



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING  
Wednesday, January 19, 2022

**Commissioners Present;** Amish Das, Lauren Becker, Sherricka Day, Dan Gilbert, Donna Hix, Mamie Pound, Marianne Richter, Jamie Waters

**Commissioners Absent:** Miles Greathouse, Mayor Skip Henderson

**Special Invitees:** Merri Sherman, Columbus Sports Council; Hayley Tillery, Columbus GA Convention & Trade Center; Ed Wolverton, Uptown Columbus

**Staff Present:** Peter Bowden, Shelby Guest, Ashley Woitena

**Call to Order ..... Peter Bowden**

- In accordance with the bylaws, the first meeting of the new year was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by VisitColumbusGA Pres/CEO, Peter Bowden for the purpose of the election of officers. Mr. Bowden reminded the Board they were presented the a slate of officers during the November 2021 meeting, to include Amish Das—Chair, Lauren Becker—Vice Chair, and Jamie Waters—Secretary/Treasurer. Mr. Bowden then called for any nominations from the floor and there being none, nominations were closed. He then asked for a motion to approve to slate of officers as presented. Donna Hicks made the motion with a second by Sherricka Day. A vote was taken, and the officers for 2022 were approved.
- The meeting was then adjourned by Peter Bowden.

**Call to Order..... Amish Das**

- Amish Das then called the meeting to order. His first item of business was to recognize outgoing Board member, Marianne Richter, for her six years of service on the Board including the role of Chair. Mr. Das went on the explain that Ms. Richter had always been a champion and advocate for VisitColumbusGA. He presented her with a special gift to commemorate her service.

**Approval of Minutes & Financials .....Jamie Waters**

- Mr. Das reminded the Board approval of Minutes & Financials is by way of a consent agenda. He then turned the meeting over to Secretary/Treasurer, Jamie Waters, for the approval of the agenda – minutes and financials from the November 2021 meeting and December 2021 financials; there was no December meeting or minutes.

- Mr. Waters asked for any questions or discussions on the minutes and financials; there being none, a motion was made by Mamie Pound to approve the November minutes & financials and the motion was seconded by Sherricka Day. A vote was taken, and the motion was approved. He then called for a motion to approve the December financials. Mamie Pound moved to approve, with a second by Sherricka Day. A vote was taken, and the motion was approved.

**Chair’s Report..... Amish Das**

- As this is the beginning of the calendar year, Mr. Das reminded the Board they are asked to review and sign the Conflict of Interest and Board Agreements and return those to staff. Board members were asked to send both signed pieces to Shelby Guest.
- Mr. Das then asked Peter Bowden to present recommendations for strategic planning and operations of the Visitors Center and Administrative Offices. Mr. Bowden began his presentation by explaining that staff has evaluated and researched the current operation of the Columbus Visitors Center, to include ideas from other visitors centers. He said a meeting was also held in December with the Executive Committee to go over preliminary concepts.

- **PopUp Visitors Center:** A SWOT was conducted (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) to look at the current operations of the Visitors Center and discuss options to increase visitor engagement, incur savings, increase funding for program of work, increase community visibility, and strengthen partner engagement. As overall visitation numbers for the current center have decreased significantly (prior to COVID-19), staff recommends developing a PopUp Visitors Center; shifting from a receptive to an interceptive concept. This would mean closing the current physical center and using a mobile set-up that would move from place to place, focusing on locations with heavy visitor traffic. The PopUp Visitors Center would be situated outside of a local attraction, hotel, meeting venue, special event, etc., and information would be available to the visitor. There would be a regular schedule of set-ups to include days, hours and sites. Mr. Bowden noted that the Roswell CCVB has done a similar mobile visitors center and has realized a 700% increase in visitor interaction and engagement.

Discussions followed to include alternative ideas for the mobile center, promoting locations where the PopUp Center would set up, producing a QR code to be displayed online and at local businesses to promote the schedule, etc. Mr. Bowden asked for any other questions and feedback and there being none, a motion was made by Jamie Waters to approve VisitColumbusGA to pursue the PopUp Visitor Center. The motion was seconded by Mamie Pound. A voted was taken and the motion was approved.

- **Administrative Offices:** Similar to the PopUp Visitors Center, a SWOT was conducted to evaluate the current administrative offices to determine location, amount of square footage, economic considerations, etc. Mr. Bowden explained a number of factors have brought the staff to this evaluation – increases in rent, a decrease in staff size, unused

space in the current location, etc. Staff has done some preliminary research to include properties in the Uptown area, some yielding a potential \$25,000 in annual savings. He explained that savings could be redirected into program of work. The presentation was followed by discussion, with the Board in favor of staff conducting more research and a pursuing a move if the opportunity presented itself. A motion to approve was made by Mamie Pound and seconded by Jamie Waters. A vote was taken, and the motion was approved

**Other Business..... Group**

- No Other Business

**Adjournment.....Amish Das**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.