



VisitColumbusGA

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Commissioners Present: Lauren Becker, Chair; Jamie Waters, Vice Chair; Amy Bryan, and Dan Gilbert

Commissioners Absent: Miles Greathouse, Sherricka Day, Michelle Spivey, Peter Jones, and Mayor Skip Henderson

Special Invitees Present: Norm Easterbrook, Haley Tillery, and Ed Wolverton

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

Call to Order Lauren Becker

- The April 2024 meeting was called to order by Lauren Becker at 4:01pm. Due to a lack of a quorum no business could be conducted at this time.

Secretary Treasurer Report Jamie Waters

- The Treasurer’s report was tabled due to a lack of quorum, with Ms. Becker explaining it would be presented at the May 2024 meeting.

Chair Report..... Lauren Becker

- Ms. Becker discussed approaching important dates, to include Arts Fest, Celebration of Life of Col. Ralph Pucket, Columbus State University’s Spring Fling, and the Columbus Museum’s various opening dates.

President’s Report..... Peter Bowden

- Next, Ms. Becker turned the meeting over to Peter Bowden. He began by giving updates on HB 1180 and SB 180.
 - HB 1180 addressed adding incentives to film makers working outside the Atlanta metro area. Although the bill gained traction throughout the legislative session, it failed to pass. Mr. Bowden thanked Film Commissioner, Joel Slocumb, for his work and organizing the GA Regional Film and Entertainment Alliance, made up of 13 cities/film commissions, who all came together to establish additional film incentives.
 - SB 180 was a Religious Freedom bill. It failed to pass for various reasons, but primarily because it was deemed legislation that could give cause for discrimination.

- Mr. Bowden informed the Board that he has had 2 meetings with Civitas about the challenges with Tourism Investment District (TID). The main topics of those meetings dealt with addressing the high taxation of room nights in Columbus, including the \$5 transportation, and identifying a leader within the hotel community to help position Columbus to adopt the TID.
- Staff presented an update on addressed a previous topic brought up by the board -- budget comparisons among similar Georgia Convention & Visitors Bureaus. The information examined cost for operations, staff, and program of work. The consensus was VisitColumbus was similar among those CVBs examined – Athens, Augusta, and Macon.
- Mr. Bowden reviewed the advertising and marketing budget breakdown to illustrate how the investment is broken down – traditional media and digital.
- Mr. Bowden turned the meeting over to Ashley Woitena. She discussed updates on the Awareness and Demand Campaign currently underway to generate more conventions and meetings. This included digital awareness, retargeting, social distribution, and website analytics – all of which help determine additional efforts in filling the sales pipeline. Ms. Woitena then addressed the Four Meeting Districts campaign whereby staff has identified four primary locations within the city that are suitable to host meetings/conventions. The District campaign includes not only the meeting venues, but hotels, and other amenities sought after for meeting planners. She concluded her report a review of upcoming travel that will seek out meeting planners looking for smaller meeting venues, which would optimize the strategy brought forth by the Meeting District strategy.
- Shelby Guest provided information on an upcoming travel writer tour that would be occurring in the next few weeks. She explained that this tour would focus on arts. Her reported included the “tentative” itinerary with visits to a variety of cultural institutions with the main focus on the re-opening of the Columbus Museum. She concluded her report with the latest travel writer related analytics: 355 published results, 99.4 million impressions, and \$919 million in estimated value

Adjournment.....Lauren Becker

With no further business, Ms. Becker adjourned the meeting at 5:19pm.