



**Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC)  
August 26, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

**Location:** Old Town Trolley, Conference Room

**TAC Attendees:** Charlie Brazil, Nancy Beskar, Jason Combs, Vaughnette-Goode Walker, Mitch Linder, Joe Marinelli, Marysue McCarthy, Collier Neeley, Michael Owens and Nancy Radke

**City Staff:** Rachel Buck, Elizabeth Clark, Faye DiMassimo, Davita Grier, Danny Henderson and Jason Pagliaro

**Guest Attendees:** Suzanne Kirk (Employee Development Strategies), Nancy Maia (VNA), Mia Mance (DBA), and Bee Vaudrin (DBA)

**Call to order: 8:30 AM**

**Summary:**

The retreat opened with introductions, a discussion of Savannah's current and future tourism environment, and agreement on ground rules emphasizing open-mindedness, listening, and solution-focused dialogue. Participants aligned on the need to clarify TAC's purpose, roles, and focus areas, while also expressing concerns about whether their input is valued by City officials. The group identified next steps including revisiting past documents and plans, seeking clarity from City officials on TAC's role, and approaching future meetings with diplomacy, representation, and a balanced focus on both residents' quality of life and the tourism industry's sustainability.

**1. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- M. Linder called the meeting to order at 8:30AM. A motion to approve the June 2025 TAC meeting minutes was made and unanimously approved.

**2. Welcome, introductions, purpose, and ground rules to retreat**

- F. DiMassimo welcomed everyone.
- Ground rules were requested as follows:
  - M. McCarthy asked for no podium speeches/side conversations and for everyone to be open-minded.
  - F. DiMassimo asked for intentional listening.
  - V. Goode-Walker asked for no interruptions.
  - S. Kirk recommended being solution focused.
- S. Kirk invited committee members to introduce themselves, including a word or phrase that best describes their perspective of Savannah's present tourism environment and a word or phrase that best describes what they hope for the future of tourism in Savannah.

Current	Future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust (concerns)</li> <li>• Opportunity</li> <li>• Fragile</li> <li>• Important</li> <li>• Delicate</li> <li>• Dangerous</li> <li>• Threatened</li> <li>• Controversial</li> <li>• Stressing the Quality of Life</li> <li>• Threat</li> <li>• Take down the temperature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase trust</li> <li>• Reflect citizen &amp; tourist needs</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Important</li> <li>• Considerate of impacts to residents and industry</li> <li>• Understood</li> <li>• Opportunity to revitalize</li> <li>• Symbiotic</li> <li>• Deliberate</li> <li>• Safety &amp; support</li> <li>• Intelligent</li> <li>• Vibrant</li> <li>• Balanced</li> <li>• Sustainable</li> <li>• Partnerships &amp; relationships</li> <li>• Future possibilities</li> <li>• Diplomacy</li> </ul>

### 3. Objectives

- Align TAC members around common purpose.
  - S. Kirk noted that the survey results indicated there is not a clear understanding of TAC’s purpose or consensus on what the committee should be working toward.
  
- Define roles and strengthen interactions among committee members.
  - S. Kirk stated that the survey results included comments about TAC being an advisory committee, with questions regarding who the committee advises and what the advisory process entails. She also asked who is responsible for taking these comments and ideas forward
  
- Identify area(s) of focus for TAC.

### 4. What Is Our Purpose & Where Are We Now?

- S. Kirk acknowledged that participants want many of the same outcomes for tourism in Savannah, but committee members are not on the same page regarding collective purpose, and each brings unique concerns to the table per the population represented.
- Committee members expressed frustration that recommendations are sometimes not heard, considered, or acted upon by City officials, raising questions about TAC’s intent and purpose.
- Discussion on the historical evolution of TAC:
  - Originally formed in 1977 in a different tourism environment.
  - M. Owens outlined TAC seats per the ordinance and reiterated a plan from three years ago that was never proposed to City Council.
  - M. Mance noted the DBA would like to be involved in discussions regarding representation.

- R. Buck read the 2023 agreed-upon TAC purpose statement.
- Committee members requested we review the 2018 Tourism Management Plan vision statement.
- S. Kirk asked committee members to share their vision for TAC’s purpose. The group discussed focusing on:
  - Policy recommendations
  - Balancing and easing friction across represented populations
  - Planning for quality of life for both residents and tourists
  - Incorporating items identified in introductory discussions
- S. Kirk initiated discussion around the **role of a committee member**:
  - Represent the group/population (DNA, TLC, VNA, Tour Companies, etc.), seek input, and engage the community.
  - R. Buck noted some tour companies feel underrepresented and want more purposeful representation.
  - Share knowledge for TAC’s benefit.
  - Educate and inform the represented population, closing the feedback loop.
  - Be a visionary for tourism in Savannah.
  - Listen intentionally to understand other perspectives (per ground rules discussion).
- S. Kirk identified that the TAC web page describes areas of focus as:
  - Parking and routine tourism-related traffic activities
  - Enforcement of tourism management regulations
  - Tourism trends
  - Factors impacting Savannah’s tourism and hospitality industry, quality of life, and preservation efforts (which survey feedback indicates as most important).
- S. Kirk summarized top strengths, challenges/threats, opportunities, and focus points from survey feedback.

## 5. Where Are We Going?

The group identified the following next steps for TAC:

1. Review previous documents clarifying TAC’s mission.
2. Seek insights from City officials to clarify TAC’s intent, expectations, and member roles (e.g., appointment status, appropriate representation, missing key representatives such as DBA, ability to lobby for initiatives).
3. Revisit the Tourism Management Plan and prior TAC strategies, focusing on solutions that do not require ordinance changes.
4. Commit to diplomacy and perspective-sharing in all meetings and discussions, including updates from each represented population.
5. Consider hybrid options for future meetings.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 10:15 AM

These minutes were prepared by Davita Grier and reviewed by Rachel Buck.