

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:

April 27, 2016

Be it remembered that on the 27th day of April, 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. The meeting was called to order at **11:44 a.m.** by Cathie Price, Vice-Chairman of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission. The following Members of the Board were found to be present:

PRESENT

Shelia Varnado
Cathie Price
Anthony Harris
Frank James

ABSENT

Marshall Bell
Bonnie Warren

ALSO PRESENT

Richard Taylor, Management
Jessica Cathey, Administration
Matthew Godfrey, Sales and Marketing Department
LaRaven Brooks, Sales and Marketing Department

Minutes from Previous Board Meetings

Upon motion made by Frank James, duly seconded by Shelia Varnado and after a full discussion, there was a unanimous favorable vote of the Board to approve the Minutes of the previous meeting.

Financial Report

Rick Taylor presented a discussion of the FYE 2016 lodging tax receipts and presented the financial reports, including the current Claims Docket and budget. He reported that the year-to-date lodging tax revenue was running 3.5% above the same period of the prior year. During discussion Rick Taylor noted the following: changes in the Marketing, Miss Hospitality Pageant expenditures, the purchase of new picnic tables, umbrellas and electronic equipment for the Visitor Center. He added that the old picnic tables will be salvaged from our inventory, but that the new community dog park has expressed an interest and will pick them up. Upon motion made by Shelia Varnado and duly seconded by Frank James, and after a full discussion, there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve the Claims Docket and Financial Reports as given.

Rick Taylor informed The Board that since the Visitors Center Gift shop's inception in 2004, sales have been limited though important in keeping Hattiesburg's brand present from a merchandise standpoint. Meanwhile, the Convention Commission has been successfully operating points-of-sale at the Zoo and Museum. In an effort to streamline operations and include Square credit card processing at the Visitors Center Gift Shop, Rick

recommended that we transfer the gift shop operations to the Convention Commission with a requirement to continue to stock selected branded items, as well as expand the product lines. This will allow the Tourism Commission to have its merchandising program (as a form of advertising) while moving the sales and financial operations to an entity that is already fully immersed in retail operations.

To do so, Rick stated that all Visitor Center's inventory beginning at October 1, 2015, will be purchased from the Tourism Commission by the Convention Commission. This inventory is valued at \$9,251.42. The Tourism Commission will then reimburse the Convention Commission in the amount of \$5,274.50, the amount of net sales since the start of the fiscal year. The Tourism Commission will be responsible for any sales taxes due up until the date of the transfer. From that point on, the Convention Commission will stock, sell and operate the VC Gift Shop. Upon motion made by Shelia Varnado and duly seconded by Anthony Harris, and after a full discussion, there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve the Visitor Center inventory transfer and payments nunc pro tunc.

Old Business

LaRaven Brooks gave an update of the Miss Hospitality Pageant. She announced that there are 32 contestants which is ahead of the contestants last year at this time. She also noted that the traditional NYC Mississippi Picnic has been cancelled eliminating the normal travel of the current reigning Miss Hospitality to this event to represent Mississippi. For this year only, the Pageant Program Board has decided to provide her with a special scholarship in lieu of this special annual function.

New Business

Rick Taylor announced that it has been approved by the Convention Commission Board to dispose of the trolleys. He explained that it is currently costing more to maintain and insure the two green trolleys than it is worth for their use. He noted that the Commission would keep the white shuttle to fulfill its assistance with USM games, city parades and hotel shuttle services.

LaRaven Brooks gave the Tourism Commission a brief overview of the daily events during National Tourism Week. She encouraged them to attend the Tourism Shining Star Luncheon on May 4 at the Train Depot and to participate in the Hattiesburg Resident Naming Contest. She announced that so far there were 32 Shining Stars to be presented at the luncheon.

Matthew Godfrey discussed plans for the light pole banners around the city. He explained that the Marketing Department is currently in the design phase, but he plans to use action words (i.e. applaud, paddle and pedal) accompanied with local photography to design ten light poles banners to be distributed across the approximately 200 empty banner spots.

He also noted that Hburg Tourism is planning to participate within the community on several events to highlight the unique attractions that draw visitors to Hattiesburg. Events include Live @ Five events in the Town Square Park, and featuring HBURG merchandise along with sponsoring an encore Live @ Five event during National Tourism Week. Hburg Tourism will provide a sponsorship of Festival South in the amount of \$5,000 specifically for marketing in out-of-town markets and assist the Craft Beer Festival with over \$2,500 of in-kind contracted advertising. Hburg Tourism has agreed to be the presenting sponsor of Best of the Pine Belt Award Show which will be held at Saenger Theater during FestivalSouth in an effort to promote that which is uniquely Hattiesburg. Working with the Convention

Commission, this sponsorship will be traded to the Convention Commission for in-town event advertising, thus saving both entities advertising dollars.

Rick Taylor informed the Tourism Commission that the Convention Commission Board has approved a new zoo attraction-a high ropes adventure course provided by Ropes Courses, Inc. as well as the Eureka Phase V to be funded within this year.

With no other activities to report, upon a motion made by Anthony Harris and duly seconded by Shelia Varnado, and with unanimous approval of the members present, the meeting of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission was adjourned.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission

Marshall Bell, Board Chair

Attested:

Richard Taylor, Executive Director