



**Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC)
Meeting Minutes**

Date: February 27th, 2024

Location: Savannah City Hall, 2nd Floor Media Room

TAC Attendees: Sue Adler, Melinda Allen, Steve Brennehan, Jason Combs, Charlie Brazil, Mitch Linder, Ryan Madson, Joe Marinelli,

Absentees: Michael Owens, Vaughnette Goode-Walker

City Staff: Susan Broker, Edward Grant, Rachel Buck

Guest Attendees: Nicholas Monteleone, Janie Armstrong, Jonathan Silva and Raul Febre, Owners of Cruisin Tikis Savannah

Call to order: 8:30 AM

Summary

The meeting included the review and approval of previous minutes, a presentation by Cruisin Tikis Savannah owners about their proposed historical Savannah River cruise, and discussions on safety measures, social media outreach, tour details, and community involvement. Topics also included man overboard procedures, social media presence, pricing, local community involvement, and the number of proposed boats. The potential expansion of boat tour operations in Savannah, focusing on location, safety, and legal jurisdiction, was discussed. Updates on trolley tour route changes, ongoing discussions with animal advocates and carriage tour operators, and preparations for St. Patrick's Day were covered. Additionally, the formation of a tourism task group and uncertainty around the proposed To-Go Cup zone expansion were addressed.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes from October 24, 2023, December 5, 2023, and January 23, 2024

S. Adler opened the meeting by requesting a motion to approve the October 24, 2023, December 5, 2023, and January 23, 2024. The Committee discussed the content of the October meeting minutes, with particular attention to the motion for approval and the need for clarity regarding certain items. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes with amendments to the October meeting notation. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Presentation: Cruisin Tikis Savannah

- Rachel Buck introduced Jonathan and Raul of Cruisin Tiki Savannah
- Nicholas Monteleone and Janie Armstrong from Cruisin Tikis Corporate introduced themselves and their unique floating tiki boat experience, emphasizing the company's focus on small groups and providing an intimate experience along the Savannah River, departing from a private dock on the east end of River Street, traveling west towards Plant Riverside District, and then returning east to the private dock.
- Nicholas and Janie covered the company's history, goals, safety measures, social media outreach, and proposed tour details.



- Nicholas and Janie also addressed questions related to the Cruisin Tiki experience, safety, local community involvement, pricing, and expansion plans.
- Jonathan described Cruisin Tikis Savannah as a fun and friendly Polynesian-style cruise that hosts birthday parties, anniversaries, and other special occasions while enjoying the historical Savannah River.
- The cruise will travel 10-15' from the docks and will not interfere with river traffic.
- Jason referenced a Facebook page describing Cruising Tikis as a floating bar on the water.
- Nicholas stated that while the aesthetic resembles a bar, there is no alcohol service on the vessel.
- Nicholas stated those who book the cruise must bring their own alcohol.

Discussion -Cruisin Tikis Proposed Tour Details and Safety Measures:

- The committee reviewed safety measures for boat operations, including equipment and captain qualifications. Melinda Allen inquired about man-overboard procedures with one captain. Jonathan outlined safety briefings and the proposed cruise route. Nicholas Monteleone noted no incidents of passengers falling overboard on tiki cruises, and all vessels are U.S. Coast Guard-approved.

Regarding community involvement and pricing, Nicholas described support for charities and environmental awareness. Sue Adler asked about operators living in Savannah, and Jonathan explained the team's rotation alternating locally every seven days. Steve Brenneman asked about pricing, and Nicholas stated tours are priced at approximately \$55 per person.

Cruisin Tikis Savannah Representatives left the meeting.

- Rachel Buck addressed questions about the City's legal authority over boat tours, asserting that the City Attorney believes the City has jurisdiction over all tours, including those on water. She clarified that the U.S. Coast Guard approves the vessel, while the City approves the business operation. Jason Combs noted that the Tour Service for Hire Ordinance doesn't permit boat tours. Charlie Brazil inquired about the treatment of the Savannah River Queen, to which Rachel Buck explained that it's not registered as a tour operation but could register if required.
- Jason Combs explained that the absence of bars in other locations is why they're not considered for similar tours, emphasizing the appeal of hopping on and off with drinks. He stated that this concept isn't suitable for Savannah and is essentially a disguised booze cruise. Melinda Allen pointed out the heavy promotion of a "bar on the water" in their marketing.
- Susan Broker conveyed the committee's strong opposition to the idea, with Sue Adler agreeing but stressing the need for a decision from the City Attorney before voting. Charlie



Brazil expressed general support for water tours but felt this specific request didn't align with the city's aesthetic.

3. Staff Report:

Trolley Route Changes and Horse Carriage Ordinance

- Updates on trolley route changes and discussions regarding potential adjustments to the horse carriage ordinance were provided.
- Charlie Brazil stated that the directional speakers for a demo version of one of his company's trollies have arrived and are being installed. A scheduled demo will follow.
- Rachel Buck stated she has met with both horse carriage operators and animal advocates regarding proposed changes to the Tour Service for Hire Ordinance regarding horse-drawn carriage tours. The next meeting will be with vets.
- The Committee discussed the engagement with various stakeholders and the evaluation of concerns and recommendations for ordinance adjustments.

St. Patrick's Day

- Susan Broker discussed comprehensive plans for the 200th St. Patrick's Day parade, including street closures, citywide green lighting, and a brief ceremony with green fireworks, in coordination with the 200th-anniversary St. Patrick's Day Committee.

Tour Small Group

- Susan Broker stated a tour small group is being formed to specifically address tour-related issues, comprising representatives from TAC, the tourism industry, and local neighborhoods. Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Charlie Brazil, Jason Combs, and Melinda Allen were identified as core members, with plans to include subject matter experts as necessary.

4. Other Business:

To-Go Cup Expansion

- Jason Combs addressed the ongoing uncertainty and discussions surrounding the To-Go Cup expansion, noting the need for a clear proposal and input from residents and business owners.
- Susan Broker stated she would gather more information on this matter and report back.
- The meeting concluded with a reminder of the next scheduled meeting date on March 26th, 2024, and an open call for any additional items to be considered for the future agenda. Sue Adler thanked everyone for their contributions and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting: March 26th, 2024, at 8:30 a.m., Savannah City Hall, 2nd Floor Media Room

Minutes Prepared by Edward Grant and Rachel Buck