

# Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes

August 22, 2023

**TAC Attendees:** Sue Adler, Melinda Allen, Charlie Brazil, Jason Combs, Mitch Linder, and Michael Owens

**TAC Absences:** Steve Brenneman, Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Joseph Marinelli, Ryan Madson

**City Staff:** Susan Broker, Rachel Buck, and Davita Grier

**Call to order: 8:32 AM**

## Chair's Report

### 1. Approval of minutes from June 27, 2023

- S. Adler opened the meeting by welcoming Rachel back and requesting a motion to approve the June 27, 2023, minutes. M. Owens made a motion to approve the minutes. M. Allen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### 2. Director's Report

#### Holiday Decorations and Programming

- R. Buck stated that one holiday item has already been ordered and there are a few more items undergoing bids. R. Buck stated the original plan was to purchase artificial garland for the residential squares to replace the live garland but due to budgeting and inventory restraints this year they will have to purchase artificial garland next year. R. Buck continued by stating that the City will most likely have to purchase a new Christmas tree because the current tree has reached the end of its life and has become a safety concern. R. Buck proceeds to share that there has been a purchase of a new holiday installation that will be in City Market. It is an ornament ball stack, that will be the first in Southeast. It is over 2,000 lbs, 10 ball ornaments stack. It will have the Savannah Holly Days logo on it and be placed in Ellis Square this year. R. Buck explained she is hoping to build on it by adding a few smaller installations in places like Forsyth Park, or different areas where people can go and visit to take pictures with the ornaments and decorations.

S. Broker added that she received an email from the Greater Savannah International Alliance (GSIA) stating that they are working with young volunteers and children in the community to create ornaments that represent various international communities in Savannah, and they're calling it "The Holiday Spirit of Savannah's Children." They asked if they could collaborate with us by building ornaments for our tree that represent the different cultures. S. Broker stated she has never worked with this group, but she's inclined to talk with them and see what it is that they want to bring forth.

R. Buck stated the only programming that is planned for the 2023 holiday season is the tree lighting ceremony and possibly something for the unveiling of the ornament stack. The City and Chamber have decided to dial back the programming to eliminate the stage on Broughton Street and invest that money elsewhere.

R. Buck continued by stating during the 2022 holiday season the City lost 100 artificial bows to theft and weather. She will be looking to replace those that were lost. She will also be looking to purchase artificial wreaths that will be installed throughout the city. Due to the

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lack of budget, she won't be able to purchase all 600 but she will purchase a portion of what is needed and in the following years will hopefully reach 600 wreaths to distribute amongst the districts.

### **RHI Summit**

- S. Broker stated that the RHI proposal has been tabled for the moment and will be presented at Council Workshop at a later date. However, the City Manager has given internal directives to start with some of the initiatives, and the first thing planned is to staff the office in Ellis Square, he's given the green light to start working on the transportation hub that we've been wanting to do, pulling together the advisory committee for nighttime management. This advisory committee will be made up of residents, venue owners, and late-night representatives. She believes that the committee is going to inform how the City looks at ordinances for late-night support and management. She continued stating that ultimately, we will come to this body to talk about anything that pertains to change with the sound ordinance or the Tour Services for Hire Ordinance. She understands it's another committee, but it's just to help inform the nighttime management effort and ultimately come to this body for things that are tourism/nightlife related.

S. Broker continued by stating R. Buck has just taken over as supervisor of the Tourism Division. She is about to hire 2 new Tourism Compliance Officers who will work only at night and on weekends.

M. Owens added that typically visitor volume increases well over 50% on Saturday and Sunday. M. Owens suggested moving forward that tourism compliance be concentrated on high-impact days such as Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

S. Broker stated the Office of Special Events will be hiring a coordinator for nightlife management so there will be one dedicated employee who will work with her and Eddie on implementing some of the strategies in the RHI plan. The City is bringing back the Ambassador Program and looking at how they can reshape the program to get the biggest bang for our buck and provide the best service to those out on the streets looking for information.

### **Motorcoach Map and TSFH Ordinance**

- S. Broker stated that Nicole Bush, who had been managing the Tourism Division while Rachel was on maternity leave, created an updated motorcoach map. S. Broker made a recommendation to have the map included in the Ordinance, so it is easier to find and is all in one place.

### **3. Other Business**

- S. Broker informed the committee of the Patriot Run that is happening on September 9th. The run is a collaboration between the City and Hunter for 9/11. She stated they are expecting at least 4,000 participants.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:04 AM**