

## **TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the City of Brenham's Tourism Advisory Board was held on Thursday, July 18, 2024, beginning at 9:00 a.m. in The Barnhill Center, Morriss Hall in the Schulte Room, 106 Douglas Street, Brenham, Texas

### Board Members present:

Scott Atwood  
James Pharaon  
Jenny Van Dorf  
Harrison Williams

### Board Members absent:

Stacey Walters  
Commissioner Kirk Hanath  
DeWayne Burnett

### Visit Brenham Team present:

Director of Tourism and Marketing Jennifer Eckermann; Tourism and Marketing Coordinator Nancy Joiner; Lu Hollander with Visit Brenham; Tourism & Marketing Manager, Kathrine Briscoe; Manager of The Barnhill Center, Alex Dill; Melinda Faubion, and Natalie Lange.

### Citizens Present:

none

### Media Present:

none

- 1. Call Meeting to Order**  
Chairman Scott Atwood called the meeting to order.
- 2. Public Comments**  
There were no public comments.

## **REGULAR SESSION**

- 3. Discuss and Possibly Act Upon Approval of Minutes from April 18, 2024 Tourism Advisory Board Meeting**

A motion was made by Board Member James Pharaon and seconded by Board Member Jenny Van Dorf to approve the minutes from the April 18, 2024, Board

Meeting.

Chair Scott Atwood called for a vote. The motion passed with voting as follows:

Scott Atwood	Yes
DeWayne Burnett	<b>Absent</b>
James Pharaon	Yes
Jenny Van Dorf	Yes
Stacey Walters	<b>Absent</b>
Harrison Williams	Yes
Commissioner Kirk Hanath	<b>Absent</b>

## WORK SESSION

### 4. **Update on STRs to Include Current Numbers and Recent STR Property Owner Group Meeting**

Jennifer Eckermann Director of Tourism and Marketing and Nancy Joiner Tourism & Marketing Specialist presented this item. Nancy Joiner reported that there are 90 STRs in the City and out of the 90, five have gone to Municipal Court for nonpayment of HOT, and three new ones are going to Municipal Court. Three new STRs have opened since April's TAB meeting, two are delinquent and will receive a friendly letter, two are either up for sale or leased long-term soon, and two properties have closed since the April TAB meeting and are not included in the count. Eckermann reported that the newly formed STR group planned to meet bimonthly. The first meeting was at a County facility and the group had questions for the County on the County's HOT expenditures. The June meeting was held at Morriss Hall, and they had questions for the City about how HOT was being used. We have offered The Barnhill Center to them for other meetings if the calendar allows.

### 5. **Update on MoMS to Include Local Exhibits; Expanded Soundwalk Experience Project; Historical Markers Guide Update and Redesign; and Other Related Projects**

Jennifer Eckermann Director of Tourism and Marketing presented this item. Work is progressing on the three local exhibits being developed in conjunction with Brenham hosting the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street (MoMS) program. "A Century of the Simon" Exhibit continues to move along with storyboards, memorabilia, oral histories, and events that will take place. The Washington County Freedom Colonies Exhibit in Belle's Alley will have five panels which are about 90% completed, one panel is at 70% completion, and the introductory panel is at 50% completion. The Camptown Soundwalk Experience exhibit research work and oral histories are still in progress but will start to come together as the exhibit in Belle's Alley nears completion.

A preliminary sound walk script is under consideration. An expanded sound walk experience thanks to James Pharaon's idea at the last meeting was to work with community partners about expanding the idea of sound walks throughout the county. Independence has a walking tour with panels and James Pharaon, Kathrine Briscoe, and Jennifer Eckermann met with them about their interest in creating a sound. Melinda Faubion found out that Burton used to have a walking tour brochure, and it has been updated and redesigned. There are plans to develop a sound walk that would be available through a QR code printed in the brochure. Chappell Hill is now working on an updated brochure that can be used as the basis for a sound walk.

The Historical Marker's Guide has been updated and this project has become more of a commitment than was first anticipated. The guide will be an excellent resource and very user-friendly. The history of each community is highlighted, along with markers in the area. Each community was allowed to include other historic sites that are important to the community that do not have a marker.

Other projects that are being worked on are a photography contest and exhibit, a passport program being developed with partner communities utilizing the Markers Guide, Tours of the exhibits for school groups, and a volunteer committee.

#### **6. Report on 2024 Round Two Tourism Grants and Hosting of Recent Workshop**

Jennifer Eckermann Director of Tourism and Marketing presented this item. Tourism Grants were awarded for 2024 Round Two by the County Funding Committee. They are Texas Arts & Music Festival - \$4,000 for advertising for the festival; Brenham Heritage Museum - \$3,000 for a billboard; Chappell Hill Historical Society - \$2,000 for the Scarecrow festival; and Burton Chamber of Commerce - \$6,320 for wayfinding signage. Earlier this year the grant application was revamped to become more streamlined. Visit Brenham hosted a recent workshop with Garrett Coppedge from TH&LA who came to share what is eligible for funding and highlighted the 2-part test requirement for eligibility.

#### **7. Visit Brenham DMO Fiscal Year Q3 Report**

Jennifer Eckermann presented this item, along with Kathrine Briscoe, Tourism & Marketing Manager; Alex Dill, Manager of The Barnhill Center; Melinda Faubion, and Natalie Lange. Briscoe reported on the DMO and Visitor Center with updates to a kickoff interview with Travel Texas-Texas Tourism Friendly Certification, blog updates, new blogs, adding a QR code to the What's Happening section to direct to the events calendar on the Visit Brenham website, and visitor center walk-ins and phone calls. She also gave updates on ribbon-cutting attendance, visitor stats at the Fire Museum, tours, helping with room blocks, and meetings for different events that will be happening later this year. Elayne Grisbee Destination & Partner Coordinator presented Visit Brenham website data, e-Newsletter with open and click rates, and the What's Happening This Week with a new QR code. Natalie Lange reported on social media impressions and the most popular Facebook and Instagram posts. We worked with

an Influencer and sponsored giveaways in partnership with lodging partners to reach new audiences. Melinda Faubion presented digital marketing with Madden Media. We are doing exceptionally well, and most of our benchmarks surpass others in the industry. Our top-performing ads are family-friendly and barbeque. Our impressions, click rates, and reach are up. Lu Hollander with Visit Brenham presented our print and digital ads with Texas Highways, Texas Monthly, and Tour Texas, and shared bonus media stories, which were in magazines such as Austin Chronicle, Southern Living, Houstonia, World Atlas, and Texas Bucket List with reaches of 978,000 to 14 million. Dill reported on group rentals and concerts in the theatre, reported on two of the four Speaker Series, which were a great success, Celebration of Life, and training sessions for groups.

#### **8. Washington County Expo Report**

Harrison Williams, Director of the Washington County Expo presented this item. He gave an overview of what has been happening at The Expo. Working on budget for the next year. The calendar for The Expo is already full and so is next year. An E-sport tournament was held last month with about 30 to 40 people participating and a horse-cutting event was happening at the same time. In December Cal Middleton will be at The Expo putting on an exhibit on how to train horses. A big pig show of about 240 pigs will be coming and staying for a week.

#### **9. Administrative Report**

Jennifer Eckermann Director of Tourism and Marketing presented this item. The Hotel Occupancy Tax has been down, but it should be good for July due to people being displaced by Hurricane Beryl. TxDOT has a plan to redesign the whole area around the Texas Turnaround (U-turn) between West Main and West Alamo. The plan and two design options were presented to the Main Street Board last month, and a survey for input was sent to their board and committees. They will incorporate aesthetic design elements in partnership with the City of Brenham and Main Street Board. These improvements will enhance safety and mobility for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists while creating a space for residents and visitors to enjoy Downtown Brenham in a new way. This will be an improved west side entrance to Downtown.

#### **10. Adjourn**

With no further business, Scott Atwood adjourned the meeting.

*Scott Atwood*

Board Chair

**ATTEST:**

*Nancy Joiner*

Tourism & Marketing Specialist