



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING  
Wednesday, August 17, 2022

**Commissioners Present;** Lauren Becker, Chair; Jamie Waters, Vice Chair; Miles Greathouse, Secretary/Treasurer; Sherricka Day, Dan Gilbert, Pace Halter, Donna Hix, Pete Jones, Mamie Pound, and Mayor Skip Henderson

**Commissioners Absent:** None

**Special Invitees:** Norm Easterbrook, RiverCenter; Merri Sherman, Columbus Sports Council; Haley Tillery, Columbus Convention & Trade Center; Ed Wolverton, Uptown Columbus

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

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

- The August meeting was called to order by Lauren Becker at 3:30pm.

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

- Miles Greathouse reminded the Board approval of Minutes & Financials is by way of consent agenda and asked if there were any questions or discussions on the minutes and financials. There being none, a motion was made by Pete Jones to approve the April Minutes & Financials and the motion was seconded by Donna Hix. A vote was taken, and the motion was approved.

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

- Ms. Becker gave an update on the status of the office move from Dillingham Place to the newly renovated historic YMCA Building (11<sup>th</sup> Street). She indicated the move was going well, with staff purging, packing, working on moving things to storage and to the new space. She added that the larger items and furniture would be moved by a profession moving company. Barring no unforeseen circumstances, the moved is expected to be completed by September 2.

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

- Mr. Bowden introduced Shannon Gray, president of Gray Research Solutions, who updated the Board on the tourism research project she which is currently underway for Columbus on behalf of VisitColumbusGA. Her presentation highlighted the program of work VisitColumbus is

currently focused on, why it updating the destination research matters, and to get Board feedback on specific items of interest and/concerns that may affect marketing the destination and VisitColumbus. She asked the Board to consider several topics and requested their thoughts to include:

- Q - How tourism has changed over the last five years:
  - A - More to offer
  - A - Columbus is becoming a total package—everything all in one place
  - A - New experiences such as Uptown Columbus
  - A - Opportunities for vacations and stay-cations
  
- Q - What tourism elements work in Columbus:
  - A - Drivability
  - A - Youth Sports
  - A - Arts
  - A - Local Pride
  - A - Military
  - A - At this point in the presentation, Ms. Gray also discussed the difference between attractors (what brings visitors to the destination) and attractions everything else that brings visitors here such as restaurants, things to do, hotels, events, etc.)
  
- Q - What do you wish worked better:
  - A - Centralized music calendar
  - A - QR Code at hotel front desks to promote the event calendar
  - A - More Cultural Festivals
  - A - Something significant to identify Columbus when you enter and are in the city
  - A - Better signage and a welcome gateway
  - A - More cross-promotion with partners
  
- Q - Opportunities:
  - A - Cross promotion
  - A - History Aspect and preservation—a unique mix of old and new
  - A - Activities for those of middle age
  - A - Shopping opportunities
  - A - Direct flights with Delta and American Airlines
  - A - Technology to capture visitor information in the Uptown area
  - A - More marketing
    - Expand target areas and who we target
    - Messaging to fit who we are promoting to
  
- Barriers:
  - More marketing dollars needed
  - Crime (Google search)
  - Transportation—make easier to get around the city, especially from attraction to attraction and hotels to meeting spaces

(See attached presentation from Gray Research Solutions.)

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

- Dan Gilbert reminded the Board of upcoming ICF (International Canoe Federation) World Cup this October, and the Nature Now Film Festival.

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

With no further business, Ms. Becker adjourned the meeting at 4:50 p.m.