



TAC
Tourism Advisory Committee
Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC)
August 27, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Date: August 27th, 2024

Location: Savannah City Hall, 2nd Floor Media Room

TAC Attendees: Sue Adler, Melinda Allen, Steve Brenneman, Jason Combs, Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Mitch Linder, Ryan Madson, Joe Marinelli, Michael Owens

Absentees: Charlie Brazil

City Staff: Ashley Anderson, Rachel Buck, Susan Broker, Donna Cooper, William Cowan, Will Gillison, Edward Grant, Jennifer Herman

Guest Attendees: David McDonald, Gary Patrick (Charlie Brazil), Hamp Murphy

Call to order: 8:31 AM.

Summary

The TAC meeting held on August 27, 2024, included announcements about new team members joining as tourism compliance officers. The City Council presentation format regarding horse-drawn carriages was revised to a report format, and updates on recommendations are still pending. The committee clarified TAC's authority regarding new tours and reviewed the renewal and decline of tour companies, with recommendations on these matters needing to be forwarded to City Council for further action. A plan to assist with 2025 tour registration was also discussed. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM

1. Approval of meeting minutes

- S. Adler initiated the meeting by requesting a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the July 23, 2024, meeting. The motion was made by M. Allen and seconded by R. Madson. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Staff Report:

Tourism Staff Update

- R. Buck reintroduced Ashley Anderson as Tourism Project Coordinator. R. Buck continued by introducing two new Tourism Compliance Officers, Donna Cooper and Willie Gillison, who joined in August. R. Buck explained Donna will be working day shift, while Willie will cover the nighttime shift. William Cowan, who has been serving as a Tourism Compliance Officer for two years, was also introduced.

S. Broker briefly expressed enthusiasm for the recruitment of the new team members, highlighting how their backgrounds align with the positions. Additionally, S. Broker thanked W. Cowan for his dedication and hard work while handling the role alone for two years

Horse Drawn Carriage Update

- R. Buck provided an update on the Horse Drawn Carriage industry. Although it was initially discussed to do a presentation for the Council workshop, it was confirmed after the presentation was submitted that Council preferred a report instead of another presentation. R. Buck confirmed that the presentation was converted into a report. Currently, R. Buck is awaiting further instructions from Director Faye DiMassimo and City Manager Jay Melder.

S. Broker stated that she would email a copy of the presentation to the TAC. She mentioned that A. Anderson sends out the weather report to the horse carriage companies each day. S. Broker is actively following up to ensure a response, emphasizing her desire to resolve the matter before the next summer. R. Buck clarified that Susan was referring to the importance of sending out the weather report to ensure that the horse carriage companies remain compliant with the ordinance.

2024 Registered Tour Companies and 2025 Tour Company Registration

- Anderson shared an update, confirming that 73 tour companies have been approved for 2024. R. Buck acknowledged that the Eproval system is new to these companies, leading to some challenges and pushback. To support them and assist with the 2025 registration process, R. Buck and A. Anderson will be holding a training session in December.

R. Madson inquired about the availability of a database showing the number and type of tours each company offers. R. Buck responded that while no such database exists, the information can be calculated. She explained that during registration, companies are asked about their tour times, and each section is reviewed. If a company schedules tours in restricted areas at 10 p.m., they are notified that those tours are not permitted. However, she noted that companies like Quadricycles, which claim to have tours every 30 minutes, may not actually book tours that frequently, making it difficult to track precise tour times.

S. Brenneman raised a question about whether a tour company could claim to have two 8:00 p.m. tours and then offer an additional five or ten on demand, asking if the ordinance allows for on-demand tours or if they should be restricted and verifiable.

R. Buck confirmed that the ordinance does not restrict this practice. R. Buck further mentioned that 2 or 3 companies have been declined due to the pause on new tour company approvals. The only company she is still working with is Dining Around Town.

Update on Bicycle Ordinance

- R. Buck referenced the vote on the bicycle ordinance from a year ago, explaining that the outcome and final ordinance had already been sent to the City Manager. Since then, it has been with the City Manager and council. S. Broker periodically follows up with emails to check on its status. R. Buck noted, “It's up to them to decide when it will be placed on the agenda.” she added that they will send another email to inquire about advancing that section of the ordinance and see what the response is.

Walking Tour Task force update

- R. Buck confirmed that the Walking Tour Task Force meeting was canceled due to the absence of all members. She also noted that the Trolley Task Force has not convened since the last set of recommendations. There was further discussion about when the two task forces were established. S. Broker addressed this concern, and M. Allen pointed out that no task force meetings had taken place in the past three months. R. Buck reiterated that it is important for all members, as well as the city attorney, to be present, which is why the Walking Tour Task Force meeting was postponed. She stated that a new meeting would be scheduled for the current month, likely on a Monday.

S. Addler expressed that she would like an update at the next meeting and believes the task force should present their recommendations to R. Buck, who will then relay those recommendations at the next TAC meeting.

Trolley update- noise reduction devices

- R. Buck provided an update on the Trolley noise reduction devices. Kelly Tours is currently exploring various technology options and is expected to make a decision soon.

Old Savannah Tours (OST) has identified, purchased, and tested speakers they believe will comply with the ordinance's sound regulations. They are on track to meet full compliance by the June 1, 2025, deadline.

Old Town Trolley (OTT) has placed an order for speakers from their supplier and is finalizing the technical specifications before shipment. They are aiming for a one-third implementation of the new technology by the first deadline.

3. Other Business:

TAC Approvals and Tour Licenses

- M. Owens asked for clarification on whether meeting the specific stipulations of the ordinance guarantees a license, while failing to meet them requires appearing before TAC. R. Buck simply replied, “correct.” M. Owens then questioned the vote to pause TAC approvals for matters outside the ordinance, suggesting that this would affect normally approved licensed businesses that comply with the ordinance. He also noted that TAC can only refuse to consider businesses that do not fit within the ordinance. Additionally, he inquired about the three denied walking tours and the reasons for their denial. R. Buck explained that the decision was made by TAC reiterating the reason for the vote, “because

they were adding to the problems they were trying to address, and a pause was needed for further discussion.” S. Brenneman stated that there are too many tours available. City Attorney suggested that they write a recommendation to the council.

Lulu Rides

- A concern regarding Lulu Rides/Lulu Lifts was brought to the table. R. Buck provided some background, on the perceived golf carts. The vehicles are classified as Low Speed Vehicles (LSVs) and meet all necessary requirements for operation. Stating there is no city ordinance prohibiting their use since they are compliant with LSV regulations, and they are not considered Tour Service Vehicles. Lulu Lift operates strictly for tips, and, per Mobility and Parking, they are not classified as a Shuttle since their six-seaters do not meet the shuttle criteria (7 or more passengers).

R. Buck stated this company has been causing significant disruptions. They’ve been playing loud music from their LSVs, disturbing the ambiance and local businesses downtown.

TAC asked for an update on the vehicles and what can be done about the disturbance moving forward at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM

These minutes were prepared by Ashley Anderson, reviewed by Rachel Buck.

Next Meeting: September 24, 2024, at 8:30 a.m., Savannah City Hall, 2nd Floor Media Room