



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, August 18, 2021

**Commissioners Present;** Amish Das, Chair; Lauren Becker, Vice Chair; Jamie Waters, Secretary/Treasurer; Sherricka Day; Miles Greathouse; Marianne Richter

**Commissioners Absent:** Dan Gilbert; Donna Hix; Mamie Pound; Mayor Skip Henderson

**Special Invitees:** Dennis Beson, East Alabama Chamber of Commerce; Cyndy Cerbin, National Infantry Museum; Paul Pierce, Springer Opera House; Merri Sherman, Columbus Sports Council; Hayley Tillery, Columbus GA Convention & Trade Center

**Staff Present:** Carter Flynn; Shelby Guest; Ashley Woitena

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

- The meeting, held at the Columbus Convention & Trade Center, was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Chair, Amish Das.
- Mr. Das reminded everyone that Peter Bowden was absent in order to present the state of tourism for Columbus at the Georgia Department of Economic Development Board Meeting

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

- Jamie Waters Reminded the Board that the approval of the Minutes & Financials is by way of a consent agenda, Mr. Das explained these pieces will not be reviewed in detail, unless there are items for specific discussion.
- Jamie Waters then asked the Board if there were any specific items from either the Minutes or the Financials needing additional discussion. Hearing none, he asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. A motion to approve was made by Miles Greathouse and was seconded by Marianne Richter. A vote was taken, and the motion was approved.

**Chair's Report..... Amish Das**

- For this month's Stakeholder Spotlight, Mr. Das introduced Paul Pierce, Director of the Springer Opera House for an update on the impact of COVID-19 on the facility, precautions taken during the pandemic, and the property's data-driven approach to safety. Mr. Pierce also talked about the upcoming COVID-19 Vaccination Event to be held at the Springer on August 28, in conjunction with Zoe Pediatrics and IACT Health.

- Next on the agenda was an update on the American Rescue Plan Funding. Mr. Das reported that staff is continuing to work with the Columbus Consolidated Government on a plan to assist with expenses at VisitColumbusGA.

**Staff Report.....Shelby Guest & Ashley Woitena**

- Mr. Das then asked Shelby Guest to present the Staff Report.
  - First on the agenda was the topic of VisitColumbusGA’s FY21 end-of-year reports. Shelby Guest gave a report on the financials of FY21 and noted that while the fiscal year was not steady, it did increase in the later months. She reported that revenue is continuing to rise and that VisitColumbusGA outperformed their original goals for FY21.
  - The next item was an update on the status of the Meetings and Conventions market. Ashley Woitena gave an update on STR Report from FY21. She noted the increase in occupancy, RevPar, and average daily rate over the past 12 months. She continued by discussing sales team’s touchpoint strategy, and the reported on the outlook of the sales strategy.
  - Ms. Guest then gave an update on the social media strategy by VisitColumbusGA. She noted the increase in impressions as well as other partners who are engaged and actively sharing posts. She then discussed the recent Travel Writer tour and gave an update from Laurie Rowe communications about recent stories published on Columbus.
  - Ms. Guest then gave an update on the Explore Georgia Marketing Grant, reporting VisitColumbusGA had applied for and received a grant from the state office of tourism. Columbus was one of only a few cities in the state to receive the maximum funding (\$100,000). VisitColumbus also received a \$25,000 co-op matching grant in conjunction with Northstar Meeting Group, to specifically market in the Dallas/Fort Worth, TX and Charlotte, NC markets for meeting planners; this is conjunction with the additional non-stop flights by American Airlines to Columbus. VisitColumbus has also been awarded a second \$25,000 matching co-op in conjunction with a marketing plan through TripAdvisor. This results in an additional \$200,000 for marketing the city on top of the program of work already in place.

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

- No Other Business discussed

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

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