

**Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC)
May 20, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

Date: May 20, 2025

Location: Historic Savannah Foundation, Conference Room

TAC Attendees: Sue Adler, Charlie Brazil, Jason Combs, Vaughnette-Goode Walker, Mitch Linder, Michael Owens, Marysue McCarthy, Nancy Radke, Joe Marinelli, Brad Baugh for Ryan Madson

City Staff: Jason Pagliaro, Rachel Buck, Georcette Washington, Cynthia Knight, Denny Henderson, Donna Cooper, Willie Gillison

Guest Attendees: David McDonald (DNA), Paul Cobet (DNA), Stephen Plunk (TLC), Destini Ambus (SMN)

Summary: April meeting minutes tabled until clearer version is presented. Report from 90-day Walking Tour Pilot program. Discussion continued regarding topics needing attention in the Tourism Management Plan, including need for an update from Code Compliance concerning illegal STVRs and results. Input from those involved in the Noise Ordinance study done a few years ago. Letter presented regarding suggested DOT improvements. Status of Night Management priority. Proposal to schedule departments to present current projects/problems. Clarification of tour company permitting process. Cancellation of July TAC meeting. Request for annual tour registration sheets. Request for topic suggestions for future meetings and questions for each topic in advance of presentation.

1. Approval of meeting minutes

M. Linder called the meeting to order at 8:30AM and asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes from April 22, 2025. M. McCarthy: Since TAC members rather than the City have been tasked in the interim to take minutes of the meetings, they have not been structured according to Public Meeting Records guidelines. Requirements: Date, time, location, and a list of attendees; the topics discussed during the meeting; a summary of the key issues and arguments raised; the resolutions or outcomes reached by the meeting; tasks assigned to individuals or groups, along with deadlines; any other relevant notes of observations. M. Owens motioned we table the approval of the minutes until a corrected version is available. Passed unanimously. M. McCarthy volunteered to provide the May minutes and attempt to put together a fuller version of April's. S. Adler: Recommends using

a tight time frame for accuracy and make any corrections needed at least two weeks before the next meeting.

2. Walking Tour Pilot

M. Linder: Pleasantly surprised with the results of the pilot contained in the report with only three violations. N. Radke: It was a good effort, but as far as a complete data set, it was sorely lacking. It's an impossible task to see where all the problems are when you only have coverage with two people during the night. For 90 days, it didn't give us enough information to truly judge. M. Linder: It is impossible to have a person at each square to observe and report. N. Radke agreed and to keep that in mind.

M. Linder: That the walking tours governed themselves is a positive. N. Radke: The creation of SALT (Savannah Association of Local Tours) was a positive result of this experience.

3. Tourism Management Plan (TMP) Items

M. Linder received several suggestions to have Joe Shearouse or another familiar with the Noise Ordinance study done a few years ago update TAC as to its findings and status. It will be pushed to the July meeting due to availability. (It was pushed to a later meeting as the Board voted to eliminate the July meeting.)

Free Transportation Circulator: Jason Combs read a letter he wrote from TAC and addressed to Council regarding the need for additional DOT shuttles, expanded hours, more service to the Historic District, and a real-time tracking app. V. Goode-Walker questioned need for updated app. Some don't have access to the technology. J. Marinelli questioned why the letter was addressed to Council rather than CAT's Board.

J. Combs stated TAC advises Council and Council can forward to CAT. M. McCarthy added they can be copied on the letter. The City has recently undertaken a transportation study which is ongoing. R. Buck: Believes it is close to wrapping up. M. Owens: It was a great letter and agrees on the surface with all the recommendations but pointed out we don't want to inundate the Council with letters for each individual item we are addressing but combine them into one succinct presentation. Also, the CAT Board is dysfunctional, and the Governor and state legislature will disband the current Board and install a new one in June. Are we better served to combine with other organizations to present our concerns? Is it a budget issue? J. Combs: We are an advisory committee. It's our job to advise. I would like Council to see the letter. M. McCarthy: We are trying to address the low hanging fruit of the TMP items the Committee members said were important. Why not address it now?

M. Linder: Would it be better to wait for the study to come out to see if it is addressed and in line to see what is being suggested? We may be way off base as to the study's findings.

M. Owens: Can we get together with those doing the study? TAC carries an important voice and represents a broad cross section. (Addressing David McDonald, DNA President: were you contacted regarding the study? Addressing Combs and B. Baugh: were you? – All answered "no.") We can pitch a fit that no representatives of the community were contacted for input for the study. R. Buck: Let me inquire where they are and send an email to see if Sean Brandon or anyone from Parking & Mobility can attend the next meeting.

C. Brazil: this may be the perfect timing to address this issue with the study to have public input. N. Radke: stakeholders have information that can address these issues. M. Owens:

CAT did a comprehensive study last year. We can ask for a copy. J. Marinelli: Questioning when and to whom TAC's concerns should be submitted to CAT and Council and whether now is premature to send. M. McCarthy: A seat was added to the CAT Board for Business and Tourism organization.

After-Hours Management: (part of the priority items of TMP) J. Pagliaro: Yes, after-hours management is being worked on. How will we restructure so we can have a night management person within the office? That is the first step. SETF will come to us to see what TAC is looking for and what the City is looking for and come to a happy medium.

Hopefully, something that will benefit everyone. M. Linder: Is there something we can do to help?

J. Pagliaro: Right now, no. I just have to figure out how to do it. M. McCarthy: I was flabbergasted at the number of people in City Market area at 12:30AM this past Friday night. With all the problems over the years regarding crime in that area, I am shocked we still don't have a Night Manager. R. Buck: We are not looking to have a Night Manager but someone who definitely would be available at night. We don't like the term "Nighttime Manager." I don't know why. I was told it is not the title or the role we would move forward with when hiring for this role. M. McCarthy: I think we would all be interested to know what you think the role should be versus what we think it should be. J. Pagliaro: That is what we are trying to sort out. V. Goode-Walker: who is "we?" M. McCarthy: The residents and businesses. R. Buck: We are working on reorganizing to better our department. As soon as we know what structure it will take, we will let you know. Our Assistant Director begins on June 2 and then we will work on how our department will operate. M. McCarthy: When dust has settled, can you share with us job responsibilities for all in the department? R. Buck:

with transition of Tourism Code Compliance to Cynthia Knight's Code Compliance office, she asked all in room to introduce themselves and state position. Please bear with us through this transition. I continue to need the information regarding tourism so I can address issues and pass along information to all of you. I am still responsible for Tourism until our department is organized. I work closely with Code Compliance enforcement to do so. V. Goode-Walker: Aren't there many SPD officers in City Market at night? Isn't it their job to pay attention to what is going on? Do we need someone else down there when the police are all over? M. Owens: On borrowed time for a major incident. We are all frustrated with lack of a comprehensive plan.

N. Radke: Are you optimistic with proposed redo of River St. will have positive effect on moving people out of City Market area? J. Marinelli: Most people in City Market area are probably locals, not tourists. Increasing our footprint is the key - whatever that looks like, including Hutchinson Island.

4. Fraudulent STVR Permits

R/ Buck: Bridget Lidy and Code Compliance handle this. Can Cynthia Knight speak to this even though we did not let you know to prepare? D. Henderson: We have the hotline to report any non-permitted short-term rentals. C. Knight: Officers can see who does and does not have permit. Platform provides us with a list of illegal STVRs and we give the list to Code Compliance officers to investigate. Have not seen an uptick in illegals but definitely can provide stats of overall complaints and drill down to whether system or citizen

complaints have alerted. Will provide at our next meeting. M. Owens: Is it possible to schedule workshops to provide us with this info so you and other departments can prep as it will be the meat of our conversation for that meeting? R. Buck: Yes, just let me know from whom you want to hear. Two months ahead is ideal. Committee compiles list of departments/people so I can reach out and check availability. Two weeks insufficient to plan. M. McCarthy: Resident members of Committee have been meeting between our monthly meetings to develop ideas and discuss our priority items, so we don't have to wait an entire month to move things along and get some results. R. Buck: Blight Fighters have a monthly meeting with different departments to discuss issues in the City so we are all in the same room. If someone needs help from a different department, we can help each other out. C. Knight: Have been doing this for three years in my department with overlapping departments so we communicate common problems to resolve them and improve City services. Plan to open it up with other agencies for more collaboration. Meetings are fourth Tuesday of every month. Various locations depending on number of attendees. M. Owens: Can non-staff sit in? C. Knight: Yes. M. Linder: Members send me a list of speakers you would like to hear from.

5. Other

M. Linder: Should we eliminate one of this summer's meetings? Consensus is to cancel July meeting. No meeting in July, with Joe Shearouse (previous Noise Ordinance Study) moved to August, depending on availability or Bridget Lidy (STVR Ordinance and Permitting) or department head more directly involved. M. McCarthy: We are very interested in results of the STVR complaints/system reporting. Can you (Knight) provide us with that information? M. Owens: Provide questions in advance for the scheduled speaker to prep answers.

6. Old Business

R. Buck: Last year we had proposed tour company Dining Around Town present to us. Several items needed updating or changed. Owner would like to come back to TAC to present. J. Combs: Can we circle back to walking tours? M. Owens: Jay Melder spoke at TLC luncheon. He said the data doesn't support a change to regulations. M. McCarthy: Someone is advertising Underground Donut tour. Is that a new company? Licensed? R. Buck: Send info to me. N. Radke: On an annual basis, requested the tour registration sheets on all companies. R. Buck: We are doing that now. There are about ten companies under review. Will send list to TAC in the next week or so. M. McCarthy: Last year, S. Broker made a statement when there was the freeze on new tour company licenses that there were 91 currently registered and SETF would limit licenses to 100. Is that an official number? R. Buck: No. If companies complied with current regulations, they are permitted. If any new tour company comes to town and there are problems, I work with them before I bring them in front of TAC. M. McCarthy: There is no limit to the number of tour companies that can operate in Savannah? 200? 300? 500? R. Buck: Correct. J. Combs: I hate to belabor this. We are

dropping the effort to revise the regulations on walking tours? Is that what has happened? What are our next steps with that? R. Buck: I don't have anything.

N. Radke: Thank you Charlie for all the hard work and investment you have been doing for the past year to outfit your trolleys with quiet technology. With the first-year anniversary coming up, is it possible for you to put together a small report regarding your fleet? Also, a fun marketing idea: put a clever identifier on the trolleys which have been imbued with the quiet technology that highlights the benefits to visitors and residents alike. It would benefit Code Compliance and others. R. Buck: We had planned to have a sticker to identify those trolleys. I have been working with Cynthia to identify trolleys that have been retrofitted.

C. Brazil: We are almost done.

M. Linder adjourned the meeting at 9:33AM.

7. Tasks

- ~Provide clearer version of April meeting minutes from M. McCarthy
- ~Immediate update on City's Transportation Study currently happening from R. Buck
- ~Suggestions for future meetings with specific topics for City department presentations to M. Linder
- ~When topic is scheduled, an advance list of questions to M. Linder
- ~Provide tour registration list to TAC members from R. Buck
- ~List of position responsibilities in SETF department once dust has settled from R. Buck
- ~Update on Night Management input schedule of stakeholders from J. Pagliaro
- ~Report of trolleys updated with quiet technology from C. Brazil/R. Buck
- ~Proposed identifying sticker for those trolleys updated with quiet technology from C. Brazil/R. Buck
- ~Email monthly info regarding date, time, and place of Blight Fighter meetings to TAC from C. Knight/R. Buck
- ~Copy of previous Noise Ordinance study to TAC done a few years ago from M. Owens

Respectfully submitted,
Marysue McCarthy, TAC Vice Chair