

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

Minutes of the rescheduled August 27, 2025, meeting of the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission of the City of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, held on:

September 3, 2025

Be it remembered that on the 3rd day of September, the Board Members of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission met in person at Hotel Indigo's conference room.

Due to last minute circumstances, a quorum was not met. With only three commissioners present, no official actions could be taken. Frank James, chair of the Hattiesburg Tourism Commission, called the meeting to order at 12:25 p.m. The following members of the Board were found to be present:

PRESENT

Melanie Archer
Anthony Harris
Frank James
Shawn Lowrey
Dr. Joe Paul
Bonnie Warren

ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

Marlo Dorsey, Management
Kristen Brock, Staff
Megan Mallory, Staff
Ann Claire Kelly, 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 May and June 2025 meeting minutes, and upon motion by Joe Paul, duly seconded by Melanie Archer, there was a unanimous favorable vote of the board to approve the minutes as presented.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Dorsey presented the financial report ending July 31, 2025, including updated tax receipts for the commission's 2% special hotel levy were down 9.1% year-over-year,

with a total collection of \$631,733 to date. However, actual market revenue is up 6.58% from the prior year to date range.

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. She continues discussions with the Department regarding the issue and will continue to ask for updates until the account has been audited.

A separate report showed tourism tax proceeds up 4.13% over the previous 12-month calendar year, while restaurant taxes were up 3.76% for the same period.

Claims dockets for the months of April through July 2025 were presented. 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.

Additionally, Dorsey presented a detailed 10-month budget update by account, showing the commission was in line with approved expenditures. Revenue was \$952,658.26, and expenditures were \$874,682.23, generating a net income of \$77,976.03.

The board was provided with reconciled balances of all Hattiesburg Tourism Commission assets through July 31, 2025, showing a total balance of \$ 3,586,703.46.

A statement of financial position through July 31, 2025, and comparative statements of revenue and expenses, provided by accounting firm McArthur, Slay, and Dews LLC, were also presented during the financial report.

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

Old Business

Dorsey shared the grant application for the Downtown Welcome Center was being submitted to the Mississippi Arts Commission Building Fund for \$400,000. Significant work had been done on the application by Brock and her. The City of Hattiesburg provided a letter of support. Awards would be announced by November 2025, according to the guidelines.

Senate Bill 2805, identifying tax compliance legislation for short term rentals, was signed into law effective July 1, 2025. Dorsey shared a local resolution would be presented this

fall recognizing the state statute, and the tourism commission would be investing in additional data with AirDNA to maintain awareness of visitor volume and revenue generation. The HTC should receive up to \$100,000 in tax revenue as a result of this new legislation once it is fully implemented at the local level.

New Business

Dorsey announced the updated staffing and office updates after visiting with board members individually since the prior board meeting.

Phase one of VisitHattiesburg's strategic planning process is complete, and the research process will continue over the next several months to further develop a 5-year strategic plan for Hattiesburg tourism through 2030.

The FY2026 Hattiesburg Tourism Commission budget was presented for consideration by Dorsey. Revenue and expenses of \$1,757,472.00 were detailed by category not including Mississippi Miss Hospitality or Hattiesburg Alliance for Public Art. Reserve allocations were also presented for operations, public art, strategic planning implementation, and civic attraction/welcome center projects. After a thorough discussion of priorities and funding, and upon a motion made by Shawn Lowrey, duly seconded by Bonnie Warren, the FY2026 budget and reserve allocations by account were unanimously approved.

Brock presented a Sales & Visitor Services update, overviewing current groups being served by the department along with recent sales efforts. In FY25, 47 groups have been serviced through Destination Services. Efforts continue to grow the meetings and conventions, sports, international, and leisure group markets to Hattiesburg through focused prospecting and development. She presented the update on ESTO, which was held in Phoenix, AZ, this year. She also reported on the remarkable feedback of the DBB Boys World Series held July 25-30, 2025, at Jaycee Park in Hattiesburg. A report was given on the upcoming tourism grant applications too.

A HAPA update was also presented, reporting on the *Lest We Forget* mural and announcements for Phase 3 of the Utility Box Series. showcasing 5 large-scale murals completed so far in calendar year 2025. The Miss Hospitality budget was presented and reviewed by Brock. Following discussion, and upon a motion made by Joe Paul, duly seconded by Anthony Harris, the 2025 closeout and 2026 budgets unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Joe Paul and seconded by Anthony Harris to consider entering executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel related matters. The motion passed unanimously.

During executive session, no action was taken.

There being no further business, and upon motion by Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Joe Paul, the meeting was adjourned at 1:24 p.m.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission:

Frank James, Chair

Marlo Dorsey, CEO