

**MINUTES OF THE
HATTIESBURG TOURISM COMMISSION
BOARD MEMBERS & MANAGEMENT**

Minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting of the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission of the City of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, held on:

April 15, 2026

Be it remembered that on the 15th day of April, the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission met in person at Hotel Indigo's conference room.

Frank James, chair of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, called the meeting to order at 12:07 p.m. The following members of the Board were found to be present:

PRESENT

Melanie Archer
Bonnie Warren
Frank James
Anthony Harris
Shawn Lowrey

ABSENT

Dr. Joe Paul

ALSO PRESENT

Marlo Dorsey, Management
Kristen Brock, Staff
David Ott, Counsel

CITIZENS FORUM

With no members of the public in attendance, Citizens Forum was not held.

MINUTES

After a full review of the February 2026 meeting minutes, and upon motion by Anthony Harris, duly seconded by Shawn Lowrey, there was unanimous favorable vote of the board to approve the minutes as presented.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Dorsey presented the financial report ending March 31, 2026, including updated tax receipts for the commission's 2% special hotel levy which show a 4.8% increase year over year for the first quarter of FY26.

Dorsey reported ongoing discrepancies between MS Department of Revenue hotel tax collections and Smith Travel Research / Co-Star projections, noting an estimated \$400,000+ in unreceived revenue over the past three years. Two months of misallocations were paid to the Commission in April, and Dorsey continues to work with the Department to remedy the

discrepancies moving forward while considering how to best audit the remaining months that have not been corrected.

A separate report showed tourism tax proceeds up 2.91% over the previous 12-month calendar year, while restaurant taxes were up 0.36% for the same period.

A claims docket for February 2026 was presented along with an ARPA expenditure status report. A listing of all ARPA and non-ARPA check and credit card expenditures was provided in full detail by line item; all were budgeted expenses.

Account balances as of March 31, 2026, were presented, showing strong financial standing across all organizational and umbrella accounts. The board reviewed reserve allocations for other projects, including the renewal of the current Region's Bank treasury bond when it matures in April 2026. After full discussion, the board recommended renewing the bond for a 6-month period.

A balance sheet and budget update for FY26 was also presented, as completed by accounting firm McArthur, Slay, and Dews PLLC.

After full review and upon motion made by Melanie Archer and duly seconded by Anthony Harris, there was unanimous favorable vote to approve the financial update as presented.

Old Business

Dorsey provided an update on the Hattiesburg Welcome Center project timeline. Construction bid advertisements are set to begin in May, with construction slated to begin this summer lasting for a period of 12-18 months. The plans follow those previously approved by the board, and regular updates will be given during future board meetings.

New Business

Dorsey continues to work with potential developers on hotel projects, a long-term goal set aside in Hattiesburg's 2020-25 strategic plan. She will update the board as progress is made.

An update was provided on the Commission's enabling legislation in this legislative session, which will be extended another four years.

Brock presented a Sales & Visitor Services update, overviewing current groups being served by the department along with recent sales efforts. In the first four months of FY26, 35 groups were assisted through Destination Services, totaling more than 7,000 attendees. Efforts continue to grow the meetings and conventions, sports, international, and leisure group markets to Hattiesburg through focused prospecting and development.

Brock provided a report on the FY26 Tourism Grant Program. Recent partner events included Hubfest, Hattiesburg Pickleball Classic, and the Mississippi Pinnacle Awards.

Brock also noted that she and Dorsey would be attending the Sports ETA national symposium to meet with dozens of sports rights holders and tournament planners about hosting their events in Hattiesburg. Efforts continue to grow Hattiesburg as a premiere sports tournament destination, aided by the new Hattiesburg Recreation & Sports Event Center. The board was presented with the complex's website proposal, which is being built by ad agency Maris, West, and Baker under the direction of Dorsey and Brock.

Hattiesburg Alliance for Public Art updates were provided, with two projects set to begin this quarter in downtown Hattiesburg. The Mississippi Miss Hospitality program is set to take place in July with 44 contestants from across the state competing in Hattiesburg.

The Hattiesburg Half Marathon is complete, with a record-breaking year of more than 1,700 athletes from 32 states. Under the Commission's management for the first time, the event experienced a sell-out crowd with a record number of community partnerships and marketing reach. The team will evaluate budget and procedures before announcing dates for 2027.

An organizational marketing and outreach update was presented. Social media engagement is up 1.9% year over year with 1,139,153 impressions and 46,518 users, a 27% YOY increase. Top engagement markets are Jackson, New Orleans, and Dallas, with 57.9% of visitors to Hattiesburg traveling from out of state.

There being no further business, and upon motion by Shawn Lowrey, duly seconded by Anthony Harris, the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission:

Frank James, Chair

Marlo Dorsey, CEO