

**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:

December 10, 2025

Be it remembered that on the 10th day of December, 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 12:19 p.m. The following members of the Board were found to be present:

PRESENT

Melanie Archer
Bonnie Warren
Frank James
Dr. Joe Paul

ABSENT

Anthony Harris
Shawn Lowrey

ALSO PRESENT

Marlo Dorsey, Management
Kristen Brock, Staff
Maddie Englese, 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 October 2025 meeting minutes, and upon motion by Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Bonnie Warren, there was unanimous favorable vote of the board to approve the minutes as presented.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Dorsey presented the financial report ending October 31, 2025, including updated tax receipts for the commission’s 2% special hotel levy which show a year over year increase for the first two months of FY26. However, HTC’s portion of tax revenue continues to fall below actual market sales.

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. The Department has

identified coding errors and is working to remedy the discrepancies moving forward while considering how to best audit the last 36 months.

A separate report showed tourism tax proceeds down 3.34% over the previous 12-month calendar year, while restaurant taxes were up 4.12% for the same period.

A claims docket for the month of October 2025 was 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. November financials will be presented at February's meeting.

An updated balance sheet for FY26 was presented, as completed by accounting firm McArthur, Slay, and Dews PLLC, along with account balances through October 31, 2025.

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

Old Business

Dorsey shared official award notification of the Building Arts Fund grant toward renovation of the Hattiesburg Welcome Center. This portion of the grant is specific to artist space programming and curated art in the welcome center as well as ADA compliance for the overall project. Grant documents and renderings were presented to the board for review as preliminary work continues on the project.

New Business

The board was presented with a draft lease agreement between the City of Hattiesburg and Hattiesburg Tourism Commission for 300 Hardy Street, the future site of the Hattiesburg Welcome Center. After full discussion and upon motion by Melanie Archer, duly seconded by Bonnie Warren, there was unanimous favorable vote to approve the lease as presented or with reasonable adjustments to the terminology by the CEO as necessary to execute the lease with the City of Hattiesburg.

Dorsey noted that work on the new strategic plan continues, with the process expected to be finalized by summer. The results will provide data, research, and recommendations on strategies to continue the development of the tourism economy. Specifically, increased accommodations offerings and sports tourism will be key focuses.

Brock presented a Sales & Visitor Services update, overviewing current groups being served by the department along with recent sales efforts. In the first 2 months of FY26, 16 groups were serviced through Destination Services, totaling more than 2,700 attendees. Efforts continue to grow the meetings and conventions, sports, international, and leisure group markets to Hattiesburg through focused prospecting and development. She presented an update on MSAE Annual Conference, where Brock and Megan Mallory met with 30+ state association meeting planners about hosting their conferences in Hattiesburg. Brock also provided a list of 36 appointments from the Travel South International market and shared a need to grow the list of specialty accommodations working with international receptive operators.

Brock provided a report of FY26 Tourism Grant Program update. Recent partner relations included the unveiling of the Camp Shelby Country Music Marker, ribbon cutting at the Sims Road Boat Launch, and hosting of the Hattiesburg Hotel & Hospitality holiday meeting in December.

Hattiesburg Alliance for Public Art updates were provided for 2025, including the addition of 10 large-scale murals, 22 new painted utility boxes, and return of the 2025-27 Hattiesburg Sculpture Show.

Dorsey shared an update on a future public art project in downtown with a private property owner. Specific details still needed to be worked out, and she would give the commission an update at the next meeting.

A marketing and outreach update was presented by Englese and Dorsey. Social media performance in 2025 included more than 12 million overall impressions, with top performing ads related to the arts in Hattiesburg. For the month, social media engagements are up 167.4% year over year. A public relations report showed 62.5 million unique views with top markets reached from Jackson, New Orleans, and Dallas. Visitor insights indicate an average length of stay of 1.2 days, with 66% of guests staying overnight.

There being no further business, and upon motion by Bonnie Warren, duly seconded by Melanie Archer, the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

Hattiesburg Tourism Commission:

Frank James, Chair

Marlo Dorsey, CEO