

**CLAYTON COUNTY TOURISM AUTHORITY
BOARD MEETING
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2022**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Damon T. Williams called the meeting to order at 4:16 p.m. Beth Bailey conducted the roll call.

II. ROLL CALL:

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Damon T. Williams	Chairman	Present
Miyoshi Bourget	Board Member	Absent
Lynda Browning	Vice Chair	Present
Myla Chapman	Board Member	Present via Zoom
Tonya Clarke	Board Member	Present via Zoom
Gabe Johnson	Board Member	Present via Zoom
Bud Smith	Board Member	Present

Staff: Tamara Patridge, Executive Director; Beth Bailey, Special Projects Manager/Interim Finance Manager

Board Attorney not present: No legal matters for board discussion

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA/CONSENT AGENDA

CONSENT AGENDA

MINUTES

1. November 2021

FINANCIAL REPORT

1. October/November/December 2021
 - a. Tourism Authority
 - b. Convention & Visitors Bureau

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve, Tonya Clarke; second, Lynda Browning. Unanimous approval.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. Tourism Authority Grant FY 2022

- a. Ms. Patridge reported that the FY 2022 grant application had been edited by the CVB staff based on feedback from the previous year's applicants on what was found to be confusing, repetitive, or unnecessary for the decision-making process. A draft of the FY 2022 grant application was distributed to the board members to review before the next regularly scheduled meeting in March at which time changes will be made so that a final version can be completed in time for the April 1, 2022 launch.
2. Tourism Authority Grant FY 2021
 - a. Ms. Patridge presented a written request from Danielle Bunch with the Newman Wetlands Center requesting a reallocation of funds from their FY 2021 grant. The organization's proposed website costs were less than projected and the organization requests that they be allowed to use \$3,917 for staff training for evaluating trails for accessibility. Motion to approve the request from the Newman Wetlands Center/Clayton County Water Authority to reallocate \$3,917 from the FY 2021 grant to staff training as outlined in the presented request letter, Lynda Browning; second, Bud Smith; unanimous approval.
 - b. Ms. Patridge shared photos of the first visitor to utilize the new track chair on the trails at the Newman Wetlands Center. Ms. Browning inquired if this project would be promoted in the local newspaper. Ms. Patridge replied that she would reach out to local media once the new grant cycle was approved at the March meeting, in conjunction with the announcement of the FY 2022 grant cycle.
3. Tourism Activity Report 2021/Projects 2022
 - a. Report was distributed to the board. Ms. Patridge reported that although the hospitality industry suffered tremendously throughout the pandemic, Clayton County hotels have been able to recover with an average daily rate (ADR) in 2021 of \$80.64 which is \$20 more per night than pre-pandemic 2019. Ms. Patridge attributes the stability and increase to Clayton County's mid-level hotel inventory and rates. The Georgia Department of Tourism's latest release of visitor spending is \$21.2 billion in Georgia. The State Tourism Office releases tourism revenue reports on a fiscal year basis, and 2021 numbers will be released July 2022. Clayton County ranked 8th in the state for visitor spending with an economic impact for the county of \$467.1 million dollars. Ms. Patridge has provided the Tourism Activity Report for 2021 to Clayton County Chairman Jeffrey Turner for his annual State of the County Address in March.
 - b. Ms. Patridge reported on the 6-month progress of additional tourism revenue resulting from the passage of House Bill 317 which requires short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb and VRBO to collect hotel/motel tax at the time of booking and takes the burden off the homeowner to report these collections. As a result of the passage of this new legislation, Clayton County collected an additional \$155,000.00 in hotel/motel tax collections in the first 6 months. Hotel/Motel tax collections excluding short-term rental platforms totaled \$829,991.04 for the new fiscal period beginning July 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021. This totals nearly \$1 million dollars in Clayton County hotel/motel tax revenue collected in a 6-month period.

Ms. Browning commented that the Tourism Authority would benefit from more tourism-related projects to utilize the additional funding and suggested that the board revisit items of discussion from their board retreat. All board members agreed. Ms. Patridge commended the staff and Tourism Authority for their support in creating a solid foundation for the visitors center, with more inclusive, refreshed and refined branding/messaging. The intentional design of the new space will allow for multifunctional uses so that Clayton County Tourism can continue the momentum of moving forward and extending a warm welcome to all. The new messaging reminds visitors that Clayton County is the home to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and is as its essence “open to the world”.

- c. Ms. Patridge applauded the Tourism Authority for creating and nurturing the grant program. She anticipates that the number of applicants will increase as the pandemic subsides. Information on the grant program, including the recipients, has been provided to Chairman Turner for his State of the County Address.
- d. Ms. Patridge shared that the CVB staff participated in a training and development day, touring two museums in downtown Atlanta in anticipation of and to begin processing creative ideas for a museum refresh project for 2022. The National Center for Civil and Human Rights and College Football Hall of Fame offered very different and unique experiences from subject to the visitor experience of static versus interactive displays. Ms. Patridge stated that there is a responsibility and obligation to present the Authority’s current tourism product, the Road to Tara Museum, with a thoughtful approach with constant and consistent oversight and supervision. Ms. Patridge will reach out to a museum designer/curator to assist with the refresh project which will provide a space for education to learn more about the African American contributions to the film, and connectivity to the county’s current film industry. Ms. Browning asked if it would be a permanent or pop-up type exhibit. Ms. Patridge replied that plans include both interspersed interactive displays in the current Gone With the Wind exhibits, and new exhibits would be placed with the intent of rotation. Mr. Smith commented that utilizing a younger generation, particularly students at Clayton State University – who are interested and adept in modern and rising technology – may be a good way to involve local students in need of hands-on experience. Ms. Browning noted that there are other art forms including the spoken word that would possibly engage millennials. Mr. Smith suggested that a possible fundraising activity could be an NFT auction. Ms. Patridge suggested that the space she had considered for expanded interactive exhibits could be utilized for this purpose. The board members discussed that the space could be used full-time as a location for NFT public view, voting and auctions. The suggestion was made to modify the space as an open room, removing large cases currently taking valuable exhibit space, providing a more flexible option with multiple uses.
 - i. Ms. Patridge added that adding new exhibits at the museum could attract younger and repeat visitors. New, diverse, and contemporary businesses locating in Clayton County–Jonesboro specifically–are bringing a new audience to the area. Restaurants like Slutty Vegan and Big Dave’s

Cheesesteaks are dining destinations. The owners, Pinky Cole and Derrick Hayes, were recently featured on the cover of Essence magazine.

- e. Ms. Patridge reminded the board that The Beach at Clayton County International Park will open Memorial Day weekend after being closed for two seasons for renovations. The CVB is anticipating an influx of visitors and the return of the very lucrative family reunion market. Chairman Williams remarked that many local Clayton County residents are not aware of all events taking place in Clayton County. Ms. Browning stated that residents are often unaware of events taking place outside of their home city within the county. Ms. Browning asked about the outlets where the organization currently places advertising. Ms. Patridge replied that as the hospitality industry moves out of more restrictive Covid protocols, it is now time to identify markets where the county's current attractions inventory would be appreciated. Mr. Johnson reminded the board that the Authority is bound by mandate to spend advertising dollars to attract visitors from outside of Clayton County. Ms. Patridge confirmed and stated that advertising Clayton County within Clayton County was not an allowable use of funds per state regulations. Ms. Patridge suggested that the CVB staff and Tourism Authority members identify creative options for promoting the positive message within the community that align with Tourism areas of focus with respect to funding restrictions. Ms. Browning confirmed her understanding of the restricted funding and agreed with Mr. Johnson. Chairman Williams asked if it would be appropriate to have community leaders attend Tourism Authority meetings on occasion to share community news. Ms. Patridge replied that she would reach out to county leadership to discuss their availability throughout the year and possible topics of discussion.

4. Building Maintenance and Repair

a. Emergency gas leak

- i. Ms. Patridge reported that she had noticed a heavy natural gas odor at 125 N. Main Street. The odor was reported to Atlanta Gas Light and a representative inspected and said no smell or leak could be detected. Another call was made the following day to Atlanta Gas Light and a leak was identified between the meter and cut-off valve. A plumber inspected the property and found that the gas pipes under the building were disintegrated due to the age of the building. The natural gas line had not been utilized in several years which contributed to the issue. An emergency repair for the gas line from the meter to the furnace was immediately necessary. The CVB paid for the emergency repair. Ms. Patridge asked for a reimbursement of \$4,800 for the cost of the gas line replacement and necessary drywall repair. Motion to reimburse the CVB in the amount of \$4,800 for the emergency natural gas safety repair, Gabe Johnson; second, Bud Smith; unanimous approval.

5. Clayton County State of the County Address

- a. As the Tourism Authority has supported in years prior, Ms. Patridge presented options for sponsorship of the 2022 Clayton County State of the County address. Members were asked if they would like to attend. Those who committed:

Chairman Williams, Ms. Browning, Ms. Chapman, Mr. Smith. Motion to approve the sponsorship of the State of the County at the bronze level in the amount of \$750, Myla Chapman; second, Bud Smith; unanimous approval.

V. OLD BUSINESS

No outstanding matters of old business.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. Ms. Browning inquired if the renovations of the basement at Arts Clayton had been completed. Ms. Chapman stated she had been in the building recently and the renovations were complete and were being used for classes.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

No matters of real estate, legal, or personnel for discussion.

VIII. MOTION TO ADJOURN

1. Motion Lynda Browning; second Bud Smith; unanimous approval
2. Meeting ended at 5:24 p.m.