

ATLANTIC CITY
TOURISM ADVISORY COMMISSION

MINUTES
OF THE
TOURISM ADVISORY COMMISSION

Date: Tuesday, January 24, 2012
Time: 4:00 p.m.
Location: 1014 Atlantic Avenue
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

PRESIDING: Ali Reynolds, Chair

PRESENT: Joseph Maher, Joseph Kelly, David Greenblatt Keturah Jackson and Sarah Beth Johnson, William Cheatham and Cortez Martin

ABSENT: Keith Mills, Tony Rodio

CRDA STAFF: Susan Ney Thompson, Val Berzins, Sharon Dickerson and Stephanie Galantino, Heather Walls

OPENING STATEMENT

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 4:02 p.m. Ms. Galantino read a statement of compliance with the notice requirements of the Senator Byron M. Baer Open Public Meetings Act and called the roll.

The Chair opened the meeting by requesting a motion to approve the Minutes of the December 13, 2011 meeting. A motion to ratify the minutes was made by Ms. Johnson and seconded by Mr. Greenblatt. The December Minutes were approved and adopted.

Susan Thompson, Deputy Executive Director, reported on the Tourism District Activity. The Board will be holding a Special Meeting to approve the Tourism District Master Plan on Wednesday, February 1, 2012 at 4:00pm. The upcoming Master Plan sets a road map for implementation. The details will continue to be developed after February 1. The Plan addresses short-, mid- and long-term objectives while providing insight from the perspective of capital investment and development. The Plan addresses management of the plan as well as implementation. In response to Mr. Maher's question regarding the time frame for short-, mid- and long-term objectives, Ms. Thompson stated short-term would be 1-2 years, mid-term 2-5 years and long-term 5 years plus. Mr. Cheatham asked what drastic moves would be made on the short-term to see immediate changes. Ms. Thompson stated there are both small and large objectives, some of which have already begun to be implemented. Some examples would be improvements to trash cans, bus shelters, improved lighting. Mr. Cheatham expressed concern the improvements would be implemented but not maintained. Ms. Thompson stated they would be maintained by the Special Improvement District as the CRDA's property. Responding to Mr. Cheatham's question regarding the rest of the city, Ms. Thompson suggested this implementation and maintenance plan could be used as a model for the city. Ms. Thompson stated the city has serious budget issues which limit its ability to implement the same programs and improvements outside of the Tourism District. Mr. Cheatham stated the city and CRDA need to work together before we have to contend with more competition. Mr. Cheatham made the recommendation of a wage tax of the workers employed in the city be sent to City Council. Ms. Reynolds asked for a second. There being no second, the recommendation will not be sent to City Council.

Mr. Kelly has observed many projects are being delayed that require support from city resources. He recommends the CRDA focus on projects that do not require city resources. Ms. Thompson stated that every municipality needs to have a Capital Improvement Plan and recommends the CRDA and city work together to align the Capital Improvement Plan with the Tourism District. Mr. Kelly made the motion to recommend CRDA meets with the city prior to establishment of next year's budget to align resources for projects that are based on priorities of the Tourism District Master Plan. Mr. Martin seconded the motion and Ms. Reynolds opened up discussion on the motion. Ms. Jackson asked if a CRDA representative is attending the City Council meetings to which Ms. Reynolds answered in the affirmative. Mr. Martin expressed

concern in waiting for the 2013 budget. Ms. Thompson stated Tom Meehan, Director of Development and Implementation, is in communication with the city on a daily basis to implement the Boardwalk lighting project and our other projects. There being no further discussion the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Jackson suggested we use the lighting poles that cannot be installed on the Boardwalk on MLK Blvd. to deter more burglaries in the area. Ms. Thompson stated the poles were purchased with funds from the Boardwalk Revitalization Fund and cannot be installed off the Boardwalk. Ms. Thompson stated Tom Gilbert, Tourism District Commander, has been working to develop a network of cameras, the "Eyes on Atlantic City" program, which will aid in apprehending criminals as the cameras did during the car-jacking. Ms. Thompson will invite Mr. Gilbert to attend the next Commission meeting to explain how that system will work.

Ms. Jackson also suggested using the bus shelters for more communication of area attractions such as the Aquarium and the Lighthouse to visitors.

Ms. Jackson inquired whether the Atlantic City Alliance will present their marketing plan to the Commission. Ms. Thompson stated they are still in the agency selection process but will contact their leadership about attending a Commission meeting when they are ready to present their plan.

Ms. Reynolds introduced Val Berzins, Chief Financial Officer, to present the CRDA budget. Members received a handout of the 2012 NJ CRDA Budget. Mr. Berzins stated the budget is \$7.4 million which is an increase of \$900,000 due to additional duties of the CRDA related the Tourism District legislation. Mr. Berzins explained each line item and added the second sheet breaks down the numbers by department. In response to Mr. Maher's question regarding whether the budget had been approved by the CRDA Board, Ms. Thompson responded it was the first time it was presented. Mr. Martin asked whether the promotions line item is enough for the ACA to promote the city. Ms. Thompson responded the ACA is a non-profit organization comprised of casino executives that will contribute \$150 million to market the city over the next 5 years. Mr. Kelly stated the funds are the \$30 million that used to be sent to the horse racing industry. It gives the ACA a more adequate fund to market the city and compete with other resorts.

Ms. Jackson was pleased to see the League of Municipalities promotion line item. She handed out an idea to promote the Tourism District at the League of Municipalities Convention.

Mr. Berzins further clarified the budget is strictly for office operations. It is exclusive of project and capital funding to which there are additional funding sources, i.e. investment alternative tax (1.25% of gross revenue from casinos), residual receipts for hotel room fee fund.

Mr. Kelly inquired about the additional land use responsibilities and if they had been outsourced. Ms. Thompson responded some has been outsourced but much of the responsibility has been absorbed by the legal department. A discussion followed regarding the process for land use applications and certifications. Mr. Kelly emphasized that in order to attract the best businesses, we need to provide the best services. Developers do not have the same comfort level they did when the process went through the city. Ms. Thompson suggested a seminar/video/brochure highlighting the process to guide applicants on each step of the process. Mr. Kelly suggested the Chamber could assist with getting the information pieces together to educate the public and the professional community. Ms. Jackson stated part of the process still requires the applicant to come to the city. Ms. Thompson stated we are trying to streamline the land use certification process. CRDA must get this information from the city which requires the CRDA to file an OPRA request which requires a 7 day waiting period. Ms. Dickerson stated the process has been getting better and city employees have become more cooperative. Mr. Kelly stated if the process is lengthy it becomes a reflection on CRDA. A few suggestions were made to possibly make the process move faster with the city, i.e. hiring students, reimbursing for overtime, etc. Mr. Maher asked if it is a budget concern however Ms. Thompson stated it should not be considering much of the land use approvals left the city office. Ms. Thompson stated we will contact Keith Mills, AC Director of Planning and Development, to ask him to attend the next meeting to answer some of these questions.

Ms. Jackson also brought up the lack of cleanliness at the Convention Center. Ms. Thompson stated SMG is under contract to the Convention Center and it should be brought to the attention of Greg Tesone.

Ms. Dickerson discussed the process of selection of members and officers. Since Ms. Reynolds is now a staff member and has resigned her position on the Board, we need to defer to the Board as to whether it would like the CRDA representative to be a Board member. The resolution creating the Commission does not require the CRDA representative to be a Board member. The resolution also assigned the chairperson to be the Board representative but this was only to start up the Commission. It is up to the members of the Commission whether they would like the CRDA representative to remain as the Chair or to elect another Chair as well as a Vice-Chair. Ms. Reynolds has agreed to serve on Commission until the Board determines who its representative will be. Ms. Dickerson also stated the Commission needs to adopt By-laws and distributed preliminary by-laws for the Commission to review and revise as it sees fit. Mr. Kelly made a motion to table the discussion regarding the election of officers until the next meeting in hopes the full membership will be in attendance. Ms. Jackson asked for the Commission members to be emailed the details regarding the CRDA representative and officer selection before the next meeting.

There being no public present, Ms. Reynolds opened and closed the public portion of the meeting.

Mr. Cortez suggested the Museum of Science & Industry. He distributed some information about the organization and suggested it be included for consideration at Gardner's Basin. This would be a family attraction that visiting families would enjoy. Ms. Jackson also heard the Marine Mammal Center may be moving to Gardner's Basin.

Mr. Cheatham asked what could be done to make Boardwalk Hall more attractive for shows and events. Event fees and Parking are too expensive and do not draw people to Atlantic City. Ms. Thompson stated \$2.50 of parking fees are committed to debt service. Anything over this amount is revenue the casinos retain. Ms. Reynolds suggested the Commission make a recommendation to the casinos to reduce the parking fees, particularly working with community and during the off-hours. Ms. Thompson suggest Mr. Rodio could give us some insight at next meeting. Mr. Cheatham reminded the commission about the intercept parking on the Expressway. Ms. Thompson stated the reason it is no longer required for employees to use it is that the city needs those employees to be moving around the city and spending their money. Mr. Kelly also stated the workforce coming into the city has shrunk by over 10,000 people. The purpose of the CRDA is to hopefully bring more business into the city, which in turn will bring more customers and workers into the city. Ms. Reynolds stated we will ask Mr. Rodio to weigh in on the topic at the next meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Johnson and seconded by Mr. Maher. Meeting adjourned.