

## **TOURISM ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the City of Brenham's Tourism Advisory Board was held on Thursday, October 17, 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  
DeWayne Burnett  
Commissioner Kirk Hanath  
James Pharaon  
Jenny Van Dorf  
Stacey Walters  
Harrison Williams

### Board Members absent:

### 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:

Sarah Forsythe, The Banner Press

- 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 July 17, 2024 Tourism Advisory Board Meeting**

A motion was made by Board Member Jenny Van Dorf and seconded by Board

Member Stacey Walters to approve the minutes from the July 17, 2024, Board Meeting.

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

Scott Atwood	Yes
DeWayne Burnett	Yes
James Pharaon	Yes
Jenny Van Dorf	Yes
Stacey Walters	Yes
Harrison Williams	Yes
Commissioner Kirk Hanath	Yes

## WORK SESSION

### 4. **Update on Hosting of the Smithsonian’s Museum on Main Street *Crossroads* Exhibit and Related Projects and Programming.**

Jennifer Eckermann, Director of Tourism and Marketing, presented this item. Visit Brenham is finalizing details and pulling all the pieces together for hosting the Smithsonian exhibit. *The Crossroads: Change in Rural America* exhibit will be installed before Friday, December 6 for the donor and supporter reception.

On local exhibits, “A Century of Simon” will be installed in time for the Geiger Press Trip on November 12 and there will be a preview weekend on November 22-24 and then reopening to the public on December 6-7. Freedom Colonies of Washington County will be in Belle’s Alley and the panels are at iZone for production. There will be a scavenger hunt brochure for this exhibit. The Camptown soundwalk experience panels are at iZone and James Pharaon is working to complete the soundwalk.

Other projects and programming include completing the fundraising needed for the project budget, taking volunteers to view the exhibit in Clifton, the Historical Markers Guide, and Washington County Soundwalk Experience brochures are completed and printed for all communities except for Washington on the Brazos. A photo contest is online for registration, a Sam Houston Speech Reenactment, and the movie will be on January 11, 2025, Texas Archive of the Moving Image will be screening Brenham videos on Friday, January 17 with a round-up the next day, a Donor Reception on December 6 from 5:30-7 pm before the formal opening on December 7, and Nancy Joiner is scheduling school and group tours during the hosting period. We are working on visitor bags that will include information on events during the hosting period in hopes the information will be shared with friends and family.

Kathrine Briscoe and Elayne Grisbee have the Smithsonian Facebook page and the Smithsonian page on the website, up and is live, and will update it as things come together. A Texas Highway ad will be placed for December, and the Datafy

targeted digital campaign will launch later and run for six weeks. Printed materials include a general Smithsonian rack card with a calendar of events, Freedom Colonies, Camptown rack cards, a scavenger hunt brochure, and a Washington County Sound Walk Experience rack card. We are upgrading the dining, shopping guides, the Downtown Historic Walking Tour brochure, and the Art Walk map with the new murals on it.

**5. Review Dates for 2025 Round One Tourism Grants Tentatively Opening October 28, 2024**

Jennifer Eckermann Director of Tourism and Marketing and Nancy Joiner, Tourism and Marketing Specialist, presented this item. The application date was presented as when the online application will go live. Also, the Eligibility Committee and Funding Committee reviewed and okayed the dates that they will meet. Commissioner Hanath mentioned that funding from 2024 Round 2 will be added to the 2025 Round 1 funding.

**6. Visit Brenham DMO Fiscal Year Q4 Report**

Jennifer Eckermann presented this item, along with Elayne Grisbee, Destination & Partner Coordinator; Alex Dill, Manager of The Barnhill Center; and Melinda Faubion. 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. Along with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Summer Showcase during Hot Nights, blog updates and new blogs were added, created a quarterly newsletter for Tourism Partners, collected 2025 Visitor Guide agreement forms, worked on MoMS information, held quarterly meetings with hoteliers, and gave tour information numbers. Jennifer Eckerman reported on social media impressions and the most popular Facebook and Instagram posts. 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. Jennifer Eckermann presented an overview of our print and digital ads that were submitted to different outlets. Alex Dill presented on group rentals and concerts in the theatre, and reported on our third Speaker Series, which was a great success, a retirement party, the Washington County Wedding Group Fall Wedding Show, and a Birthday party. On ticket sales for the 2025 season, sales have surpassed 2024 sales.

**7. 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. They made it through the Washington County Fair and have over 56,000 in attendance. They will need to redo their stage area to accommodate artists and help support those who want to play at the fair. There will be a National Cutting Horse South Texas Championship this weekend and they are referring them to Airbnb's and hotels. They are getting ready for the HLS&R event, their budget was approved for additional office staff, and in 2025 there will be a new event happening at the

Expo. There will be an Amazon and Prime Show, along with talks with the Free Masons from Dallas coming with about 1,000 people. They will begin talks on a new arena which should be completed in 2026 and will hold 5,000 seats. There will be new bathrooms. This arena will help keep animals separated and an architect is coming next week. There will also be naming rights for the new arena. The arena will not be air-conditioned for now but hope that one day it will be. There will be a new layout at the Expo and improvements made in the barns along with the separation of the different animals at the Expo.

**8. Administrative Report to Include Proposed TAB Board Meeting Dates for 2025; update on STR Property numbers; 2025 Season Tickets Sales Report; and Upcoming Geiger Press Trip**

Jennifer Eckermann Director of Tourism and Marketing presented this item. This will be James Pharaoh's last meeting. He will be getting off the Tourism Advisory board. The Hotel Occupancy Tax for the last quarter was up. The proposed dates for the Tourism Advisory Board meeting are January 23, April 17, July 17, and October 16, 2025. Currently, we have 97 STRs that are active, and out of the 97 nine are at Municipal Court for non-payment and one repaying HOT, ten are new since the last Tourism Advisory Board meeting, fourteen are delinquent, and four properties have either sold or have gone long-term. On November 8 there will be the Tourism Partner meeting at 8:30 am and invitations will go out this week. The Geiger press tour will be here November 12-15 and thirteen writers are coming. A movie director called and will be filming at WOB about the last cattle drive, and he is contacting the Browning Plantation to see about filming there as well. There will be about eighty people. Chappell Hill has a visitor center at Popular and Main Street.

**9. Adjourn**

With no further business, Scott Atwood adjourned the meeting.

*Scott Atwood*

Board Chair

January 30, 2025

**ATTEST:**

*Nancy Joiner*

Tourism & Marketing Specialist

January 30, 2025