

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:

October 26th, 2017

Be it remembered that on the 26th day of October, 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
Marshall Bell
Anthony Harris
Adrienne Garanich-Hicks

ABSENT

Torksy Williams
Fei Xue, Ph.D.

ALSO PRESENT

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

Minutes from Previous Board Meetings

Upon motion made by Bonnie Warren, duly seconded by Anthony Harris 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 Adrienne Garanich-Hicks abstaining from the vote.

Financial Report

Marlo Dorsey presented the updated FYE 2017 lodging tax receipts, including the summer months of receipts, noting that receipts were down significantly from last summer's receipts. Dorsey said this appeared to be a discrepancy since Mississippi's STR reports showed hotel occupancy growth. She said would work with the City on the special levy collections and the Department of Revenue on finding more information if this downward collection trend did not correct itself for September and October collections. In the absence of accounting supervisor Danielle Herrington, Marlo Dorsey presented the previous financial reports, including the current Claims Dockets for August and September and the FY2018 budget. Upon motion made by Anthony Harris and duly seconded by Marshall Bell, 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 Searchwide Executive Director process. James stated that all vetting and candidate interviews had been completed over the course of several months, and the proper order of events with Searchwide was now concluded with the Tourism Commission voting to select Marlo Dorsey as its new Executive Director. A motion was made by Anthony Harris and duly seconded by Bonnie Warren to approve these actions in the October commission meeting to formally document the commission's selection of Marlo Dorsey as the new Executive Director.

The second item of old business was Special Revenue Funds, and Counsel David Ott shared a brief update that these special funds would require updated policy standards along with other needed documentation, which would be a priority to complete in the first part of 2018.

New Business

Upon a motion made by Marshall Bell and seconded by Anthony Harris, and after a general discussion, there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve the contract for Marlo Dorsey's employment as Executive Director.

The discussion then moved to the selection of officers for the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, and Chairman James opened the floor for nominations. Upon a motion made by Bonnie Warren, duly seconded by Marshall Bell, Anthony Harris was nominated to fill the vacancy for Vice-Chair, and there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve Harris for this officer position.

Marlo Dorsey then shared with the group the recent appointments of new tourism commissioners made by Mayor Toby Barker. She welcomed Adrienne Garanich Hicks to the commission meeting, and noted Torsky Williams and Fei Xue had work related conflicts for their first meeting, but she had spoken to both of them following their appointment. Adrienne Garanich Hicks would serve in a hotel industry slot, while Torsky Williams would fill an at-large seat, and Dr. Fei Xue would fill the University of Southern Mississippi seat. Marlo noted that with these new appointments, the commission was now fully represented with all seven seats filled.

The discussion moved to a long-term lease consideration for the space in the Visitors Center, where Hattiesburg Tourism Commission had been presented a five-year lease from Rick Taylor, acting on behalf of Hattiesburg Convention Commission.

Upon motion by Bonnie Warren to consider going into Executive Session for the purposes of discussing the proposed lease, recent transitional challenges and cooperative opportunities with Hattiesburg Convention Commission, Anthony Harris seconded this motion. After general discussion, the Commissioners voted unanimously to go into Executive Session.

Bonnie Warren then made a motion to go into Executive Session for the purposes of the proposed lease, transitional challenges and cooperative opportunities with Hattiesburg Convention Commission. Marshall Bell provided a second to this motion. After which, the Commissioners voted unanimously to go into Executive Session for this purpose. The Chair requested that Marlo Dorsey and Bud Kirkpatrick remain with the Commission during the Executive Session.

Upon motion by Marshall Bell to exit the Executive Session, Anthony Harris seconded the motion. At which, the Commissioners present voted unanimously to leave the Executive Session.

Bonnie Warren made a motion to authorize the Chair of the Tourism Commission to sign letters addressed to Hattiesburg Convention Commissioners outlining current transitional challenges and presenting cooperative opportunities with the Hattiesburg Convention Commission for forward progress. Anthony Harris seconded this motion, upon which the Commissioners present voted unanimously to approve.

Marshall Bell made a motion to table consideration of the lease until the outcome of cooperative opportunity discussions, and Anthony Harris seconded the motion. After a general discussion, the Commissioners voted unanimously to approve.

Marlo presented several successful projects with Downtown Hattiesburg that had recently attracted visitors to the area, and she shared updates on the importance of a community's downtown to the overall health of the tourism sector.

Marlo presented the idea of forming a Hattiesburg Hotel/Motel Association and offering support to these industry efforts. She stated it would be a goal to have a more collaborative hotel group moving forward as the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission worked to increase visitor traffic through leisure and corporate travel.

Marlo presented the resume and portfolio work of Paige Crane, indicating she was the top candidate for the position of Director of Communications and Digital Strategies, following the advertisement of this open position with the Tourism Commission. Upon a motion made by Anthony Harris and duly seconded by Bonnie Warren, then following discussion, the Commission voted unanimously to hire Paige for this position.

Marlo then presented various highlights in Tourism Commission marketing and event updates including its Tourism Promotion of the Year award in September 2017 for VisitHattiesburg's new website and tourism video. Additionally, she reported on the success of the statewide conference for MSAE (Mississippi Society of Association Executives) that Tourism hosted the first week of October. Additionally, Dorsey reported on other marketing activities including VisitHattiesburg's newsletters and social media that were growing in popularity and exposure.

Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission

Frank James, Board Chair

Attested:

Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director