

Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes

January 24, 2023

TAC Attendees: Sue Adler, Melinda Allen, Charlie Brazil, Steve Brenneman, Jason Combs, Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Nancy Maia, Mitch Linder Joseph Marinelli, and Michael Owens

TAC Absences:

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

Guests: Nancy Maia

Call to order: 8:32 AM

1. TAC recognizes J. Combs as the 2022 former Chairman

- R. Buck recognized J. Combs for his service to TAC as the 2022 former Chairman of the committee. J. Combs was honored with a service award plaque.

2. Approval of minutes from December 21, 2022

- J. Marinelli asked for a motion to approve the December 21, 2022 meeting minutes. J. Combs clarified that his objection to the nomination of S. Adler as Vice-Chairman of TAC was based on her place of residency, which is outside of the Savannah area. Additionally, J. Combs wished to amend the December 2022 minutes section regarding Creeper Van interactions given by Jennifer Long to include physical interactions when passing out candy. J. Marinelli asked for a motion to approve the minutes to include the revisions. C. Brazil made a motion to approve the minutes. M. Owens seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Director's Report: Rachel Buck

Purpose of TAC

- R. Buck informed the committee that there would be a change implemented to the start of each meeting to include the reading of the purpose of TAC to remind everyone of the important role they play on the committee. TAC contact sheets were also distributed at this time.
- J. Marinelli stated that the reading of TAC's purpose at the beginning of each meeting was a great refresher and provides guiderails to the general sense of what the meetings are about. Additionally, J. Marinelli expressed his primary objectives for TAC to include making the conversations had more cooperative, communicative, and collaborative. Additionally, J. Marinelli emphasized the fact that TAC is a recommendation board and not a board of directors. The

importance of participation and attendance are all key drivers to overall success and that each member should allot for at least 75 minutes of meeting time monthly. Lastly, agendas should be read ahead of meeting dates.

Nightlife Management

- S. Broker stated the draft report from RHI is expected soon, which will include all the engagement, feedback, and suggestions given last year as to what the Office of Nightlife Management should look like. The content of the report will be reviewed internally prior to being available to the public. Additionally, RHI and the Special Events, Film, and Tourism Office will host a summit in the upcoming months where the report will be presented to the community. On another note, the City is looking to remove the temporary light structures that have been placed in the squares. These were placed last summer to address some of the issues happening in City Market. Lighting will be a component of the overall Nighttime Management strategy.

J. Marinelli asked if S. Broker or other staff members would be briefed on the findings of the report prior to release.

S. Broker stated that no previews have been provided yet, but staff will review the report once made available and will release to all shortly thereafter.

Parklets

- S. Broker stated that in December 2022, the Office of Special Events, Film & Tourism went before City Council to present Parklets as an agenda item. Questions were raised from Council regarding the impact Parklets would have on parking availability. S. Broker advised Council that there is an expectation to possibly lose roughly 8-9 parking spaces. Currently, there is a need for more insight currently sought from area restaurants regarding this project. There was a recent Parklet public forum in which roughly 5 individuals attended. To gain additional input, SEFT staff developed a survey which can be found online. There will be a February 2023 follow-up meeting.

J. Combs asked who showed up to the Parklet public forum.

S. Broker stated Boomys and 4 downtown residents participated.

J. Marinelli asked if there was any other notable feedback provided from Council.

S. Broker stated a fee structure was suggested for areas that would not generate revenue for parking.

J. Combs asked if Parklets were going to be available in areas where parking spaces were not delineated.

R. Buck stated that there was an openness to the idea and that Traffic Engineering would need to be consulted.

St. Patrick's Day

- S. Broker stated that St. Patrick's Day falls on a Friday this year. The City is in full operation mode to make the event a success. This year no permits for festivals on River Street will be issued and the to-go-cup zone will be expanded. There will also be a limitation of motor coaches in control zones. The City Command Center will be located at the Floyd Adams Complex this year. The event will be held from Friday morning through Sunday morning at 4AM.

J. Marinelli asked if there were any plans to bring back the same group as last year for the purpose of gaining feedback regarding the event.

S. Broker stated that the group will be brought back together sometime towards the end of February or early March.

V. Goode-Walker asked about the specified parameters of the to-go cup areas and if it would resemble the same as last year.

S. Broker stated the areas would be Victory, Truman, and MLK, Jr. Blvd.

J. Combs asked if there was any possibility of extending the to-go-cup days from 1 to 2.

S. Broker stated yes there has been discussion regarding that and the topic could be brought up at the City-wide meeting.

R. Madson asked if there was any available data regarding litter collection.

S. Broker stated additional sanitation services were deployed to combat litter collection and that there was no considerable increase in litter from the event.

R. Madson suggested the to-go-cup initiative be proposed to Council for consideration to be made a permanent entity.

J. Marinelli stated that the general consensus between hotels and restaurants he was in contact with expressed far more positives than negatives regarding the event. More fine tuning is in the works in anticipation of the St. Patrick's Day Saturday event to be held next year. Individuals spoken to disclosed that business levels were not impacted negatively.

S. Adler stated that there is a concern with the after-effect of the event including a porta-potty being left in a square and welcomes a higher level of

monitoring from the City's Sanitation Department. S. Broker stated that the porta-potties will be more strategically placed this year to specifically address needs on the parade route.

C. Brazil asked about the timeline for mapping out the change process for how the event is conducted overall.

M. Owens stated that trying to control the festival in the past has, at times, made matters worse, which resulted in a few businesses foregoing participation in the event. M. Owens also stated he is unsure if there is an intention to bring things back to the way they were in the past, but there is a need to let business owners shape the event in a matter that is beneficial to their clientele and overall business operations without too much interference.

V. Goode-Walker stated that the event last year went well and with that success maybe the planning should commence in anticipation of the milestone 200th St. Patrick's Day in 2024.

Creeper Van

- R. Buck informed the committee that Jennifer Long, the owner of Creeper Van, had withdrawn her application for her company and will not be proceeding any further.

M. Owens asked if there were plans for Ms. Long to try another route.

R. Buck stated that Ms. Long's email stated that she would not be moving forward with registering any tour company.

S. Broker added that she felt she would have been a great asset to the community.

J. Combs stated that Ms. Long had plans to resubmit at a later date.

4. Other Business

St. Augustine Trip

- R. Buck explained there will be a roundtable discussion comprised of members of TAC, the City, and officials of St. Augustine, FL regarding holiday decorations and their "Nights of Lights" display. The purpose of this trip is to gain a better understanding of what the City of Savannah could add to their current holiday decorating project and would address if a display of such large magnitude could be recreated in Savannah.

S. Broker added that holiday decorating has finally found a home in the Office of Special Events, Film & Tourism, and going forward there is hope for a strategic public/private partnership to deliver the desired results and expectations of the City Manager.

S. Adler asked that since the lights impact the downtown area, were any businesses from the downtown area accompanying the group to St. Augustine, FL.

R. Buck stated that no business owners in the area would be attending the trip.

J. Marinelli asked the status of the lights on Broughton Street and whether they would be staying up.

R. Buck stated the lights would stay up. A sustainable plan is being devised to address issues including timing issues, etc.

Tour Operator Application Process

- V. Goode-Walker suggested devising a way in which all forms and documents required concerning becoming a tour operator be streamlined across all City departments. Currently, there is no way to submit information electronically as some departments require customers to show up in-person to submit documentation.

R. Buck stated that she has been made aware of these issues, especially over the last couple of weeks, and addressed the need to streamline the process between the Revenue Department, Parking and Mobility, and Special Events, Film, and Tourism by creating an electronic application.

S. Broker added that there will be a meeting involving all departments involved in the tour operating process to identify needs and to strategize and come up with a way to make the process more efficient and customer friendly.

New Agenda Item

- R. Madson requested the topic of sustainable tourism be added as an agenda item at the next meeting. Stating sustainable tourism is an emerging trend that should be discussed and defined.

J. Combs stated that the term sustainable tourism is defined in the Tourism Management Plan on page 20.

Meeting adjourned at 9:23 AM