



Tourism Advisory Committee
Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC)
September 24, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Date: September 24, 2024
Location: Chamber of Commerce, Chamber Board Room
TAC Attendees: Sue Adler, Melinda Allen, Charlie Brazil, Steve Brenneman, Jason Combs, Vaughnette Goode-Walke, Joe Marinelli, Mitch Linder
Absentees: Ryan Madson and Michael Owens
City Staff: Ashley Anderson, Susan Broker, Rachel Buck, Donna Cooper, Will Gillison, Edward Grant

Guest attendees: Marysue McCarthy, Patricia Perry (Michael Owens)

Call to order: 8:35 AM

Summary

The meeting covered approval of the August 27 minutes, updates on ordinances, and event planning. Key actions included amending the minutes to clarify there is one task force, agreeing to send a memo to city officials about ordinance updates, and discussing tour services, parking congestion, and scooter regulations, with plans to involve city officials for further discussion.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes

- S. Adler initiated the meeting by requesting a motion to approve the meeting minutes from August 27, 2024. S. Brenneman requested the inclusion of his statement about there being only one task force in the minutes. R. Buck confirmed that this statement would be included. S. Adler then proposed a motion to amend and approve the minutes. The motion was made by S. Brenneman and seconded by M. Linder.

2. Staff Report:

Horse Carriage and Bicycle Ordinance Update

- S. Broker provided updates on the TAC's letter concerning the horse drawn carriage ordinance, which has been resent to the city manager for consideration. She recommended that a memorandum be sent to the Mayor and Alderman indicating that TAC has concluded no modifications are necessary and should remain unchanged. She also noted that the Downtown Neighborhood Association is in agreement with this conclusion.

S. Broker mentioned that the bicycle ordinance is another pending matter. She confirmed that once the ordinance change request is submitted to City Hall, we have no control over the process, although the city manager is aware of the situation.

S. Broker proposed that all modifications to the ordinance concerning bicycles, walking tours, quadricycles, and trolleys be submitted simultaneously. J. Combs expressed concern that this approach might shift blame onto TAC for perceived inaction, as they are trying to

provide updates as each piece is completed. In response, S. Broker acknowledged this concern and suggested sending a memo from the city manager to the mayor and aldermen to inform them of our progress and outline our planned presentation. S. Adler also stated that if we proceed in this manner, a deadline should be established.

2024 Registered Tour Company Data

- R. Buck began by discussing a new Excel document created by A. Anderson, which lists all registered tour companies in 2024, including their start and ending locations. She noted that there is a substantial amount of information that can be shared as is, or it could be broken down in other ways. R. Buck explained how to utilize the Excel document and mentioned that A. Anderson had met with the developers of Eproval to make updates that facilitate easier data exports.

M. Allen expressed her preference to receive the data in its current form.

V. Goode-Walker questioned the purpose of creating and needing this information. R. Buck clarified that, it was intended to address capacity issues and the number of people involved.

V. Goode-Walker pointed out that predicting tour schedules is difficult, as there can be fluctuations in inquiries from day to day. R. Buck acknowledged that this is why the data cannot be considered exact, emphasizing that it cannot be claimed to be 100% accurate.

S. Broker clarified that this information has been transitioned to a program called Eproval to facilitate data retrieval. This approach ensures that we have the necessary data when needing to present to the Mayor and Alderman.

C. Brazil highlighted the importance of the data spreading impacts and addressing density concerns. While he questioned whether hours of operation effectively measure impact, he acknowledged it as a starting point. He noted that the topic has been frequently discussed, focusing on adjustments to operational scopes and creating lanes for high utilization while minimizing effects on residential quality of life. However, he indicated that full progress on these discussions has not yet been made.

Denied Tour Companies

- R. Buck discussed the denied tour companies mentioned in the August meeting. She confirmed that A. Anderson has reached out to each of these companies and is currently working with them to assist with registering their companies.

Walking Tour Task Force Update

- R. Buck stated that a Walking Tour task force meeting was held on September 9. She shared the recap with details about attendees, absentees, and the agenda. The recap included data from previous discussions, along with questions about the preservation fee and the number of tours offered. R. Buck stated that the next meeting will be on October 7, and participants should bring recommendations to the table to discuss at the November TAC meeting.

S. Broker asked for any input from any TAC members that were at the meeting. J. Combs highlighted that while current proposals are valuable, they only address surface-level

concerns. He noted that overall downtown congestion and crowd volume remain unresolved, and expressed uncertainty about effectively tackling this issue. He mentioned potential measures such as time cutoffs and tour caps but acknowledged that these would not solve crowding in the squares and streets.

C. Brazil emphasized the need for alternative solutions and discussed the impact of tour locations on residential areas. He suggested limiting tours near homes and expressed frustration about issues caused by a few "bad actors." However, he acknowledged the overall collaborative efforts of the task force in seeking solutions.

R. Buck outlined proposed revisions, including a 20-participant limit per tour, in-ear technology requirements based on group size, and a code of conduct for guides. She also discussed restrictions on operating during certain hours and the need for clearer registration requirements, urging tour companies to provide detailed information such as start and end locations and maps. She expressed frustration with companies resisting changes but emphasized the importance of these measures for future planning and compliance.

Lulu Rides

- R. Buck provided an update on Lulu Rides (also known as Lulu Lifts), which operates low-speed vehicles but does not meet the city's shuttle requirements due to its seven-passenger limit. The service operates on a tips-only basis, resulting in issues such as loud music and parking in prohibited areas. R. Buck has begun addressing these violations and is working with the police department to handle noise complaints and potential citations. Lulu Rides has requested to expand its fleet and possibly become a registered tour service. She emphasized the importance of managing the situation before the company increases its operations, particularly concerning ongoing noise and compliance issues. Additionally, she mentioned that a meeting with the owner is scheduled to discuss the complaints.

3. Other Business:

- C. Brazil requested the tourism compliance officers to share their insights on the major issues they face while working on the streets, highlighting their firsthand experience with challenges and observed trends. D. Cooper addressed congestion issues in the squares, particularly in Johnson Square, where multiple tours, including Segway, bike, and walking tours, converge at the same time. She noted that slow-moving trolleys contribute to traffic backups, and many public parking areas are being used as tour stops. This has frustrated Uber and Lyft drivers due to the lack of designated waiting areas, leading to complaints. Additionally, commercial vehicles frequently block traffic by stopping in the middle of the street, further worsening congestion in the historic district. D. Cooper cited an incident with a delivery truck that caused significant delays, emphasizing the ongoing challenges of managing street traffic.

M. Allen mentioned that a large delivery truck blocks Drayton Street every morning during rush hour. She suggested designating specific lanes for deliveries during certain hours, rather than allowing dumpster parking, and recommended more frequent trash pickups to alleviate some issues. R. Buck responded that the truck has received multiple citations, likely daily, from both her officers and mobility and parking teams. She stressed that these challenges extend beyond their control and require support and solutions from higher leadership.

S. Adler proposed inviting Faye DiMassimo, who reports to J. Melder and has additional responsibilities, to the next TAC meeting. R. Buck and S. Broker agreed to extend the invitation to Faye DiMassimo.

The meeting adjourned at 9:31 AM

Next Meeting: October 22, 2024, at 8:30 a.m., Historic Savannah Foundation, HSF conference room

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