

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 Hotel Indigo board room on:

June 28, 2023

Be it remembered that on the 28th day of June, the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission met in person at the Hattiesburg Hotel Indigo board room. Frank James, Chairman of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m. The following Members of the Board were found to be present:

PRESENT

Melanie Archer
Frank James
Dr. Joe Paul
Shawn Lowrey
Bonnie Warren

ABSENT

Anthony Harris
Michael Marks

ALSO PRESENT

Marlo Dorsey, Management
Kristen Brock, Staff
David Ott, Counsel

Citizens Forum

With no members of the public present, Citizens Forum was not held.

Minutes from Previous Board Meetings

After full review and upon motion by Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Shawn Lowrey, there was unanimous favorable vote of the board to approve May 2023 meeting minutes.

David Ott presented Executive Session minutes from the May 2023 meeting, where the annual performance appraisal and compensation of the executive director/CEO were discussed. After full review and upon motion by Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Dr. Joe Paul, the minutes were approved by unanimous favorable vote of the board.

Financial Report

Dorsey presented the financial report. Included was a document with updated tax receipts for the commission's 2% special hotel levy. For the first nine months of FY23, the report showed total revenue at

\$690,251. The board budgeted for an anticipated 15% reduction in hotel revenue for FY23, and the actual year-to-date decrease is 11.9%.

Claims dockets for the months of April and May 2023 were also presented. A listing of all expenditures was provided in full detail by line item, which were all budgeted expenses.

Reconciled balances of all Hattiesburg Tourism Commission assets through May 31, 2023 were presented, showing a total balance of \$3,758,610.82. Included on the report were details of each account with financial institution, current interest rates, and maturity dates listed. The overall balance includes ARPA funds from round 2 of the Tourism Recovery Fund (TRF), as awarded to the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission by the Mississippi legislature, which is being accounted for separately at Hancock Whitney Bank in a checking and money market sweep account. All accounts have been reconciled by accountants at McArthur, Slay, & Dews, PLLC.

Dorsey also presented an 8-month FY23 budget comparative analysis from accountant as well as the internal budget analysis, which was in line with the approved budget and showed an overall YTD net income of \$11,375.71.

After a full review and upon a motion made by Bonnie Warren and duly seconded by Shawn Lowrey, there was a unanimous favorable vote to approve the financial report as presented.

Old Business

Dorsey confirmed that round two of the Tourism Recovery Fund (TRF) procurement and reporting had been ongoing with the Department of Finance and Administration with no issues. Round 3 of the TRF would be coming up soon with an estimated grant allocation of \$1.1 million for Visit Hattiesburg. Details would be provided following the start of the state's new fiscal year when the legislation would go into effect.

New Business

Dorsey presented an amended agreement for mutual support services between Downtown Hattiesburg Association (DHA) and VisitHattiesburg. Effective June, the DHA board had voted to hire Allison Neville as a full-time employee, creating the need for modifications to the original agreement in place. Counselor Ott offered minor recommendations on this language change to be non-employee specific and recommended the modification be made effective immediately with all other items in the agreement remaining intact. Upon motion by Dr. Paul, duly seconded by Melanie Archer, the board unanimously agreed to approve the amended agreement as presented.

Dorsey provided a 12-month overview of tax revenue from May 2022 to April 2023, showing hotel collections down 1.3% for the year, while restaurant collections are 3.06% higher than the previous year. A list of recent and upcoming group events using VisitHattiesburg services was also presented.

In late 2022, Hattiesburg was asked to host the DYB World Series in 2023, one year earlier than the bid they entered for the series. As such, certain hosting costs were not included in the FY23 budget. Dorsey presented a DYB 2023 World Series budget request for \$7,000, including promotional material, signage, and hospitality supplies, to be added to the Self-produced events budget account. Upon motion by Dr. Paul, duly seconded by Bonnie Warren, the board unanimously agreed to amend the FY23 budget to add the requested funding

for the DYB World Series.

Dorsey presented a marketing and public relations update. Included was a report of Arrivalist data, which shows where visitors are coming from and where they're spending money in Hattiesburg. An analytics overview of April and May 2023 marketing efforts and visitation was also presented by Dorsey, showing 2.29 million digital impressions in April and 2.42 million digital impressions in May. A public relations overview was also presented including national stories on Hattiesburg's tourism assets as well as VisitHattiesburg being awarded two statewide MS Main Street Awards. Updated photo assets were also shared, which were completed by marketing firm Maris, West, and Baker. As the organization's marketing campaign continues, more video, photography, and testimonials will be completed. Dorsey also announced that she has completed her Professional in Destination Management certificate from Destinations International in May 2023, and course work still was ongoing for the CDME credential, Certified Destination Marketing Executive.

Brock presented a Programs & Development update, including a list of recent and upcoming HAPA projects with two murals recently completed and two more in progress. Additionally, a brief update for the 2023 Mississippi Miss Hospitality competition was shared including a list of contestants participating and highlights from Hannah Grace's trip as a Mississippi ambassador at the Chicago Blues Fest.

Dorsey announced that a MS Outdoor Stewardship Grant had been submitted for the Pinebelt Blueways earlier this year. The project was slated to receive state funding to enhance the boat landing and access point near Sims Road, which will provide users with a more enhanced way to enter waterways.

Being no other business, and upon motion by Dr. Paul, duly seconded by Shawn Lowrey, the meeting was adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission:

Frank James, Board Chair

Marlo Dorsey, Executive Director