



# VisitColumbusGA

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING  
Wednesday, April 19, 2023

**Commissioners Present;** Lauren Becker, Chair; Jamie Waters, Vice Chair; Miles Greathouse, Secretary/Treasurer; Amy Bryan, Sherricka Day (virtual), Dan Gilbert, Pace Halter, and Michelle Spivey

**Commissioners Absent:** Peter Jones

**Special Invitees:** Norm Easterbrook, RiverCenter for the Performing Arts; Haley Tillery, Columbus GA Convention & Trade Center; Merri Sherman, Columbus Sports Council; Ed Wolverton, Uptown Columbus Inc.

**Staff Present:** Peter Bowden, Kim Gonzalez, Shelby Guest, Lacy Harden, and Ashley Woitena

**Call to Order ..... Lauren Becker**

- The April 2023 meeting was called to order by Lauren Becker at 3:30 pm.
- Ms. Becker welcomed new board member, Michelle Spivey who then provided the board with additional background information about herself and work experience in the hospitality industry. Ms. Becker also welcomed special guest, Everett Fleming, Assistant Director of the Department of Transportation/Metra.

**Approval of Minutes & Financials ..... Miles Greathouse**

- Miles Greathouse presented the consent agenda which included minutes from the March 2023 meeting, as well as financials for March 2023. He asked if there were any questions or discussion. There being none, a motion was made by Pace Halter to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Dan Gilbert. A vote was taken, and the motion was approved.

**Chair’s Report ..... Lauren Becker**

- Ms. Becker then asked Mr. Everett Fleming, to present the Columbus Consolidated Government’s plan for electric shuttle service for the Uptown District (see attached report)

**President’s Report ..... Peter Bowden**

- Next, Ms. Becker turned the meeting over to Peter Bowden. He began by giving a legislative update on SB 127 protecting funding for destination marketing, preventing changes to

hotel/motel tax funding unless all parties agree. Mr. Bowden explained that the bill is slated to be signed into law by the governor May 1, 2023,

- Shelby Guest then provided a recap of the Southeastern Tourism Society Sales, Marketing & PR Conference highlighting several workshops that ranged from “remarkable” customer experiences, examples of why research is important to marketing decisions, to sustainable tourism trends.
- Mr. Bowden then asked Ashley Woitena to review the Executive Summary STR Report. This is a continuation from last month of reviewing various reports included in the board packet to help board members have a better understanding of what is tracked for the destination and why. Ms. Woitena provided the Board with information on how the details are calculated, how to read the report, and how this aids the organization in planning, competing, and prospecting for business.
- Mr. Bowden then updated the board on the short-term rental impact to hotel/motel tax. He explained that there are a large number of non-compliant short-term rental units operating in Columbus which results in lost revenue for both the city and those organizations dependent on hotel motel tax. He emphasized that short-term experiences are part of the visitor experience, but those non-compliant units have an unfair advantage over hotel owners who have invested heavily in the marketplace and that the goal would be to create a “level playing field “ for both hotels and short-term rental businesses.

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

- Dan Gilbert spoke of the financial impact and national media coverage that the Ranger Competition had on Columbus, GA. The Ranger Competition will be held here again, next year.

**Adjournment.....Lauren Becker**

With no further business, Ms. Becker adjourned the meeting at 4:22 p.m.