



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
Wednesday, March 16, 2022

Commissioners Present; Lauren Becker, Dan Gilbert, Miles Greathouse, Mayor Skip Henderson, Pete Jones, Mamie Pound, Jamie Waters

Commissioners Absent: Sherricka Day, Donna Hix

Special Invitees: Josh Beard, Mayor Henderson’s Chief of Staff; Michael Denehy, National Infantry Museum; Pace Halter, WC Bradley Real Estate;

Special Guest: Kim Ritten, Digital Edge

Staff Present: Peter Bowden, Shelby Guest, Joel Slocumb, Ashley Woitena

Call to Order Peter Bowden

- With the resignation of Amish Das a special election was held for Board Officers. Peter Bowden called the meeting to order presenting the slate of 2022 officers -- Lauren Becker, Chair; Jamie Waters, Vice Chair; and Miles Greathouse Secretary/Treasurer. Mr. Bowden asked for any nominations from the floor. There being none, a vote was taken and the officers were approved. The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Bowden and turned over to Ms. Becker.

Call to Order Lauren Becker

- The March meeting was called to order by Lauren Becker at 3:40pm. Ms. Becker began the meeting by introducing new Board member Pete Jones with the National Infantry Museum. She then asked Miles Greathouse to present the Minutes & Financials.

Approval of Minutes & Financials Miles Greathouse

- Mr. Greathouse reminded the Board approval of Minutes & Financials is by way of a 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 February Minutes & Financials and the motion was seconded by Jamie Waters. A vote was taken, and the motion was approved.

Special Presentation Digital Edge

- Ms. Becker introduced Kim Ritten and Courtney Goodwin with Digital Edge to give an update/recap on the Convention and Meetings Marketing Campaign. Ms Goodwin explained that the campaign’s goals are:
 - To create awareness that Columbus is a new meeting destination with hotel options and convention packages
 - To create interest via short lead form for the Sales Department for prospecting purposes, follow up and development into new meeting opportunities
 - To target state and regional associations, military reunions, religious groups, and corporate groups tied to the local corporate base
 - To focus geographically on Georgia and specific cities in Alabama that are drivable;
 - To showcase VisitColumbusGA’s ability to produce viable meeting options to keep partners engaged and working collaboratively.

Ms. Goodwin discussed the metrics for the campaign, the lead generation campaign, social distribution metrics — specifically Facebook and LinkedIn, and email marketing results; all of which were outperforming national averages.

Chair’s Report.....Lauren Becker

- Ms. Becker took a moment to recognize and thank Amish Das for his leadership and service on this Board, particularly his guidance as Board Chair through the pandemic.
- She also informed the Board that staff continues researching alternative spaces to relocate the administrative offices and that report will be discussed at the next Board.

President’s Report.....Peter Bowden

- This month’s report featured presentations from VisitColumbusGA staff with updates on departmental projects.
 - **Sales DepartmentAshley Woitena:**
Update of goals for meetings held, leads sent, turned definite, citywide performance, number of site visits conducted, proposals submitted, total room nights, and economic impact. She also discussed the impact still being felt due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - **PopUp Visitors Center & FilmColumbusGA..... Joel Slocumb:**
 - Discussion on the progress of the PopUp Visitors Center, its set-up (can be indoors or outdoors), tracking visitors intercepts (averaging 100 visitors per week), partner participation, etc. Mr. Slocumb also gave an update on projects within the Columbus Film Commission Office to include meetings with two independent film productions, with possible filming in late Spring or early Summer—all of which depend on financing and casting. There is also on-going discussions with a producer about a possible television series to be filmed in Columbus. Mr. Slocumb finished his report with a brief explanation of an animation project and its work through several local organizations.
 - **Travel Media Tour..... Shelby Guest**

- Ms. Gust provided an update on the recent travel writer tour, conducted in conjunction with Laurie Rowe Communications (LRC). Writers included Becky Beall, Nicole Letts, and Mira Temkin. The tour took place over three days. She also gave an update of the latest report from LRC detailing the number of published results, total impressions and total estimated value, while highlighting some of the outlets. Ms. Guest finished her report by reminding the Board will a second travel media tour, highlighting outdoor adventure, is slated for mid-May.
 - **Legislative Update.....Peter Bowden**
 - Mr. Bowden updated on specific legislation directly affecting the tourism/hospitality industry to include:
 - **House Bill 1434** currently, this legislation is for individuals displaced from their home due to fire, allowing an exemption from hotel/motel tax. The bill also includes situations of domestic violence, human trafficking;
 - **House Bill 1429** exempting owners of short-term rentals from paying hotel/motel tax—he explained this bill is intended specifically for Augusta, GA area and the impact on short term rentals supporting The Masters Tournament; however, other sub-committee members have expressed interest in providing similar exemptions. This could cause a serious effect on the tourism industry. This bill has been introduced but is still in committee study for Ways & Means
 - **House Bill 1330** the Georgia Music Theatre Recovery Act—lowers the threshold for minimum spending required to receive tax credit for the music and entertainment industry.

Other Business..... Group

- No other business from the group

Adjournment.....Lauren Becker

With no further business, Ms. Becker called for a motion to adjourn, which was made by Miles Greathouse and seconded by Pete Jones. Motion was approved and the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.