

**Meeting Summary  
Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC)  
November 20, 2019**

**TAC Attendees:** Melinda Allen, Michael Ambrose, Charlie Brazil, Mark Dana, Vaughnette Goode-Walker, Bill Lovett, & Michael Owens

**TAC Absences:** Sue Adler, Clinton Edminster & Joe Marinelli

**City Staff:** Susan Broker, Lida Coleman, Edward Grant, Matt Krueger, Jonika Rountree, Rachel Scott & Richard Gerbasi

**Guest Attendees:** CPL. Janessa Stalter, Beth Nelson; Film Commissioner, Stephen Yetman; Council of Dads location manager, & Genevieve Hawkins

**Chair's Report**

Chairwoman Melinda Allen opened the meeting by asking for any comments on the October 16, 2019 minutes. Michael Ambrose made the first motion to pass the minutes from the October 16 meeting. Bill Lovett seconded the motion to pass minutes with no objections.

**Bonaventure Cemetery: Richard Gerbasi- Director of Bonaventure Cemetery**

Richard Gerbasi spoke about the influx of visitors, maintenance needed, parking issues and the overall balance of maintaining Bonaventure Cemetery. Some of the main issues Richard mentioned include: funeral processions unable to get through the gate due to the amount of vehicles parked in the cemetery, too many people in a tour group, too many tour companies in the cemetery at one time, lack of parking and lack of security. The cemetery conducted a vehicle study in June 2019 and confirmed an average of 624 vehicles entering the cemetery daily. Mobility and Parking Services will be funding a parking study in December 2019 to look at the overall foot print of the cemetery and what can be done to fix some of these issues. Richard is suggesting posting rules to help regulate visitors, reduce the amount of people in a tour to 15 people, reduce the number of days a week tour companies are allowed to give tours in the cemetery, and regulating what areas tour groups can enter. Richard confirmed that tour companies do have to pay the preservation fee per the Revenue Ordinance but that money goes into the general fund and the cemetery does not receive any of those funds. After hearing some of Richards's suggestions TAC members came up with the following suggestions:

- Susan Broker: Have the tour company's pay for the security needed while conducting tours or share in the cost since the companies are using the service.
- Michael Owens suggested Richard meet with the tour companies to see how lowering the number of people per tour would affect their business or if they had any suggestions on how to alleviate some of the issues caused by their customers.
- Michael Owens: Scan driver's licenses when entering the gates and charge \$3.00 to anyone who is not visiting a gravesite or not a local address.
- Bill Lovett: Regulate the number of tours a day and the size of the tours.

- C. Brazil and Michael Ambrose: extra revenue would help alleviate some of these issues. If the cemetery charged an entrance fee then those funds could generate enough revenue for the guards and maintenance needed.
- There was mention of special taxes that districts could opt to pay.

After the parking study in December 2019 Richard will come together again with TAC to nail down some ideal solutions to present.

### **Director's Report – Susan Broker**

Susan discussed fee changes proposed for the 2020 revenue ordinance. There will now be a food truck application fee as well as a Special Event application fee and permit fee to account for employee's time and other administrative costs. The street performer badge fee will also go from \$10 to \$20. A replacement will be \$10.

### **RHI**

On November 13, 2019 the Office of Special, Events, Film, and Tourism hosted an informational meeting about the Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI) and had the director of RHI, Jim Peters present to City Staff, TAC committee, and SPD his proposal to develop a night time management plan that will assist the City of Savannah in developing a strategy and structure to address night time enforcement, activities and quality of life. RHI sent their original proposal for 20K for Phase 1. After reviewing the proposal Susan asked RHI to develop a hybrid Phase 2 proposal that would incorporate more implementation strategies since the City already has the framework that Phase 1 entails, primarily due to the Tourism Management plan. TAC members were impressed by Mr. Peter's presentation and voted to support moving forward with the contract. Michael Owens made the first motion to support entering into a contract with RHI. Vaughnette Goode-Walker seconded the motion. All were in favor of moving forward with no objections.

### **Public Meeting- Special Event Ordinance and Tour Service for Hire Ordinance**

On December 9<sup>th</sup> the Office of Special Events, Film and Tourism will host two public meetings to discuss the changes made to the Special Event Ordinance and Tour Service for Hire Ordinance. The meetings will be held at 12:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. in the Mason Room at the Savannah Civic Center. The meetings are open to the public. Rachel Scott and Edward Grant will present at each meeting.

### **Special Event Application:**

The Office of Special Events, Film and Tourism will host on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month an open forum to allow for event organizers to come to the office and ask questions about the new application and pay permits.

### **Rousakis Plaza for Events**

Ms. Broker recapped her meeting she and other City staff had with the organizations that use Rousakis Plaza for events. These organizations are Unity in the Community, Savannah Waterfront Association and Savannah River Street Art Association. Stating the use of Rousakis Plaza for events will be added to the Special Events ordinance to help alleviate the over use of the plaza and address the many complaints the City receives regarding the negative impact these events have on

the River Street businesses. It was determined there will be only one event per month per organization permitted effective January 2020.

**Tourism Advisory Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen Vote**

Melinda Allen made the first motion to elect Mark Dana as the 2020 Tourism Advisory Committee Chairmen. Charlie Brazil second the motion with all in favor. Michael Owens nominated Michael Ambrose as Vice Chair of the 2020 Tourism Advisory Committee. Bill Lovett second the motion with all in favor.

Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting:           **Next meeting: December 18, 2019 – City Hall Media Room – 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**