



Briefing

MEETING DATE: July 23, 2024

TITLE:

Update on the Hotel Occupancy Tax Taskforce Meeting

AGENDA ITEM SUBMITTED BY:

Submitted by: Sylvia Carrillo-Trevino, ICMA-CM, CPM, City Manager

BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

On April 9, 2024, council created an ad hoc committee consisting of 2 council members (Plunkett and Myer) and several community members with occupancy tax and marketing experience. The committee consisted of:

- Olga Maystruk, Lost Pines Art Center
- Debby Denny, Media
- Lee Harrel, Visit Bastrop
- Irby Morvant, Hyatt Lost Pines & Visit Bastrop
- Councilmember Myer
- Councilmember Plunkett

The first meeting was held on April 17, 2024, and after several bi-weekly meetings to review operational expenses, seek to identify any redundancies, seek to improve collaboration, the group was able to identify needs of the Community Assets (Museum, Art Center, Opera House, etc) that Visit Bastrop could assist with, and also discuss the operational expenses of each of the entities. Visit Bastrop will refocus its proposed \$1.116M budget by reducing operational expenses and dedicating more of its budget to the core mission of marketing.

Additionally, the contract for Visit Bastrop is proposed to be amended by adding several points that protect the public's interest. Those include:

1. **Board Operations:** The Board of Directors shall meet at least 7 times per year. The Board of Directors will receive routine updates on the organization's operations. While the Board may have an Executive Committee, the entire Board shall receive full briefings from staff.
2. **Fully Staffed Board:** The Board of Directors shall diligently strive to maintain a complete Board by dutifully filling vacancies in a prompt and timely manner. There shall be a disinclination to allow vacant positions to linger. Recruitment, appointment, onboarding and training will be a priority for the Board of Directors.

3. **Board Education:** The Board of Directors shall receive training at least annually on the following topics: Open Meetings, Open Records, Ethics, and Best Practices for service on nonprofit boards.
4. **Open Meetings:** The Board of Directors shall comply with the Texas Open Meetings Act for all Board Meetings; including posting deadlines, public posting of meetings on both the Visit Bastrop site and the City of Bastrop site.
5. **Open Records:** Visit Bastrop shall comply with the Texas Public Information Act, including securing records that are to be made available to the public at large.
6. **Budget:** Visit Bastrop shall have an annual operating budget, which shall be a public document. All expenditures by Visit Bastrop shall be in accordance with the annual operating budget. A copy of the budget shall be submitted to the City along with any proposed amendments in advance of approval.
7. **Annual Audit:** Visit Bastrop shall have an annual financial audit of its accounts performed by an independent Certified Public Accountant (CPA) who is not engaged to perform any routine bookkeeping or financial management services for Visit Bastrop. The annual audit report shall be submitted to the City and shall be a public document.
8. **Bylaws:** The Bylaws for the Board of Directors shall be submitted to the City Manager along with any proposed amendments in advance of approval.
9. **Financial Policies:** The Financial Policies of Visit Bastrop shall mirror or as closely mirror the City's and be submitted to the City Manager along with any proposed amendment in advance of approval by the City Council.
10. **Personnel Policies:** The Personnel Policies of Visit Bastrop shall mirror or as closely mirror the City's and be submitted to the City Manager along with any proposed amendments in advance of approval by the City Council.
11. **Monthly Reports:** Visit Bastrop will submit written monthly reports to the City Manager summarizing services performed under the new agreement, including relevant performance measures (benchmarks) and alignment to the budget.
12. **Quarterly Reports:** Visit Bastrop will submit in-person quarterly reports to the City Council summarizing services performed under the new agreement, including relevant performance measures (benchmarks).
13. **Benchmarks:** Benchmarks and other expectations of Visit Bastrop by the City Council shall be clearly stated and incorporated into the annual budget prior to adoption. Agreed performance measures to those benchmarks shall be clear and quantifiable.

In summary, the group assisted in balancing the HOT fund FY 2025 proposed budget, identified redundancies, and improved communication and possible cross collaboration.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None

RECOMMENDATION:

Direct staff to amend the Visit Bastrop contract for FY 25.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. HOT summary budget (not considered final until approved by the Council at budget adoption)