



VisitColumbusGA

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
Wednesday, January 17, 2024

Commissioners Present: Lauren Becker, Chair; Jamie Waters, Vice Chair; Miles Greathouse, Secretary/Treasurer; Sherricka Day, Dan Gilbert, Pace Halter, Michelle Spivey

Commissioners Absent: Amy Bryan, Peter Jones, Mayor Skip Henderson

Special Invitees Present: 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, Joel Slocumb, and Ashley Woitena

Call to Order Peter Bowden

- The January 2024 meeting was called to order by Peter Bowden at 4:00pm for the annual election of officers. Mr. Bowden presented the slate of officers with Lauren Becker as Chair, Jamie Waters as Vice Chair, and Miles Greathouse as Secretary/Treasurer. He then asked for any nominations from the floor and there being none, a motion was made by Michelle Spivey and seconded by Sherricka Day to accept the slate of officers as presented. A vote was taken, and the motion was passed. Mr. Bowden then adjourned the meeting and turned it over to Lauren Becker.

Call to Order Lauren Becker

- The meeting was reconvened by Lauren Becker at 4:05pm.

Secretary Treasurer Report Miles Greathouse

- Miles Greathouse presented the consent agenda -- minutes for the November 2023 meeting, as well as financials for November and December 2023. NOTE: there was no meeting in December due to the holidays. He asked if there were any questions or discussion. There being none, a motion was made by Michelle Spivey to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Jamie Waters. A vote was taken, and the motion was passed.

Chair Report..... Lauren Becker

- Ms. Becker asked the Board to review and sign the Conflict-of-Interest and the Board Agreement documents before leaving the meeting.

President’s Report.....Peter Bowden

- Next, Ms. Becker turned the meeting over to Peter Bowden. He began by giving an update on the Tourism Investment District (TID). Mr. Bowden discussed the latest activity with Civitas and the on-going feasibility study to establish a TID. He said that during the kick-off committee (local organizing committee -- LOC) meeting, a Civitas representative explained the purpose of the LOC, the history of TIDs, the pros and cons of a TID in Columbus, the timeline of the feasibility study (approximately three months), and most importantly the use of the additional funds that could be generated from the TID.
- Mr. Bowden gave an update on the Uptown Shuttle service. The free shuttle service launched on Dec 26th. The shuttles are a five-passenger solar powered golf cart. Riders can use the mobile app to arrange transportation. The route includes Bay Avenue, First Avenue, Ninth Street, and 14th Street. No metrics of ridership is available as the January meeting.
- Mr. Bowden explained to the Board that marketing elements have been developed over the years to meet visitor needs. He asked Shelby Guest to go over some of those materials. This included the newly launched website, visitcolumbusga.com. She gave an overview of the navigation -- staff’s goal to make the user interface easier for the visitor, microsites for hotels, attractions, etc. Ms. Guest then reviewed the meetings and convention portion of the website; meant to engage meeting planners in their site selection of Columbus. Next, she reviewed visitfortmoore.com, a website developed to mitigate the challenge of the IHG property on Ft. Moore; aiding families, coming to the area, to find hotels near the fort, while giving them a positive, user friendly, pricing option alternatives to accommodations. She explained that this website was specifically introduced after meetings with Columbus hoteliers, looking for help (to compete with the Ft. Moore hotel). Ms. Guest then spent time showing the Columbus Event Calendar, a community resource used for planning, audience development, cross promotion from event to event, as well as a tool to avoid creating conflicts with major events occurring throughout the city.
- Mr. Bowden asked Ashley Woitena to provide a mid-year sales progress report. She went over the progress of key performance indicators, site visit conversions, and outcomes of various trade shows attended over the first six months of the fiscal year – see attached PowerPoint for analytics discussed during the presentation.
- Next on the agenda, Joel Slocumb discussed the organization of the GA Regional Film & Entertainment Alliance and its purpose. Mr. Slocumb’s key talking points included the Alliance make up of 13 communities, like Columbus, working towards seeking alternatives to bring film production to the Alliance communities. He explained that meetings had taken place with key legislators, a white paper covering the purpose and possible solutions had been created and distributed. Essentially, Mr. Slocumb, offered that the Alliance is seeking an additional financial “uplift” to entice film productions to work outside the Atlanta metro area.
- Mr. Bowden then asked Mr. Slocumb to continue with a report on a new effort, music in Columbus. Mr. Slocumb provided an overview that the mayor’s office had tasked VisitColumbus to look at ways to help identify the best way to help develop the music and entertainment industry in Columbus. He reported that several organizations have been approached varying in services and pricing. At the conclusion of the research portion of this work, the local committee will meet to determine the best solution, action steps, and timeline.

- Mr. Bowden then turned the meeting back to Ms. Becker.

Adjournment.....Lauren Becker

With no further business, Ms. Becker adjourned the meeting at 4:59pm.