

## TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

A regular meeting of the City of Brenham's Tourism Advisory Board was held on Thursday, April 17, 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  
Jenny Van Dorf  
Stephanie Wehring  
Harrison Williams  
Commissioner Kirk Hanath  
Keith Hankins

### Board Members absent:

DeWayne Burnett

### Visit the 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; and Natalie Lange.

### Visit Brenham Team absent:

Melinda Faubion

### Citizens Present:

Katie Burch – Plan North  
Paul Aschenbeck – Plan North  
Charlie Kolarik – Populus Firm  
Blake Adams – Populous Firm

### Media Present:

Sarah Forsythe – The Banner Press

### **1. Call Meeting to Order and Welcome New Board Member Keith Hankins**

Chairman Scott Atwood called the meeting to order. Chairman Atwood introduced Board member Hankins and asked him to give information about himself and his background.

### **2. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

## **REGULAR SESSION**

### **3. Discuss and Possibly Act Upon Approval of Minutes from January 30, 2025, Tourism Advisory Board Meeting**

There was a change to the minutes on the wording of the new Vice Chair. It should have read “A motion was made by Board Member Scott Atwood and seconded by Board Member Stephanie Wehring to approve Jenny Van Dorf as Board Vice Chair for another year” instead of “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”.

A motion was made by Board Member Keith Hankins to approve the make the change, and seconded by Board Member Jenny Van Dorf to approve the minutes with the change.

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

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

## **WORK SESSION**

### **4. Discuss Washington County Request for Input from the Tourism Advisory Board on Plans for Expo**

Harrison Williams brought with him the group from Plan North and Populus to discuss with the Tourism Advisory Board and Visit Brenham what they think the needs of the Expo are for the future. No drawings have been done; only surveying stakes have been done. An overview of the current fairgrounds was given, what types of wants are needed, and they have about twelve plus meetings scheduled with other groups as well. The question was asked, “What other events can the Expo have to help Tourism?” The Expo mainly focuses on agricultural events but also has a place where employers could hold events or meetings for either formal or casual events with great lighting. For the Fortnightly Annual Book Sale, they would need shelving and tables for the 100,000 books that are donated each year for the sale. Other issues were size of rooms are needed, the buildings should be named something different than the Expo Event Center, keeping it family-friendly, a place for keeping the family heritage alive by sharing our local agricultural history, having indoor/outdoor space for concerts, more green space, and having more weekday events which will drive people Brenham. If we are making the Expo a draw, then new hotels are needed to bring more people here and keep them. We have different types of people coming to Brenham for the murals, live music venues, and we are an easy day trip for those who live close. We need to think about where we see the Expo in the next ten to fifteen years and what we want it to be, and

the usage of the Expo. Once they meet with all the groups scheduled, they will take the feedback and discuss design and planning concepts. They should be back in the summer with information.

## **5. Visit Brenham DMO Fiscal Year Q2 Report**

Jennifer Eckermann presented this item, along with Elayne Grisbee, Destination & Partner Coordinator; Kathrine Briscoe, Tourism & Marketing Manager; Lu Hollander, with Visit Brenham; Alex Dill, Manager of The Barnhill Center; and Natalie Lange. Elayne Grisbee presented updated numbers for tours and walk-ins, trained new part-time staff, updated and published blogs, and organized a Volunteer Appreciation party for the Smithsonian and Simon exhibit volunteers. Also updated the Visit Brenham website, wildflower watch page, worked at a mobile visitor center at Blue Bell, and the Fun Run. Created new themed itineraries, created “Plan Your Visit” tab for the website, provided visitor bags, and assisted with tour groups. The Fire Museum was open during spring break and saw an increase of 17.6% over last year. She welcomed visitors from other countries to the Visitor Center. 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. Sent the Wildflower Watch Map flyer to our tourism partners, and we received over 400,000 views on the Wildflower Watch Map. 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. Jennifer Eckermann presented digital marketing with Madden Media and ads from the Geiger Press trip that are now in media outlets. 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 content that were submitted to different outlets. Lu Hollander with Visit Brenham presented the print and digital ads, plus 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, concerts, TAMI Film Screening, and video roundup, along with the Re-enactment of the Sam Houston speech by the Washington County Historical Commission. The Step Into the Past Movies were a big hit during the Smithsonian exhibit, so they were shown again during Spring Break.

## **6. Administrative Report to Include Review of 2025 Round 2 Tourism Grant Funding Timeline; Recognition as Tourism-Friendly Texas Certified Community; and Ice Cream Capital of Texas Update**

Jennifer Eckermann, Director of Tourism & Marketing, presented this report. The timeline for the 2025 Round 2 Tourism Grant Funding will begin on May 5, 2025. We will receive our official certification as a Tourism Friendly Texas Community today at

the City Council meeting at 1 pm. As of today, it is pending in committee in the Senate and reported favorably without amendments in the House. It is moving slowly in the process in Austin, and we are hoping to hear when it comes up for a vote. We are looking to trademark this and have talked with the City's legal department. We had a good hotelier meeting on Tuesday, and HOT is good. We will be simplifying the 2026 visitor guide and will start that process soon.

**7. Adjourn**

*Scott Atwood*

Board Chair

July 17, 2025

**ATTEST:**

*Nancy Joiner*

Tourism & Marketing Specialist

July 17, 2025