

TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

A regular meeting of the City of Brenham's Tourism Advisory Board was held on Thursday, January 30, 2025, 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
DeWayne Burnett
Jenny Van Dorf
Stephanie Wehring
Harrison Williams

Board Members absent:

Commissioner Kirk Hanath
Keith Hankins

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; Destination & Partner Coordinator, Elayne Grisbee; 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. Welcome New Board Members Keith Hankins and Stephanie Wehring

Keith Hankins was absent, and Stephanie Wehring gave information on her background and her current business.

REGULAR SESSION

3. **Discuss and Possibly Act Upon Approval of Minutes from the October 17, 2024, Tourism Advisory Board Meeting**

A motion was made by Board Member Jenny Van Dorf and seconded by Board Member DeWayne Burnett to approve the minutes from October 17, 2024, Board Meeting.

Chair Scott Atwood called for a vote. The motion passed with the following votes:

Scott Atwood	Yes
DeWayne Burnett	Yes
Keith Hankins	Absent
Jenny Van Dorf	Yes
Stephanie Wehring	Yes
Harrison Williams	Yes
Commissioner Kirk Hanath	Absent

4. **Discuss and Possibly Act Upon the Election of a Board Chair and Vice-Chair for the 2025 Calendar Year**

The Tourism Advisory Board By-Laws state that at the first meeting of each calendar year, the Board is to appoint or reappoint a Chair and Vice-Chair to serve for the calendar year. Current Chair Scott Atwood and Vice-Chair Jenny Van Dorf have agreed to serve again.

A motion was made by Board Member DeWayne Burnett and seconded by Board Member Jenny Van Dorf approved Scott Atwood as Board Chair for another year.

Chair Scott Atwood called for a vote. The motion passed with the following votes:

Scott Atwood	Yes
DeWayne Burnett	Yes
Keith Hankins	Absent
Jenny Van Dorf	Yes
Stephanie Wehring	Yes
Harrison Williams	Yes
Commissioner Kirk Hanath	Absent

A motion was made by Board Member Scott Atwood and seconded by Board Member Stephanie Wehring to approve Jenny Van Dorf as Board Chair for another year.

Chair Scott Atwood called for a vote. The motion passed with the following votes:

Scott Atwood	Yes
DeWayne Burnett	Yes
Keith Hankins	Absent
Jenny Van Dorf	Yes
Stephanie Wehring	Yes
Harrison Williams	Yes
Commissioner Kirk Hanath	Absent

WORK SESSION

5. Review Update on Geiger & Associates Media Tour

Jennifer Eckermann, Director of Tourism & Marketing, and Lu Hollander, with Visit Brenham, presented this report. Jennifer Eckermann reported that the Geiger Media Tour was held November 12-15, and attached is a list of journalists who participated and the itinerary for the trip. We will receive our first report from Debbie Geiger on February 4. Our two primary takeaways were that tourism partners needed some training about the journalists who were coming and that there were several issues that had to be addressed. This most likely could have been avoided with direction and tips. Secondly, there was not enough time scheduled in Downtown Brenham, and it will be an easy fix for the next time they tour. Geiger & Associates have training that will be shared before the next media tour.

Lu Hollander presented the Visit Brenham Media Marketing Overview report. The progress by the numbers shows the potential visitors it will reach, the total cost of publicity if it had been purchased as paid advertising, the number of journalists who came, and the number of articles that have been written to date. Also, the contributions by sponsorship and the return on investment. Also, the coverage of publications that will be coming out soon. Geiger planned everything before they came, and they worked with what our needs were.

6. Update on Brenham's Request for Recognition as the Ice Cream Capital of Texas by the State Legislature

Kathrine Briscoe, Tourism & Marketing Manager, presented this report. We are in the process of requesting that Brenham be recognized as the Ice Cream Capital of Texas by the State Legislature in this session. It has been submitted to Senator Lois Kolkhorst's office, and it will be a Concurrent Resolution once approved by Representative Trey Wharton's office. We will plan a celebration at the State Capital and here in Brenham. We will partner with Blue Bell on celebrations along with appointing a task force to help plan. We will trademark the Ice Cream Capital of Texas and change the sign in the Visitor Center as well.

7. Report on Planning for the Upcoming Wildflower Season

Kathrine Briscoe, Tourism & Marketing Manager, presented this report. The Wildflower Watch Page, Map, and Blog will all go live on February 14th. The Visitor Center has already started receiving phone calls and questions regarding the wildflower season. Social media posts will be geared toward spring, and ad campaigns have been created for this as well. For those visitors traveling to Brenham, we will create an Itineraries Page since springtime brings many families to Brenham and Washington County. The first one will be family friendly. More part-time staff are needed in the Visitor Center, and a job listing will be posted by the Human Resources soon. We hope to have someone hired before going to Blue Bell during Spring Break.

8. Report on Wrap-Up of Brenham's Hosting of the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street *Crossroads* and A Century of Simon Exhibits, and Related Projects and Programming

Jennifer Eckermann, Director of Tourism & Marketing, presented this report. Our 18-month journey of hosting the Smithsonian ended on January 19th. We were extremely successful in accomplishing our goals, which were in the application of sharing the under-told stories of local Black History, celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Historic Simon Theatre, and increasing heritage tourism in Brenham and Washington County. All the goals were accomplished by the Visit Brenham team. The Smithsonian exhibit was open seven days a week except for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. We are looking at other ways to showcase the Simon exhibit at other locations and in the theatre throughout the year. The historical videos in the theatre drew a big interest with visitors, and we are looking at how to showcase these as well throughout the year.

9. Visit Brenham DMO Fiscal Year Q4 Report

Jennifer Eckermann presented this item, along with Elayne Grisbee, Destination & Partner Coordinator; Nancy Joiner, Tourism & Marketing Specialist; Kathrine Briscoe, Tourism & Marketing Manager; Lu Hollander, with Visit Brenham; Alex Dill, Manager of The Barnhill Center; Natalie Lange; and Melinda Faubion. Elayne Grisbee, Destination & Partner Coordinator, presented quarterly updates on the Fire Museum tours, Visitor Center statistics, Geiger press trip, and Smithsonian activities; developed the 2025 Visitor Guide distribution plan, updating and publishing blogs, and planning for the 2024 Tourism Partner Awards to be held on February 11, 2025. Nancy Joiner, Tourism & Marketing Specialist, reported on the number of short-term properties for the end of 2024, new short-term rentals, and the number of those who are delinquent in paying the local HOT. Kathrine Briscoe, Tourism & Marketing Manager, reported on the Visit Brenham and Washington County website on the number of views, users, and total time of engagement by month. Also, the number of referrals received, walk-ins, visitor guides mailed, and phone calls to the Visitor Center. The E-Newsletters that were sent out and the open and click rates. She reported on the Happening This Week flyer along with the website's analytics, number of subscribers to the monthly newsletter, blog posts, visitors to the Fire Museum, and the completion of the application for Brenham to receive its Texas Tourism Friendly Certification. Natalie Lange reported on social media impressions and the most popular Facebook and Instagram posts. How our numbers continue to

increase, and the most popular places in the county to visit. Melinda Faubion presented digital marketing with Madden Media. We are doing exceptionally well, and our benchmarks surpass others in the industry. Our impressions, click rates, and reach are up, as well as print and digital that were submitted to different outlets. Lu Hollander with Visit Brenham, presented the bonus media ads that were sent to other outlets, along with the number of reaches each outlet has. Alex Dill, Manager of The Barnhill Center, presented on group rentals and concerts in the theatre, and the usage of Morriss Hall for the Smithsonian and Simon Exhibits. Total ticket sales for the 2025 Season for the last quarter of 2024 were \$235,881, which is up from last year. The Golden Age of Hollywood fundraiser raised over \$126,00 for improvements to TBC.

10. Washington County Expo Report

Harrison Williams, Director of the Washington County Expo, presented this report. For 2025, more show dates have been added to the livestock and equestrian shows, and seven acres of the Expo property were turned into Johnson grass fields as Texas A & M presented thirty test spots on how to manage these fields. Ted Cruz was at the Expo for a campaign rally, They tracked at least 3,500 heads of cattle, 6,500 supported cows, and 2,500 horses that were at the Expo. Washington and Burleson Counties are the largest producers of support cows. 32,000 are coming to the Expo with \$7.2 million in impact to the community, with \$10.79 worth of impact coming out of 172,000 people coming to the Expo. They will hold a three- to four-day event in August of 2025 for the Masons, and they will be staying in and around the county. They will host shows for 2025 and are moving forward, but slowly, with a new arena, trying to get the King Sale, which is a big sale, and they are trying to adopt a different approach to customer service by giving a better experience here and hoping they will come back again. They do have one person who is at the Expo all weekend during these shows. They have upgraded the bathrooms and made maintenance changes to the buildings as well. The event center has been remodeled, replacing barn number one pens from 170 to 200. The events that are coming are getting bigger, and trying to make improvements to benefit them.

11. Administrative Report to Include Review of 2025 Round 1 Tourism Grant Funding; Update on Tourism-Friendly Texas Recognition; Tourism Partner Awards Coming February 11

Jennifer Eckermann, Director of Tourism & Marketing, presented this report. The 2025 Round 1 Tourism Grants were only funded for \$ 16,900. Tourism Texas Friendly had an interview with Kathrine and herself in late November, and we are now considered Tourism Texas Friendly. It will be announced in a couple of weeks to possibly in March 2025. Thirty-three communities are Tourism Texas Friendly. The Tourism Partner Awards will be on February 11, 2025, and the awards will be presented in the theatre.

12. Adjourn

With no further business, Scott Atwood adjourned the meeting.

Scott Atwood
Board Chair

April 17, 2025

ATTEST:

Nancy Joiner
Tourism & Marketing Specialist

April 17, 2025