



## **Tourism Advisory Committee**

### **January 19, 2022, Meeting Minutes**

**TAC Attendees:** Mark Dana, Bill Lovett, Sue Adler (zoom), Nancy Maia (zoom), Charlie Brazil, Jason Combs, Vaughnette Goode-Walker (zoom), Joe Marinelli, and Melinda Allen (zoom)

**TAC Absences:** Michael Owens

**City Staff:** Susan Broker and Rachel Buck

8:36 a.m. Call to Order- Mark Dana

Mark Dana addressed TAC committee to inform members of the changes in his employment in the hotel industry and discuss the future of his seat on the Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC). M. Dana is no longer an owner of the hotels but is still an investor. Mark is not in the operational aspect of the hotel business, but he is still managing the parking garages – Congress Street and Liberty Street. M. Dana now serves as the President and CEO of 200 club of the Coastal Empire. Accepting this position allows him to fundraise even more for off-duty police deaths and illnesses - 20 counties.

Visit Savannah appoints the lodging representative and will need to determine if the position should be filled by another hotelier.

M. Dana asked about the possibility of TAC hosting meetings at the hotel and asked if anyone had reached out to host the meetings there. Rachel Buck did reach out to the hotel for meeting space but since the hotel is not owned by M. Dana anymore, the hotel would have to go through the new owners and it would not always be open for TAC to use. Jason Combs is going to check with Gingerbread House and V. Goode-Walker offered Ralph Mark Gilbert Museum as an alternative meeting space in case City Hall was not available for meetings.

#### **1. Approval of Minutes from November 17, 2021 Meeting**

M. Dana requested a motion to approve the minutes from the November 17, 2021 meeting.

J. Marinelli made a motion to approve the minutes, Bill Lovett requested the following amendments be made to the minutes.

- (a) Melinda Allen was present for most of the meeting but left early;
- (b) V. Goode-Walker attended electronically; and
- (c) B. Lovett made a request to amend the minutes to read “Bill Lovett thanked Susan Broker for finding the funding to decorate the squares for Christmas.”



B. Lovett asked for clarification on the discussion regarding the quadricycle parking space request discussed in the November meeting and reiterated he took from the meeting that the recommendation for the use of the parking spaces was not approved and that edits would be made to the 2022 Tour Service for Hire Ordinance. J. Combs commented that he understood from the meeting that the use of the spaces was approved.

S. Broker explained that she took from the discussion that TAC approved the recommendation for the use of the spaces outside the Owens-Thomas House and by Wells Fargo which are currently freight zones and will remain freight zones but will allow quadricycles to park there. S. Broker discussed with Parking Services that TAC has no issue and to move forward with the quadricycle use of spaces.

J. Combs, moving forward would like to have a statement typed out that TAC members will sign clarifying TAC's recommendations and decisions to dismiss any confusion moving forward.

B. Lovett commented that nothing in the November minutes states TAC approved the spaces and that TAC had issues with the spaces. Further, the minutes state S. Broker was not prepared to make a recommendation about the problem and would be tabled until 2022. S. Broker clarified her previous statement from the November meeting that she was not prepared to make a recommendation about the number of quadricycles in the city, not the use of the parking spaces

M. Dana recommended the November minutes stay as is and in the next meeting we can address it and memorialize it as part of another meeting's minutes.

B. Lovett Second the motion. Minutes passed unanimously

## 2. 2022 Chair and Chair-elect Vote

M. Dana addressed the volunteer leadership of the organization. Nominations for 2022 chair and 2023 chair of TAC were made at the November 2021 meeting. Jason Combs was nominated and agreed to serve. J. Marinelli was nominated and contacted and agreed to serve. Two nominations were declared. M. Dana asked for a motion to approve the incoming slate of J. Combs as Chairman and J. Marinelli as Vice Chair. Charlie Brazil made the motion and V. Goode-Walker seconded the motion. J. Combs stated he is acting president of Thomas Square and wanted to ensure that the board is okay with him serving on both boards. J. Combs doesn't see it as a conflict and believes he can be neutral. J. Marinelli stated he has no problem. Voted all in favor.

M. Dana turned the meeting over to new chairmen J. Combs.



Joe Marinelli suggested reviewing the makeup of the TAC committee as a future agenda item. S. Broker explained the process used previously to establish the makeup of TAC. S. Broker requested to create a small executive group composed of one neighborhood representative and one tourism representative to come back to the board with their recommendation. J. Combs confirmed the request.

Sue Adler asked about bylaws for the committee. Section 6-1502 – governed by ordinance. S. Broker responded that TAC is only an *advisory* committee. Appointed by the Mayor and Aldermen. As such, TAC is governed via the Tour Service for Hire Ordinance.

V. Goode-Walker would like to be part of the process to so that the perspective of the walking tours is part of the conversation.

### 3. Director's Report

- Recap of 2021

S. Broker addressed the vacancies in the Office of Special Events, Film, and Tourism and welcomed Rachel Buck as the Tourism Management Coordinator and announced the hiring of a new Film Coordinator. S. Broker will have Rachel Buck take more of a leadership role on TAC that will allow S. Broker to step back and focus on other projects. As of January 4, 2022, four Tourism Compliance officers transitioned from Code Compliance to the Office of Special Events, Film, and Tourism. These officers are under the supervision of Nicole Bush and the Nighttime Management Program.

S. Broker is not interested in having Tourism Compliance officers issue citation after citation. Rather, wants the officers to question why repeat citations might be necessary and to consider if there is a compelling reason to modify the ordinance. In other words, S. Broker stated if you are having to issue a citation repeatedly, either it's the price of doing business or there is something that needs to be changed in the ordinance to help the situation and tourism community. It will be a learning curve for all.

J. Combs asked about a number to call if they would like to report an issue. S. Broker confirmed that you will now call our office, or you can send an email to [Tourism@savannahga.gov](mailto:Tourism@savannahga.gov) and we will receive the concerns. Rachel Buck, Susan Broker along with other members of the office received these emails directly.

S. Broker asked V. Goode-Walker and C. Brazil to meet with her in the future to discuss any suggestions and changes that could be made relative to the ordinance and/or the deployment of the Tourism Compliance Officers.



- Tree Canopy  
TAC Appointee for the Urban Forest Management Task Force – The Savannah Tree Foundation contacted S. Broker about having tourism representation on the Urban Forest Management Task Force. This Task Force was put together to develop a management plan for Savannah’s tree canopy. S. Broker asked J. Combs to appoint a representative from TAC to serve on the Task Force.
- 2022 Goals
  - Parklet (Creating a fee structure) - S. Broker stated her office has finalized a Parklet policy instead of an ordinance so that modifications can be made more expeditiously than if it were an ordinance. Since Parklets will be a new program, it is expected that we will need to edit the Policy.
  - The only section of the Parklet policy that will be in ordinance form is the fee structure within the Revenue Ordinance which allows the City to collect fees. Staff is researching other communities to develop a fair fee structure. Considerations include lost revenue per space monthly and annually and average cost per square foot for restaurant space downtown. S. Broker stated we do not want this to be cost prohibitive for businesses, but we need a fee that offsets some of the lost revenue from these spaces.

M. Dana asked if there will be a map that determines where a parklet can be and what streets are off-limits. He also asked if the City will be requiring additional insurance in case of an accident. S. Broker confirmed both questions. There will be off-limit streets and spaces and additional insurance is required.

S. Broker discussed the requirements and mechanics of a parklet.

J. Combs asked R. Buck to send TAC members a copy of the Raleigh, NC Parklet Program. J. Marinelli expressed his concern about the curb appeal of the parklets and posed the question of how many there are in Savannah? Will there still be a demand? Is the popularity/ need still there?

S. Broker confirmed that there are streets that will be off-limits for Parklets. These streets were identified by Traffic Engineering as not conducive to this type of street activity. For example, Broughton Street will not be allowed to have parklets because the sidewalks are being widened as part of the Redevelopment Project. S. Broker then confirmed that there will be an annual fee, not a monthly fee.



- Tour Service for Hire ordinance edits
- Bicycle ordinance

S. Broker's goal is to have her office compile all Tour Service for Hire (TSFH) ordinance edits and bring them to Council at the same time, including the Bicycle and Segway section of the ordinance.

S. Broker informed the group that her office hosted a meeting with the bicycle tour businesses in October/November 2021. Most of the proposed ordinance was based on State law but that some sections were based on local preferences identified by the bicycle community. All appropriate City departments have reviewed and approved the proposed ordinance. Traffic Engineering is currently reviewing the ordinance. Once their review is complete, the ordinance will go to Legal for review.

V. Goode-Walker expressed her concerns with walking tours. There are a lot of guides walking around without City-issued badges, people walking around with headphones creating a safety and noise concern, and the number of walking tours that are allowed in the city. V. Goode-Walker mentioned quiet zones and would like to talk offline about some changes she would like to see in the TSFH ordinance. S. Broker suggested a meeting with V. Goode-Walker and the Tourism Compliance Officers to help them better understand the industry and compliance purpose.

- Christmas Decorations

S. Broker, at the request of the City Manager, is creating a Holiday decoration committee to develop a more comprehensive and detailed holiday program for 2022. S. Broker requested that J. Combs appoint a representative from TAC to serve on this committee.

C. Brazil recommended that a group from TAC should visit St. Augustine to see the Nights of Lights Display.

J. Marinelli mentioned that the Christmas tree stage skirt was down, and that people were going under the stage and lights being torn off. He suggested we need to address our current issues and then move forward with the new ideas.

A motion request was made by J. Combs to appoint C. Brazil to the Holiday Committee. M. Dana made a motion, B. Lovett second the motion. C. Brazil agreed to serve on the Holiday Decoration Committee.



4. Other Business

RHI. The 2022 general operating budget for the Office of Special Events, Film, and Tourism includes funding to enter a contract with Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI) to assist the City with developing a comprehensive Nighttime Management Program. TAC will play a pivotal role in the creation of the Nighttime Management Plan. S. Broker will keep TAC informed of the progress.

J. Marinelli and M. Dana recommended Michael Owens attend RHI convention with the OSEFT team. Four staff members will be attending the 2022 convention in D.C.

J. Combs asked about Rock n' Roll Marathon negotiations. S. Broker confirmed that the negotiations have not started as the City just finished their after-action report and sent it to the City Manager. The Mayor stated that when negotiations do start, the DNA and neighborhood involvement will be part of the conversation.

J. Marinelli stated that when Rock n' Roll was in town they mentioned they have an artificial deadline of March 2022 to have a commitment or decision made.

J. Combs asked for a volunteer to serve on the Urban Forest Management Task Force. Nancy Maia was nominated, and a motion was made to pass by Melinda Allen, Second by C. Brazil. N. Maia agreed to serve on the Urban Forest Management Task Force committee.

N. Maia voiced her concerns about the TSFH bicycle tours. She stated that the number of bicycles in the squares is getting out of hand and interfering with pedestrians. The DNA continues to have trouble with the bike tours in the squares. She suggested that the bicycle ordinance contemplate capping the number of customers per tour. S. Broker stated that the ordinance does cap the number and she will send the ordinance to TAC members before the next meeting.

B. Lovett asked about the Film Coordinator position. S. Broker confirmed the start date of the coordinator will be January 31, 2022.

5. Adjourn 9:35 a.m.

**Next meeting: February 16, 2022 – City Hall Media Room – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**

**2022 TAC Meetings**

February 16, 2022

March 16, 2022

April 20, 2022

May 18, 2022

June 15, 2022



July 20, 2022

August 17, 2022

September 21, 2022

October 19, 2022

November 16, 2022

December 21, 2022