

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 teleconference via GoToMeeting platform during COVID-19 on:

June 30, 2020

Be it remembered that on the 30th day of June, the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission met in a regular meeting via teleconference due to the gathering restrictions of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). Frank James, Chairman of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m. Chairman James welcomed the two newly appointed members to the commission. The following Members of the Board were found to be present:

PRESENT

Bonnie Warren
Frank James
Fei Xue, Ph.D.
Melanie Archer
Anthony Harris
Michael Marks (new)
Shawn Lowrey (new)

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

Marlo Dorsey, Management
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 Bonnie Warren, there was unanimous favorable vote of the board to approve the April 2020 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 May 31, the report showed year-to-date received revenue at \$555,509 for the first eight months of FY2020, compared to \$522,012 from the first eight months of last fiscal year. Marlo noted the strong start to the fiscal year would be of great benefit to the overall budget since the effects of COVID-19 would reduce hotel revenue for the foreseeable near future. Of note, May 2020 hotel revenue was down 64% from the previous year.

The claims dockets for the months of April and May were presented. These budgeted expenditures were provided in full detail by line item. Reconciled balances of all Hattiesburg Tourism Commission assets through May 31, 2020 were presented with a total balance of \$1,591,949.08. Included on the report were details of each account with financial

institution, current interest rates, and maturity dates listed. After full review and discussion and upon motion by Michael Marks and duly seconded by Anthony Harris, there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve financial reports as presented.

Old Business

Marlo welcomed Doug King and Shelbi Quimby to the meeting to present the FY2019 audit. Members of the commission were each provided a printed bound copy of the audit in advance of the meeting for their review. Mr. King went through the audit in its entirety with the group, sharing audited financial details. After a thorough review of all commission's financial operations, Mr. King presented his findings there were no internal financial issues or compliance issues for FY2019. After full review and discussion and upon motion by Fei Xue and duly seconded by Anthony Harris, there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve the FY2019 audit as presented.

Marlo then asked Attorney David Ott to provide an update on the Convention Commission's response to the Visitors Center lease since the last letter was submitted to the HCC for an update on terms or guidelines. Ott shared the latest update via a letter from the HCC, noting meeting minutes from the HCC did not accompany the letter as requested. The HCC letter stated the HTC could remain until December 2020 at which time a new lease would be required with the terms of approximately \$4,200 a month for rent. After a full discussion, the board, instructed counsel to convey their disappointment and share that VisitHattiesburg would not be able to pay the amount of rent requested. Based on the assurance of the management that locating alternative space could be accomplished in the time allowed, all agreed the Tourism Commission would terminate the lease with the HCC effective January 1, 2021. A motion was made by Anthony Harris and seconded by Bonnie Warren to search for a new location.

An update was given on the HTC's legislation, SB2905, which passed with a two-year repealer in the 2020 legislative session and would be up for renewal July 1, 2022. Marlo shared the conference report on the bill. After a full discussion, the recommendation was made to invite Senators Polk and Johnson to a commission meeting to share updates on Visit Hattiesburg's strategic plan for Greater Hattiesburg.

New Business

An update was provided on the PPP application for the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission. Funding for \$76,000 was provided through this program in the form of a loan. More details would be provided on eligibility for loan forgiveness when they became available.

Following a presentation of income and expenditures to date for FY2020 as well as the update on PPP proceeds, the commission did not see the need to make any additional budget adjustments to the amended budget from the April meeting.

Marlo provided an update on the potential for additional revenue funds from the Mississippi Tourism Recovery Fund. This program and its level of funding would be determined on the last day of the legislative session the following day, July 1, 2020. These grant dollars would be used to assist in driving tourism recovery through CARES Act Funding as it relates to the business disruption effects of COVID-19. More details would be provided at the following meeting when this process and these dollars were finalized. Following those details, a marketing plan would be presented for the board to review and adopt.

Marlo shared that any expenditures from the Tourism Recovery Fund would follow state purchasing guidelines, and the HTC would need to secure the services of an advertising agency for new marketing assets for a traveling responsibly campaign. An RFP (request for proposal) would be issued, and several members would be asked to serve on the selection committee in the next few weeks.

Marlo provided a brief update on staffing, where directors were following social distancing guidelines to work in the office.

Briefings were provided on the Mississippi Miss Hospitality Competition set for July 18. This program would be presented in accordance with social distancing guidelines set in place by executive order of the Governor.

Updates were provided for the Hattiesburg Alliance for Public Art with additional murals and public art features in the works for fall.

The diversity and inclusion statement was reviewed and discussed. No official board action was needed to approve it.

Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission:

Frank James, Board Chair

Attested:

Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director