

**Tourism Advisory Committee
Minutes
September 26, 2023**

TAC Attendees: Melinda Allen, Charlie Brazil, Steve Brenneman, Jason Combs, Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Ryan Madson, Joseph Marinelli, and Michael Owens

TAC Absences: Sue Adler and Mitch Linder

City Staff: Susan Broker, Rachel Buck, Davita Grier, and Jen Herman

Call to order: 8:30 AM

Chair's Report

1. Approval of minutes from August 22, 2023

J. Marinelli opened the meeting by requesting a motion to approve the August 22, 2023, minutes. R. Madson made a motion to approve the minutes. J. Combs seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Thinking about next year

J. Marinelli first acknowledged the current agenda and then transitioned into a discussion about the upcoming year. He notes that several topics from today's agenda are expected to extend beyond the remaining TAC meetings for the current year and will likely carry over into the new year. These topics encompass St. Patrick's Day 2024, the Horse Carriage Ordinance, and concerns related to DNA within the tourism industry.

J. Marinelli talked about St. Patrick's Day 2024, mentioning that he was a part of the 200th-anniversary Committee, which was distinct from the Parade Committee. The Committee had been working on improving the St. Patrick's experience for both visitors and locals. J. Marinelli mentioned that he had connected with J. Shearhouse on a sub-committee to discuss the idea of lighting the city in green, and that they are working with various facilities to make it happen.

3. Director's Report:

Holiday Decorations and Programming- Rachel Buck

R. Buck expressed excitement about the upcoming holiday season and mentioned changes in holiday decoration procurement, with an open bid for the city's district decorations. They aimed to replace missing bows and introduce red & gold bows in residential squares. They intended to purchase live garlands for various squares, and DNA would assist with the setup. A new Christmas tree with a drum base replaced the old one on Broughton Street.

An ornament ball stack with the Savannah Holly Day logo will be installed in Ellis Square, and there will be a tree lighting ceremony and an ornament stack unveiling. Most weekend programming was eliminated in favor of these two events, driven by cost-effectiveness.

Tourism Advisory Committee
Minutes
September 26, 2023

J. Marinelli recommended focusing on more festive decorations instead of performances.

Lighting issues on Broughton Street were discussed, with efforts to find a sustainable electricity source underway.

St. Patrick's Day 2024- Susan Broker

S. Broker discussed preparations for St. Patrick's Day 2024, with a focus on sustainability and cleanliness due to it falling on a Saturday and the 200th Anniversary. Operations would be extended to two days, with an internal meeting to address the larger crowds expected.

Horse Carriage Ordinance- Susan Broker

S. Broker mentioned concerns from animal rights activists regarding horse carriages and heat issues. The city was looking into modifying the ordinance to address these concerns and sought TAC's input. M. Owens expressed his alarm at the issue resurfacing and highlighted past efforts on the topic. A request was made for two TAC members to assist in the modification process. M. Owens and S. Brenneman were selected to assist staff with recommendations for the horse carriage industry.

DNA Concerns with the Tourism Industry- Susan Broker

DNA presented concerns about the impact of trolley tours on quality of life. They had recommendations to address this imbalance and were invited to present at the TAC meeting. There was discussion about the length of the presentation and the need for TAC to serve as a soundboard.

Patriot Run- Susan Broker

The Patriot Run, which had about 2000 runners, was discussed, and efforts to promote it for the 25th Anniversary of 9/11 were mentioned.

Active Shooter Training- Susan Broker

Plans for active shooter training in the City Market area were discussed. Training would involve internal city staff and external organizations, with the goal of creating a response plan to share more broadly.

4. Other Business

S. Broker mentioned a new policy on permitting for events and tents in Forsyth Park was in the works and will be further discussed when the policy is complete.

Meeting adjourned 9:14 a.m.