

**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, was held at the Hattiesburg Train Depot on:

February 23, 2022

Be it remembered that on the 23rd day of February, the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission met in person at the Hattiesburg Train Depot Community Room. Frank James, Chairman of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, called the meeting to order at 12:17 p.m. The following Members of the Board were found to be present:

PRESENT

Frank James
Melanie Archer
Michael Marks
Shawn Lowrey
Anthony Harris

ABSENT

Bonnie Warren

ALSO PRESENT

Marlo Dorsey, Management
Kristen Brock, Staff
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 Michael Marks, duly seconded by Melanie Archer, there was unanimous favorable vote of the board to approve December 2021 meeting 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 February 28, the report showed year-to-date revenue at \$437,228, calculating year-over-year growth for the fiscal year at 24.3%.

Claims dockets for the months of December 2021 and January 2022 were also presented. All expenditures were provided in full detail by line item and were budgeted expenses.

Reconciled balances of all Hattiesburg Tourism Commission assets through January 31, 2022 were

presented, showing a total balance of \$1,933,677.37. Included on the report were details of each account with financial institution, current interest rates, and maturity dates listed. Marlo noted that the Region's account is not currently bearing interest, and she has an inquiry in to the bank regarding this issue. All accounts have been reconciled by accountants at McArthur, Slay, & Dews, PLLC.

After a full discussion and upon a motion made by Shawn Lowrey and duly seconded by Michael Marks, there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve the financial report as presented.

Old Business

Marlo provided an update on Hattiesburg's tourism legislation renewal, which sunsets on June 30, 2022. A resolution for the proposed legislation was presented to Hattiesburg City Council in December 2021, where the council adopted to move forward with the renewal process. Representative Missy McGee will introduce the bill in the house, requesting an extension of Hattiesburg's 2% hotel tax levy. Marlo shared she was in direct contact with Senators Polk and Johnson regarding the extension of the levy.

Over the last several months, Marlo has joined tourism colleagues in Jackson to seek additional ARPA funding for the state's tourism industry. Earlier this month, bills approving round 2 of the Tourism Recovery Fund passed committee in both the Mississippi House and Senate, with final funding decisions being determined in conference.

New Business

The annual DHA cooperative agreement with VisitHattiesburg is up for renewal. This year, the shared employee listed in the agreement has been given more responsibilities to assist with the growth of downtown and a corresponding increase in pay. No other changes were made to the agreement. After a full discussion and upon a motion made by Melanie Archer and duly seconded by Anthony Harris, there was a unanimous favorable vote to renew the cooperative agreement through December 31, 2022.

Kristen provided a brief overview of year-over-year tax revenue updates and current sales efforts, as work continues to bring group business to Hattiesburg. A year-over-year overview of hotel and restaurant tax levies shows that Hattiesburg hotel collections are up over 54% for the year while restaurant collections are 29.7% higher than the previous year. There are several sports and outdoor events scheduled for early spring, and conferences are beginning to return in fall 2022.

Marlo shared updates on VisitHattiesburg's marketing strategies. An analytic overview of current campaigns was presented, showing rapid growth including a yearly increase of 90,000 users on Facebook and more than 40,000 new website visitors over the last two months. These reports allow the VisitHattiesburg team to see who is visiting Hattiesburg from where, and aid in the development of future marketing strategies. Examples of national PR featuring Hattiesburg were also provided, with articles appearing in publications such as *Travel Pulse*, *Travel + Leisure*, and Yahoo! News.

Kristen presented a Programs & Promotions update, beginning with Hattiesburg Alliance for Public Art's recent and upcoming projects, including the second project in the Midtown Mural Series, to be completed by national artist Kayla Newnam in March. She also announced that Hattiesburg was named a "Top 11 Arts Destination in the World" in January. As HAPA continues to grow, a FY22 proposed projects report was developed and presented to the board. A Mississippi Miss Hospitality update was also provided, showing 37

confirmed programs for this year's competition as of February.

Also presented was a list of FY22 Tourism Grant Program recipients and additional requests. Because a large number of events are returning for the first time since the pandemic and there is an increased need for funding, VisitHattiesburg has received a record number of qualified grant candidates. The board was asked to review and consider another increase for the remaining months of the fiscal year as all current funds have been expended, which will be taken up at the following meeting in April.

Executive Session

Upon motion by Melanie Archer, seconded by Anthony Harris, there was discussion to consider entering Executive Session for the purpose of personnel updates. Following unanimous favorable vote, the board entered Executive Session with all meeting members remaining present. During Executive Session, the board reviewed personnel matters from the December 2021 board meeting. Following full discussion and upon a motion made by Michael Marks and duly seconded by Anthony Harris, there was unanimous favorable vote to exit Executive Session.

Being no other business, and upon motion by Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Shawn Lowrey, the meeting was adjourned at 1:42 p.m.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission:

Frank James, Board Chair

Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director