

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:

December 8, 2021

Be it remembered that on the 8th day of December, 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 12:11 p.m. The following Members of the Board were found to be present:

PRESENT

Frank James
Melanie Archer
Michael Marks
Shawn Lowrey

ABSENT

Fei Xue, Ph.D.
Bonnie Warren
Anthony Harris

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 Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Michael Marks, there was unanimous favorable vote of the board to approve November 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 November 30, the report showed year-to-date revenue at \$192,224, including a \$101,379 check for September 2021 hotel stays, a record monthly hotel tax collection for Hattiesburg. Calculations for the first two months of FY2022 show 44% year-over-year growth.

The claims docket for the month of October 2021 was presented. November reports will be included at the February 2022 meeting due to the December meeting being held earlier than usual. All expenditures were provided in full detail by line item and were budgeted expenses.

Reconciled balances of all Hattiesburg Tourism Commission assets through November 30, 2021 were presented with a total balance of \$1,927,895.74. Included on the report were details of each account with financial institution, current interest rates, and maturity dates listed. All accounts have been reconciled by accountants at McArthur, Slay, & Dews, PLLC.

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

Old Business

Marlo has joined tourism colleagues in Jackson to seek additional state and federal funding for the industry. On December 8, 2021 she testified in front of a committee, requesting \$152 million in ARPA funding for destination marketing in Mississippi. Additionally, Marlo worked on a resolution for Hattiesburg's tourism legislation renewal, which will be presented to Hattiesburg City Council at the end of December and then introduced in the MS House of Representatives by Missy McGee in early 2022.

New Business

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 hotel collections are up nearly 34% for the year while restaurant collections are 19.7% higher than the previous year. In November, Hattiesburg hosted two large-scale football championships, several motorcoach bus groups, and saw the return of numerous small conferences and board retreats, all of which contributed to the hotel tax collections.

Marlo shared updates on VisitHattiesburg's marketing strategies. An analytic overview of current campaigns was presented, showing a successful digital and print campaign, enhanced by a large number of travel writers and influencers who have been hosted in Hattiesburg. Between September 1, 2020 and November 30, 2021 VisitHattiesburg had 2,034,665,310 total brand interactions valued at \$1,235,782 in total earned media. Examples of previous and upcoming marketing materials were provided in the board packet for review.

Kristen presented a Programs & Promotions update, beginning with Hattiesburg Alliance for Public Art's recent and upcoming projects, including a 200+ foot tunnel mural along the Longleaf Trace. A budget for the 2022 Mississippi Miss Hospitality program was provided to the board for review, showing a significant increase in scholarship offerings for contestants. Kristen also provided an update on the FY2022 Tourism Grant Program to the board.

Marlo invited the board to the HTC Holiday Social, scheduled for December 13 at USM's Ogletree House.

Frank James opened discussion on a merit-based performance review for the executive director position. All board members in attendance agreed to form a committee to independently review the executive director's performance. After a full discussion and upon motion made by Michael Marks and duly seconded by Melanie Archer, there was a unanimous favorable vote to authorize Frank to adjust the executive director's salary up to 10% after reviewing the committee evaluations, to be effective the following pay period.

Shawn Lowrey opened discussion to consider cost of living raises for the entire staff. Marlo will review the

recommendation and report back to the board prior to the next scheduled meeting.

Being no other business, and upon motion by Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Michael Marks, the meeting was adjourned at 12:53 p.m.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission:

Frank James, Board Chair

Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director