

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 the Lake Terrace Convention Center on:

DECEMBER 20th, 2017

Be it remembered that on the 20th day of December, the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission met in a regular meeting at the Lake Terrace Convention Center, being a place fixed by law for such meetings. Frank James, Chairman of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, called the meeting to order at 11:39 a.m. The following Members of the Board were found to be present:

PRESENT

Bonnie Warren
Frank James
Anthony Harris
Torksy Williams
Marshall Bell

ABSENT

Fei Xue, Ph.D.
Adrienne Garanich-Hick

ALSO PRESENT

Bud Kirkpatrick, HCC Liaison
Marlo Dorsey, Management
David Ott, Counsel
Kris Powell, Counsel

Minutes from Previous Board Meetings

Upon motion made by Marshall Bell, duly seconded by Bonnie Warren a waiver of the reading of the minutes was approved. Upon a motion made by Bonnie Warren, duly seconded by Marshall Bell, there was a favorable vote of the Board to approve the Minutes of the previous meeting with new commissioner Torksy Williams abstaining from the vote.

Attorney David Ott then presented the Executive Session minutes for reading and review. After review and considerable discussion, Anthony Harris moved to accept the minutes from Executive session, then duly seconded by Bonnie Warren. There was a favorable vote of the Board to approve the Executive Session Minutes of the previous meeting with new commissioner Torksy Williams abstaining from the vote with Mr. Bud Kirkpatrick remained present.

Financial Report

Marlo Dorsey presented the updated FYE 2017 lodging tax receipts, noting the last several months of tax collections was still significantly down from the Department of Revenue versus the actual amounts being collected from hotels. She provided an update on email correspondence with Mr. Chris Bagwell, a sales/use tax division director at DOR,

who was closely investigating the special hotel levy for Hattiesburg. Several hotels were missing from the HBURG lodging report, and an audit would be performed on all the addresses in Hattiesburg. Marlo noted this would take several months to be completed, and she would report back to the group at the following commission meeting.

Marlo then shared the detailed Mississippi STR reports for the 2017 calendar year over 2016, which showed double-digit hotel revenue and occupancy growth year over the last year. She highlighted HBURG's recent regional digital marketing campaign in various target markets, aimed to bring more visitor traffic to Hattiesburg. The group then engaged in a general hotel industry discussion, with Bonnie Warren stating it was nice for the commissioners to have the specifics for hotel properties as general talking points. The group discussed the addition of two new hotels in Hattiesburg scheduled to open in summer 2018: a Holiday Inn on Highway 49 and Hotel Indigo at the District at Midtown. With these additions, Hattiesburg's existing hotel inventory would be approximately 3,000 rooms.

Marlo then presented the relevant financial reports since the last commission meeting, including the reconciled bank balances of assets under the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission and current Claims Dockets for October through December. Upon discussion of the asset holdings, Attorney Ott noted the Great Southern account exceeded FDIC insurance limits, and Marlo agreed to investigate if this presented a liability as public funds. Upon motion made by Marshall Bell and duly seconded by Anthony Harris, and after a full discussion, there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve the Claims Docket and Financial Reports as presented by Marlo.

Old Business

Chairman James updated the commission on the requested meetings with the Hattiesburg Convention Commission in regard to a cooperative agreement between both organizations, noting several had not taken place. However, Hattiesburg Tourism Commission did call a special meeting on November 15, 2017 at Lake Terrace to discuss several outstanding items and discuss a cooperative agreement. Following that meeting, Chairman James noted a follow-up meeting with a working committee between both organizations set for Monday, November 20. This meeting did not occur, however, HCC Chairman Andy Stetleman reached out to Frank James, asking for the Tourism Commission to work on a draft for their consideration. This draft was then shared at the Convention Commission regularly scheduled November 30 meeting by Frank James, Marlo, and Attorney David Ott.

From there, the Hattiesburg Convention Commission noted receiving the proposed agreement in their minutes, stating they would discuss it at next upcoming meeting of the Convention Commission on January 25, 2018. Anthony Harris made a motion, seconded by Bonnie Warren, to authorize Frank, Marlo, David, and Anthony to represent the interests of the HTC at the January 25, 2018 Convention Commission meeting. After discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

The second item of old business was the Consideration of Lease Agreement at the Visitors Center, which was tabled from the last meeting. Discussion was undertaken as to responsibilities for the Visitors Center, and whether the Convention Commission is agreeable to variations on the lease, as they are the operators and maintainers of the facility. Consideration of the legislation indicates that Convention Commission is afforded the revenue from tax for purposes of operations of the Visitors Center. Bonnie Warren made a motion, seconded by Anthony Harris, to continue to table the lease agreement as part of the cooperative agreement with Hattiesburg Convention Commission was still ongoing and several challenges still existed. After a lengthy discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

New Business

A Cooperative Agreement with Historic Hattiesburg Downtown Association was presented, which had been previously mailed to each Tourism Commissioner prior to the meeting. The agreement outlined ways for both organizations to collaborate to further the tourism and economic development goals of the Hattiesburg community in addition to providing support services to maximize resources of both organizations. Bonnie Warren made a motion, seconded by Anthony Harris, to authorize the contract on behalf of the HTC with Mr. James to sign on behalf of the HTC as Chairman, and to have the executed agreement affixed to the minutes of this meeting. After discussion, the motion was unanimously approved. HCC Liaison Mr. Bud Kirkpatrick noted this was a great decision for the benefit of the entire tourism community.

Marlo reported on hiring of new staff member as Director of Sales & Visitor Services, Paige Hunt. Marlo noted all staff salary amounts are within the current budgeted payroll amounts.

Marlo reported on the ongoing FY2017 Financial Audit for the HTC, scheduled for the next commission meeting.

Marlo presented several activities and visitor successes in Hattiesburg during the holiday season, including projects at USM, William Carey, and Downtown Hattiesburg.

Marlo updated the commission on the idea of forming a Hattiesburg Hotel/Motel Association and offering support to these industry efforts. She stated the first meeting is set for March 2018.

Bonnie Warren officially congratulated Anthony Harris and his son Noah, a senior at Oak Grove, on being admitted to Harvard University on full scholarship and the recent accolades in the media as to his accomplishments.

Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission

Frank James, Board Chair

Attested:

Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director