



Tourism Advisory Committee

March 30, 2022, Meeting Minutes

TAC Attendees: Sue Adler (zoom), Melinda Allen, Charlie Brazil, Steven Brenneman, Jason Combs, Nancy Maia, Michael Owens, and Jay Wiendl

TAC Absences: Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Joe Marinelli

City Staff: Susan Broker, Rachel Buck, and Jennifer Herman

Guests: DeeAnn Geeslin, Sitting in for Joe Marinelli and Mary Sue McCarthy

Call to Order: 8:30 a.m.

1. Approval of Minutes from March 30, 2022 Meeting

J. Combs requested a motion to approve the minutes from the March 30, 2022 meeting.

C. Brazil made a motion to approve the minutes. Nancy Maia requested amendments be made to the minutes. N. Maia requested that her statement from the previous meeting on February 16, 2022, be added to the minutes, “the Victorian Neighborhood Association is very concerned with the 25 patrons allowed on a bicycle tour. Melinda Allen seconded the motion to amend the minutes. Amended minutes passed unanimously.

2. Director’s Report

- St. Patrick’s Day debrief

Susan Broker addressed Saint Patrick’s Day 2022 and reiterated from the previous meeting that she will be turning over TAC meetings to Rachel Buck. S. Broker stated St. Patrick’s Day from a city of Savannah perspective was a great day. The city instituted new changes for 2022 such as expanding the To-Go cup zone and not issuing on-street entertainment or alcohol sales. There were some on-street food sales from local food trucks. The feedback S. Broker has received has been positive from the business, tourism, and residential community.

The City did have the emergency command center open and running from Thursday, March 17, 2022, from 6:00 a.m. through Sunday, March 19, 2022, at 6:00 a.m. There was a total of four arrests which is very low, all related to public drunkenness/disorderly conduct.

Several street closures were implemented during the celebration to address crowd control. Nothing like the city has seen in the past. The question “Why were the crowds so much lighter than in years past,” was addressed. There are a lot of



variables that go into answering such as COVID-19 is still active and people are still nervous of large crowds, it was a Thursday parade, maybe the elimination of entertainment on the riverfront played a role, motorcoaches were not allowed in their usual drop off areas nor were they allowed to come from out of state to drop off guests without a permit.

J. Combs asked if there were motorcoaches that showed up? S. Broker confirmed there were a few that showed up, and three citations were issued. R. Buck confirmed a few motorcoaches were asked to move from city sidewalks where they parked. There were four citations given to one company. The motorcoach company admitted they knew the city was not permitting motorcoaches on St. Patrick's Day but still decided to come.

S. Broker discussed the internal city after-action report, Broker has reached out to the Downtown Neighborhood Association, Downtown Business Association, Waterfront, Victorian neighborhood Association, and Starland about doing listening sessions with the local businesses and residents to hear what the organization's overall experience was with the 2022 parade.

S. Broker is developing a survey to send out to membership groups to get some feedback. S. Broker asks for feedback from TAC members about their St. Patrick's Day experience.

Jay Wiendl stated the DeSoto had a great weekend, the hotel market filled up for the weekend last minute. The DeSoto was completely booked for the weekend.

Nancy Maia stated the parade was calm and not crazy. Typically, she gets people walking by her home throwing up and drunk and she just didn't see it this year.

Melinda Allen was out of town for the parade but spoke with neighbors and friends and received the following feedback. The parade was much more enjoyable and family-friendly. Allen's impression as a resident coming back into the city after the parade, she was impressed by the cleanliness and was happy to see no damage to her basketball hoop or trashcans like in years past.

On behalf, of Joe Marinelli, DeeAnn Geeslin stated all positives. Geeslin noted the lighter number of crowds, overall from a Visit Savannah perspective, J. Marinelli was very happy with the results. From her perspective and her first St. Patrick's Day, she had a ball and the only negative she heard was some locals felt they didn't have good access to go into a bar and get a drink. The cover charges were high, and the hotels wouldn't let you come in to buy a drink.

Sue Adler did not have any comments on St. Patrick's Day.



J. Combs stated he walked through Starland and it was very sedate. He looked for motorcoaches and didn't see any. It was busy at Starland Yard but manageable. Overall pretty good.

Steven Brenneman stated from a homeowner's standpoint it was great. The only negative he addressed was the lack of porta potties. There were not enough toilets for people to use. He was allowing people in his home to use the bathroom at Calhoun Square.

S. Broker addressed the lack of porta potties. The city did have almost 160 fewer toilets this year compared to years past. When the bids came back, the company that usually provides our toilets, the price increased. For 387 toilets the quote was \$260,000 dollars, the company told the city the reason it was so high was that they didn't want the job because their toilets get destroyed.

The city rushed to find toilet vendors, one of the issues we did have is that we didn't know we were going to have a parade until February, and was incredibly rushed. The city went with a company that had never done it before and was budget-friendly. There were some hiccups such as the contractor placing the toilets in the street, in the wrong direction, etc. Overall, it was a learning curve and there is room for growth. Lack of toilets and services of the toilets is a large topic in the after-action report.

Charlie Brazil stated it is the one day of the year Old Town Trolley does not operate. The prohibition museum was not open either out of precaution. Old Town Trolley might dip its toe in the water next year and operate if the parade continues to stay calm. C. Brazil does think that the weather, mid-week celebration, was a perfect storm as opposed to the impending weekend that is coming up in 2023. There were issues with motorcoaches blocking the entrance on boundary street, Old Town did have to close three or four stops throughout the weekend, it wasn't problematic but not optimal. It was certainly quieter. The issue with closing stops is that the trolley has already dropped people off at those stops, so those people were expecting to get back on the trolley at the stops and couldn't. They had to find alternative stops to load and unload.

S. Broker stated the next steps of the St. Patrick's Day after-action report are the creation of the survey and conducting listening sessions, she's hoping by June 2022 the city will begin contracts for the 2023 celebration.

Overall Savannah Police Department, Traffic, Parking, was happy. There were four arrests, S. Brenneman stated an SPD officer attended the last DNA meeting and confirmed 17 arrests. Jennifer Herman confirmed the number of arrests differs based on which government agency you are asking.



S. Broker addressed an accident that a Tourism Code Compliance officer was in on Truman Parkway. A drunk driver hit the officer on his way into work on St. Patrick's Day. DUIs were focused on by Georgia State Patrol.

- Parklets: Rachel Buck

Rachel Buck discussed the Parklet Ordinance and thanked J. Herman for writing the ordinance. R. Buck referred to a previous discussion about deciding what needed to be codified in an ordinance and what could accompany the ordinance in a policy. Essentially the Policy was transcribed into an ordinance for enforcement and legal purposes. R. Buck asked for comments on the ordinance.

J. Combs expressed concern about a clause in the ordinance stating there cannot be a parklet within 30 feet of a stop sign, crosswalk, or yield sign. Collins Quarter, unfortunately, measures 22ft from the stop sign. He suggests changing the clause to its original draft of 20 ft. from a stop sign it would allow Collins Quarter to have the parklet.

R. Buck stated Traffic and Engineering made those changes and that she will confirm with Traffic what the reason behind the change was and if it was not a safety or legal reason then she has no issue changing it back to the original form. R. Buck also suggested having a discussion with Parking about the parking space. S. Broker stated it is unfortunate but Traffic has guidelines they have to follow. M. Allen brought up the parking space that is already there and asks if it is a legal space.

J. Combs encouraged everyone to look at the CNU- Congress for New Urbanism code. J. Herman presented a scenario of a car crash and why the guidelines established have to be followed.

S. Breneman pointed out a typo in the ordinance. The word minimum is missing in section 6-2727 (d2)- two ft. minimum buffer. J. Combs also pointed out a typo in section 6-2726 (a3) it should read 30mph or less, not 25mph.

Since there were only two changes that needed to be made members of TAC agree to vote on moving the ordinance to the mayor and alderman pending the two changes. M. Allen made the motion to provisionally put this to a vote via email, N. Maia seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

- Bicycle ordinance: Rachel Buck

R. Buck addressed the changes made to the Bicycle and Segway Ordinance.

- The definition of a bicycle tour was changed. Removed: the following: and whether or not the bicycles are used for transportation to various locations when



the tour is completed. Added: For the purpose of this definition a bicycle tour is defined as in progress once all bicycles depart from base of operations until all bicycles return to base of operations at which point the tour is deemed concluded.

- The definition of Segway was changed. R. Buck removed: Weight of 170 pounds- Because the Segway companies have different types of Segways that carry anywhere from 100-300lbs. The weight is taken from the department of public safety website. <https://dps.georgia.gov/georgia-code-low-speed-vehicles>

- Added Juneteenth to the Hours of Operation since it is an official city holiday.

- Safety Operations. Removed: “all patrons sign a release of liability waiver,” per legal. This would place many claims for roadway incidents solely on the City.

- Defined safety vests

- Added: “or any other substance, whether legal or illegal, that impairs their ability to operate and safely control the Segway.”

- Reworded section Sec. 6-1597(b) to reflect the citation should go to the tour service company and/or guide or operator in the instance of public safety violations.

R. Buck asked for input and suggested changes. S. Brenneman addressed several typos and asked for clarification on section 6-1592 (c) There is an exception for bicycles on the sidewalks of Forsyth Park, to ride two abreast. Shouldn't the bicycles ride single file? C. Brazil asks if the distinction stated in the ordinance means two abreast on roadways and not sidewalks.

M. Allen and N. Maia expressed their concern about allowing bicycle tours on the sidewalks of Forsyth and agree it shouldn't be allowed. N. Maia reiterates the VNA has an issue with allowing the tours on the sidewalks and the number of people allowed on a tour. 18 bikes are too many people and are unmanageable.

M. Allen questioned where pedestrians go to get out of the way for these tours. C. Brazil pointed out that the bicycle tours are currently operating with these numbers and there hasn't been a problem. The incidents are manageable or nonexistent. C. Brazil suggested adding riding single file.

M. Allen suggested adding a bike lane in the future and suggests the park be used reserved for pedestrians. J. Combs stated the real issues are Drayton and Whitaker Street.

S. Broker conveyed that Tourism Compliance Officers have been directed to pay more attention to bicycles specifically in Forsyth Park. S. Broker would like to



push more information to the public about safe biking and regulations and suggests having a conversation with Savannah Bike Campaign.

J. Combs will write a letter to the mayor and alderman conveying the Tourism Advisory Committee approves the following with the vote of X, and if there are any dissenting votes those will be attached as well.

J. Combs moved to vote with the addition made of changing the ordinance to read single file instead of two abreast, C. Brazil seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously. With one dissenting vote, N. Maia on behalf of the VNA is against the Bicycle and Segway ordinance.

S. Broker asked when the ordinance is presented that Nancy or a representative from the VNA attend to defend their opposing vote.

3. Review of Tourism Advisory Committee makeup: Jason, Charlie, and Vaughnette (absent)

- J. Combs and C. Brazil presented the proposed Changes to TAC makeup. With the arena and canal district plans it is obvious there needs to be somebody on the TAC committee representing that area. Given this proposed addition, poses the question how do we add that seat? One suggestion was not to increase the size of the committee and to remove a seat from the DNA the other option is adding two seats one for the westside and one for tourism-related interest.

M. Allen stated it is premature to add a seat because there isn't a lot of tourism activity. J. combs asks why not prepare for the future because the tourism industry is expanding in the area. C. Brazil stated this is an opportunity for advanced outreach. S. Adler agrees with C. Brazil, why not bring them on now. It's a great opportunity and gives them a voice. It doesn't hurt anything. J. Wiendl stated tourists are going over to the arena/Westside area, and his hotel patrons are in the area regularly.

S. Broker divulged the establishment of the Quality of Life Committee. S. Broker explained the difference between the Quality of Life Committee and TAC. Essentially the Quality of Life Committee will provide feedback from the residents and business community and act as a sounding board for R. Buck and the ordinance and policies she is already working on.

M. Allen stated she is completely against the removal of a DNA seat because she feels the DNA is the bulk of the tourism area. M. Owens agrees with M. Allen that the DNA is the bulk of the residents, but he also likes the notion of a westside seat because of committee balance and growth in the area. M. Owens would like to see a seat added for the Food and Beverage industry, there is a value in having someone who is an operator and who is in the mix every day, that can share with this group as we make changes.



M. Owens suggested a joint Visit Savannah and Tourism Leadership Council nominee. It must be someone who speaks up and is open to creating compromise.

There was concern expressed about adding seats to the TAC, posing the question is it manageable.

S. Adler expressed her support for the additions of the Westside and tourism Food and Beverage seats and does not think the addition of the seats would make the committee too large to handle. S. Adler stated the seats are a necessary addition, so these groups have appropriate representation.

M. Owens expressed that adding two seats is the right move because each of the seats suggested are directly impacted by the growth and tourism industry. It is important to bring them to the table.

M. Owens made a motion that TAC recommends to the mayor and alderman to add two seats to the Tourism Advisory Committee, one for the Westside community and one for the Food and Beverage industry that would be selected jointly by Visit Savannah and TLC. C. Brazil seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.

S. Broker suggested the Mayor and Alderman select the Westside appointee. All members were in favor of this suggestion.

M. Owens confirmed TLC and Visit Savannah will hold off on selecting a representative for the Food and Beverage seat until the Westside appointee has been selected.

Adjourn 9:35 a.m.

Next meeting: May 18, 2022 – City Hall Media Room – 2nd Floor

2022 TAC Meetings

May 18, 2022

June 15, 2022

July 20, 2022

August 17, 2022

September 21, 2022

October 19, 2022

November 16, 2022

December 21, 2022