



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
WEDNESDAY, October 21, 2020

Commissioners Present: Cameron Bean, Board Chair; Amish Das, Vice Chair; Lauren Becker, Secretary/Treasurer; Marianne Richter, Immediate Past Chair; Greg Hudgison; Mamie Pound; Jamie Water; and Mayor Skip Henderson

Commissioners Absent: Miles Greathouse; and Donna Hix

Special Invitees: Timothy Bragg, Cunningham Center; Helena Coates, Uptown Inc.; Norm Easterbrook, River Center for the Performing Arts; Pace Halter, W.C. Bradley Real Estate Power House; Haley Henderson, Columbus GA Convention & Trade Center; Jerald Mitchell, Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce; and Lindsey Norton Bibb Mill

Special Guest(s):

- Mayor Skip Henderson
- Monica Smith, Executive Director Southeast Tourism Society
- Bo Tabor, Robinson Grimes CPAs

Staff Present: Peter Bowden, Shelby Guest, Carter Flynn, Melanie Grace, Linda Olvera, Joel Slocumb, Andrea Smith, Carrie Beth Wallace, and Ashley Woitena

Call to Order..... Cameron Bean

- The meeting was called to order at 3:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes & Financials..... Lauren Becker

- Ms. Becker asked the Board members present if there were any questions regarding the minutes from the September Board Meeting that had been emailed prior to the Wednesday, October 21st meeting. There none, Marianne Richter made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Jamie Waters seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed. Ms. Becker asked if there were any questions concerning the profit & loss statement. Jamie Waters then made a motion to accept the financials. Amish Das seconded the motion; a vote was taken, and the motion passed.

Annual Audit..... Bo Taber,CPA Robinson & Grimes

- The meeting was then turned over to Bo Taber, CPA with Robinson Grimes. Ms. Becker explained that the audit documents had been emailed prior to the meeting. Mr. Tabor reviewed the documents, concluding that the report was deemed as a clean audit. He asked if there were any questions. There being none, Jamie Waters made a motion to accept the audit as presented. Amish Das seconded the motion, a vote was taken, and the motion passed.
- Cameron Bean thanked Ms. Becker for her presentation, then proceeded to introduce Mayor Skip Henderson for his update on the Consolidated Government's mitigation of the Coronavirus COVID-19. Mayor Henderson first addressed the impact COVID-19 has had on the hospitality industry, specifically the CVB. He said that as an economic development resource for the city, it was important that the CVB's work continue in helping to restart the hospitality industry as a whole; and how appreciated the work of the Mr. Bowden, his staff, and the CVB. Mayor Henderson then went into detail about the effect the virus has had and continues to have on the city. He explained that a medical response team was established in February and how in March government buildings were closed to the public as a result of the shelter-in-place executive orders. Mayor Henderson talked about the challenges of businesses closing -- restaurants, bars, etc. He said he felt it was better for the city err on the side of caution in hopes of keeping the population as safe as possible. He revealed that the mandatory face coverings in public would be lifted Thursday, October 22nd, but that face masks would still be required in all government buildings. Mayor Henderson was encouraged that while the numbers in Columbus have gone down, it is still important that the public wear face masks and social distance.
- Mr. Bean thanked the Mayor for his remarks and continued support of Visit Columbus. Mr. Bean then asked Peter Bowden, President-CEO of VisitColumbus, to introduce Monica Smith, Executive Director of Southeast Tourism Society (STS). Mr. Bowden provide a brief introduction of Ms. Smith outlining her career path at the Macon CVB, Jacksonville, Florida CVB, and now as Executive Director of the Southeast Tourism Society. Ms. Smith spoke about the long history and relationship the Columbus CVB has had with STS, having been a member since 1985. She said there are over 500 organizations as members from the region. She explained there are agreements with the National Park Service, Corps of Engineers, and the US Forest Service that all facilitate tourism activities. Since the pandemic's impact on the travel industry, STS has organized and hosted regular meetings for the leadership of the various member organizations to come together and discuss topics of interest. Ms. Smith remarked that as the pandemic continues, sales and marketing activities have changed not just for destination marketing organizations, but for attractions as well. She said that she and her team have encouraged its members to keep relationships open with meeting planners, sports organizations, and attractions, to let those suppliers know what is occurring in each destination. She also discussed how the CARES monies from the federal government had been shared with tourism organizations. Ms. Smith included that Georgia had not been one of those states to receive this sort of funding relief for the hospitality industry. However, representatives with STS continue to work with state and federal officials to make changes in the distribution of monies. Ms. Smith paused to ask if there were any questions. Staff commented that the presentation from STS would be available upon request.

Other Business..... Group

Adjournment Amish Das

- Chairperson Bean had left the meeting prior to its end and asked Vice Chair Amish Das to continue with the meeting on his absence. Mr. Das thanked Mayor Henderson, Monica Smith, and Bo Taber for their time and timely information. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.