



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

Date: April 23rd, 2024
Location: Savannah City Hall, 2nd Floor Media Room
TAC Attendees: Sue Adler, Melinda Allen, Steve Brenneman, Jason Combs, Charlie Brazil, Mitch Linder, Ryan Madson, Joe Marinelli, and Michael Owens
Absentees: Vaughnette Goode-Walker
City Staff: Susan Broker, Edward Grant, Rachel Buck

Call to order: 8:34 AM

Summary

The meeting began with the unanimous approval of the minutes from the previous meeting held on March 26th. The agenda included a review of trolley route modifications to reduce congestion around Washington Square, the implementation of noise reduction measures for trolleys, and a review of horse carriage ordinances. Recommendations for walking tours were discussed, focusing on tour size, hours of operation, and noise levels. Additionally, the bicycle ordinance was reintroduced alongside walking tour regulations. The meeting also included deliberations on redevelopment options for the Civic Center site.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- S. Adler initiated the meeting by requesting a motion to approve the meeting minutes from March 26, 2024. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

2. Staff Report:

City Council Workshop Presentation • Tourism-Related Issues

- Susan Broker presented tourism-related issues to the city council during the April workshop, focusing on trolleys and horse carriages. She highlighted the Tourism Advisory Committee's (TAC) response to the Downtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) and provided statistics about the tourism industry's impact on the economy and livelihood.

Trolley route modifications

- There was a discussion about relocating away from Washington Square, with trolley companies offering to identify any potential congestion points that may result from this move. Additionally, plans for sound elimination for trolleys were addressed, with an ordinance drafted for presentation to the city council in May 2024. Language for a timeline for implementation is currently being crafted.

Horse Drawn Carriage Industry

- The current horse carriage ordinance was presented to council during the April workshop, emphasizing that the current ordinance is comprehensive. It was noted that the state's Department of Agriculture reviewed the ordinance and deemed it one of the best they have seen. Council expressed diverse opinions regarding the future of the horse carriage industry and requested a thorough review to be presented by staff within 60 days.

Walking Tours

- Rachel Buck presented the progress of the walking tour tourism task force. She noted that two meetings with walking tour operators had been conducted. The presentation of the results from these meetings is scheduled for June. Various aspects of walking tours were discussed, including tour size, hours of operation, and conduct, during the task force meetings.

3. Other Business:

Bicycle Ordinance

- S. Broker provided an update on the bicycle ordinance. She suggested reintroducing the bicycle ordinance to the council in conjunction with walking tour recommendations in June. There was also a discussion about the potential for a council workshop on the bicycle ordinance, which would ultimately be the decision of the City Manager.

Open Discussion on Civic Center Redevelopment

- TAC members discussed various opinions on the potential redevelopment of the Civic Center. Considerations included housing, density, and the preservation of the Johnny Mercer Theater. There was a highlight on the need for a mid-size performing arts facility and the importance of stakeholder involvement in decision-making. A compromise was considered in preserving the Johnny Mercer Theater while allowing for redevelopment. Discussion also revolved around keeping the Johnny Mercer Theater and rebuilding Albert Square, as well as different schemes or phases for redevelopment, including integrating parts of the ward. There was consideration for a municipal office building as part of the mall redevelopment on the south side, and exploration of possibilities for shared spaces and public-private partnerships. The multiple uses of the Civic Center and its role during emergencies were highlighted, along with a comparison of the facilities and capabilities of the Civic Center and Convention Center for sheltering during crises.

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 AM

Next Meeting: May 28, 2024, at 8:30 a.m., Savannah City Hall, 2nd Floor Media Room

Minutes Prepared by Rachel Buck and Edward Grant