



Meeting Summary
Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC)
September 19, 2018

TAC Attendees: Joe Marinelli, Bill Lovett, Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Charlie Brazil, Mark Dana, Michael Owens, Daniel Carey, Melinda Allen, Michael Ambrose, Nichelle Stephens

City Staff: Susan Broker, Edward Grant, Amanda Hutson, Jonika Rountree

Guests: Jamie Credle, Patrick Connell

Chair's Report

Chair Vaughnette Goode-Walker began the meeting by asking members to comment on the recent National Historic Landmark District assessment and its potential impact on tourism in Savannah. Daniel Carey stated that recent changes in development were moving in the right direction to preserve Savannah's status, and that it appears that work is being conducted more sensitively in light of the National Park Service's report and other recent announcements.

Special Events Ordinance

Eddie Grant, Administrator of the Office of Special Events, Film & Tourism, provided an overview of the action to-date on the Special Events Ordinance. Staff is currently researching the practices of other cities across the country. The scope of the ordinance will include races, parades, filming, square reservations, etc. Staff continues to meet with the TAC task force to discuss the ordinance. The event organizers that have been contacted also appear to be on board with the proposed changes.

While the ordinance is being developed, staff is implementing changes in event permits. Both new and pre-scheduled events are now required to submit plans for security, clean-up, public notification, and parking, as well as route details and contact information. Event organizers are required to apply at least 60 days in advance, and may be charged extra fees if they do not submit their applications on time.

OSEFT has proposed 46 new or increased fees for 2019 across the four divisions it operates (special events, film, tourism, and food trucks). If accepted, these fees will generate \$370K in revenue in 2019, representing an increase of \$100K-\$150K from 2018. Fees are being raised to account for staff time and coordination required to manage the programs. OSEFT Director Susan Broker offered the example of film amendment fees. Currently, film productions are charged \$200 per permit but may make as many last-minute adjustments as possible. This carries no cost but represents an inordinate burden on staff to amend permits and reissue notifications.

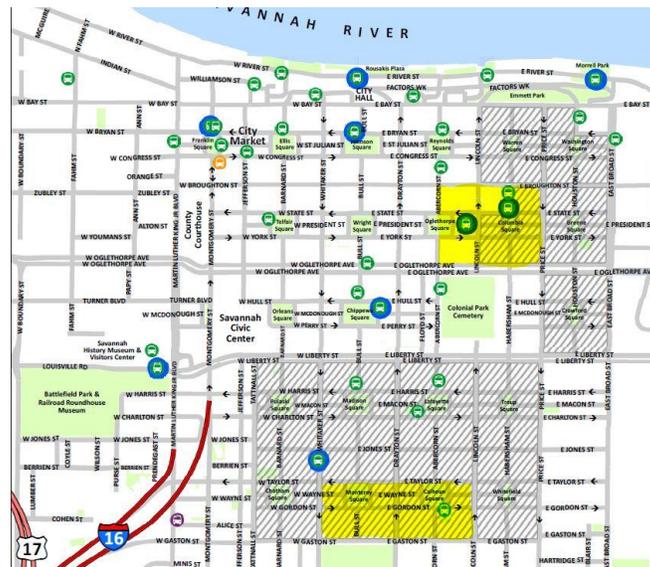


Melinda Allen cautioned against making the public pay for incurred costs of events, such as police and sanitation services, and reinforced the policy of offering reduced rates for local residents. Michael Owens clarified that there would be certain events that should be community-funded, such as the Fourth of July celebrations and the St. Patrick’s Day Parade.

Ms. Broker emphasized that staff will continue to implement strategies to address community concerns. In response to Chair Goode-Walker’s question on the timeline for a draft of the ordinance, Joe Marinelli responded that it is not a reasonable expectation to see a draft of the ordinance anytime soon since the public input required will be substantial. Mr. Owens concluded by advising staff to actively engage counterparts in other municipalities to find the most attainable best practices.

Tour Restriction Area Proposal

Amanda Hutson, OSEFT Tourism Coordinator, presented information on a proposal to amend the Tour Service for Hire Ordinance to add two areas to the restrictions in Sec. 1502: “Sections of the city designated by ordinance in which all tour guides and tour service companies shall not operate at certain times or under certain conditions.” The proposed restricted areas include the Lincoln/President corridor and Monterey/Calhoun Squares, with tours ending at 10pm nightly.



Staff proposed the following timeline: September/October, review and public input; November, Council Workshop; December, formal notice to tour companies; January, implementation. Staff identified 29 of the 115 registered tour companies that could potentially be affected.

Charlie Brazil cautioned against limiting tours due to the business they generate for other businesses. Ms. Allen added that the volume of tours is an issue at that time and represents a real inconvenience for residents. Mr. Owens and Mr. Brazil cautioned against over-reacting to the complaints of individuals and argued that some would still complain. Ms. Hutson noted that



these restrictions were open for negotiation, including allowances for charters and exceptions on busy days/weeks of the year.

Chair Goode-Walker noted that tours could reroute in the affected areas to remain in compliance, as long as sufficient notice was offered. Bill Lovett requested that residents be consulted in any public notification as well, as residents would have input on the scope of the restrictions. Mr. Owens stated that overall, the TAC appeared to be in agreement, but that details should be considered. Mr. Owens stated that if the motivation behind the restrictions is complaints on non-compliant tour guides, the City should be more diligent in addressing the source of the problem.

OSEFT Updates

Ms. Hutson proceeded with an update on the Pedicab Ordinance revisions. OSEFT staff is finalizing the draft and aim to present the ordinance to Council in October. Ms. Hutson informed the TAC of an emerging dispute between pedicab drivers. OSEFT, in collaboration with Savannah Police and the Code Compliance Department, will organize a meeting with pedicab operators to reinforce the code of conduct signed by all pedicab drivers.

Ms. Broker provided an update on the empty Forsyth Fort restaurant space. An RFP for a new vendor was issued earlier this year on the assumption that metered parking would be introduced in the park. That proposal did not proceed and a new RFP will be issued by the end of the month. The City will continue to maintain restroom facilities and security services.

Ms. Hutson continued with an overview of the Shared Mobility Devices Ordinance. On Sept. 13, Council prohibited dockless bicycle and scooter companies from operating in Savannah until a regulatory ordinance or further public discussion is conducted. Mr. Owens praised City Council for working proactively on a potentially problematic situation.

Other Business

Ms. Hutson introduced a proposal from the Department of Housing & Neighborhood Services to implement a strategy in the Tourism Management Plan aimed at addressing affordable housing. Director Martin Fretty is seeking TAC support to dedicate a portion of the surplus Hotel/Motel Tax to the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund. While TAC was in favor of supporting the fund, Mr. Owens cautioned against relying on unsustainable surplus revenue. Mr. Carey asked whether funds could be committed to a variety of programs, including the homelessness issue.

Mr. Brazil commented on an article in the news about a potential new market based on the “stupid fun” tours popular in Nashville. Ms. Hutson made a request for volunteers to host TAC meetings and agreed to email the dates available for hosting. The first meeting of each quarter will remain at City Hall. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 17th – 8:30am – City Hall Media Room