



Meeting Summary

Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC)

January 30, 2018

TAC Attendees: Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Eric Meyerhoff, Mark Dana, Bill Lovett, Austin Hill, Charles Brazil, Michael Owens, Joe Marinelli
TAC Absences: DeAnne Mitchell, Sandra Baxter, Adam Wilkins, Jamie Caskey, David Jones
City Staff: Bridget Lidy, Cynthia Pelote, Susan Broker, Amanda Hutson
Guests: Melinda Allen, Daniel Carey

Chair's Welcome

Chair Goode-Walker opened the meeting and stated that this is a specially called meeting to address any suggestions, fixes, major concerns, or issues members had with the Tourism Management Plan (TMP) that was distributed at the previous meeting (January 23). Chair Goode-Walker opened the floor to discussion.

Tourism Management Plan

Joe Marinelli suggested adding “partnership” to the community vision. Bill Lovett recommended removing “tourism” from the sentence. The group agreed to have the statement read, “Savannah embraces its vibrant future...”

Chair Goode-Walker did not like the word “transplants.” Michael Owens recommended using “new residents” in its place. The group agreed to this revision.

Mr. Owens recommended changing \$2.5 billion in visitor spending to \$2.9 billion based on Visit Savannah’s latest data. He also suggested adding the rejection of the development of a cruise ship terminal, the creation of the TAC, and the creation of a tourism department to the list of accomplishments under the Background section. The group agreed.

Charlie Brazil asked about the restructuring of the TAC. Bridget Lidy stated that the previous proposal was removed from the document based on feedback from the group. In a previous meeting, TAC unanimously agreed to a 12-member structure with balanced representation from residents, preservation, and industry. This recommendation will be forwarded to City Council as one of the first tasks of the implementation schedule.

Mr. Owens pointed out a discrepancy with the point of lowering barriers to entry while instituting a medallion or franchise system. The group agreed to strike this language to avoid mixed messages.

Mr. Owens talked about the difficulty in implementing the Comprehensive Communications strategy. He suggested using a robust webpage where all tourism-related data, communications, and activities could be found. Mr. Brazil commented that the ideal communication plan will



work differently in reality and recommended simplifying the communication strategies. Mr. Marinelli agreed, stating that the communication plan should not be reworked, but simply scaled back. Mr. Owens reinforced the need for transparency as well as the importance of clearly conveying the economic impact of tourism with the community. The group agreed to modify the communication strategy and add a new task under the Implementation Schedule.

Mr. Marinelli recommended the term “tour operators” be replaced with “local tour companies.” The group agreed to this change.

Melinda Allen asked about the SPLOST funding for projects as outlined in the implementation schedule. Ms. Lidy stated that the SPLOST projects would be something determined at a later date since the funding cycle is from 2020-2026.

Mr. Owens questioned why workforce readiness and workforce housing was included in the implementation schedule and whether it would be a role of TAC. Susan Broker clarified that it would be led by City of Savannah staff, with a “holistic” approach to the action items being accomplished with an Implementation Team spearheaded by the Office of Special Events, Film, and Tourism. Mr. Owens encouraged city staff to not operate in a vacuum, and to consider utilizing stakeholders in these decision processes. Staff mentioned that the TMP references the use of task forces to ensure other stakeholders are at the table.

Mr. Owens recommended page numbers be added to the Best Practices section. He also commented that this section reflected what the City and the tourism industry have already done, are in the process of doing, or are actively planning to do. Ms. Allen suggested building on the after-hours and safety/security element of the Best Practices.

Austin Hill recommended revising the structure of the TMP so the planned activities appear earlier in the document. The order would be changed to Background, Plan/Implementation, then Strategic Roadmap; the group approved the suggestion. Mr. Owens requested that the Best Practice concerning Innovation Districts be removed; the recommendation was approved.

Mr. Marinelli approved the TMP based on the revisions discussed; Mr. Owens seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously. Ms. Lidy stated that DeAnne Mitchell conveyed her approval of the TMP via email.

Other Business

Chair Goode-Walker encouraged TAC members to look at the new Visit Savannah website. She added that the next TAC meeting would be determined at a later date. We will await City Council approval and direction regarding the TMP and the structure and composition of the TAC.

There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned.