468,259 for the first six months of FY2020, compared to \$388,613 from the first six months of last fiscal year. Marlo notes this increase of approximately \$80,000 from the year prior would be greatly needed as the effects of COVID-19 were drastically reducing hotel revenue for the foreseeable near future.

The claims dockets for the months of February and March were presented. These budgeted expenditures were provided in full detail by line item. After full review and discussion and upon motion by Melanie Archer 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 March 31, 2020 were presented with a total

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balance of \$1,481,114.42. Included on the report were details of each account with financial institution, current interest rates, and maturity dates listed.

Old Business

Marlo provided an update on the FY2019 audit process, stating King CPA firm would present the FY2019 audit at the next scheduled commission meeting. She was in the process of providing all financial records and reports.

Marlo reported no report had been provided back to Attorney David Ott or through the Convention Commission on a lease since the last letter was submitted to the HCC for an update on terms or guidelines.

Additionally, no progress had been made on a securing a company vehicle, which was approved for purchase in December 2019 since strict social distancing guidelines were still in place with restricted travel.

New Business

An FY2020 budget update was presented to the commission by Marlo for consideration of budget reductions in various categories. The former adopted budget would need to be reforecast with newer revenue projections from hotel revenue collections. With occupancy being down more than 60% in March and April, a new budget was presented that adjusted expenses by \$139,329 in the following areas: marketing and advertising, travel, and office operations. More details would be provided on the PPP application and if the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission would be provided those funds and be eligible for loan forgiveness for them.

Noting the available financial assets on hand and after a lengthy discussion on future revenue projections and upon motion by Bonnie Warren and duly seconded by Anthony Harris, there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve the presented budget reductions and revenue estimates as presented. Chairman James noted the group would be able to review updates at the next meeting and make any necessary adjustments if required.

Marlo provided an update on a statewide effort with her counterparts at other Destination Marketing Organizations in Mississippi called the Mississippi Tourism Recovery Fund. She shared that approximately 24 other organizations had joined together to discuss ways the tourism industry could work together to help revitalize their destinations through possible grants from federal dollars that would be given to each state. In doing so, they would require legal and disaster recovery assistance to be knowledgeable on the rules and regulations with how to effectively proceed with these efforts. Marlo presented an option for professional services for this purpose, which were within the allocated perimeters of the commission's legislation. Attorney Ott provided a brief update on the value of independent expertise in this area to deal with unprecedented business disruption for the tourism industry. Following a discussion on the importance of stability and recovery and upon motion by Bonnie Warren and duly seconded by Melanie Archer, there was a unanimous favorable vote to move forward with securing professional services for this purpose.

Marlo provided a brief update on staffing, where directors were working from home and slowly returning to the office in a rotation to maintain social distancing.

An updated plan for the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Competition was presented, which would alter the week of preliminary activities to virtual sessions. After a full discussion and budget forecast, and upon motion by Bonnie Warren and duly seconded by Anthony Harris, there was a unanimous favorable vote to move forward with a virtual preliminary competition to follow social distancing guidelines set in place by executive order of the Governor.

Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:23 p.m.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission:



Frank James, Board Chair

Attested:

Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director