

ATLANTIC CITY
TOURISM ADVISORY COMMISSION

MINUTES
OF THE
TOURISM ADVISORY COMMISSION

Date: Tuesday, July 26, 2011
Time: 4:00 p.m.
Location: 1014 Atlantic Avenue
Atlantic City, NJ 08401

PRESIDING: Ali Reynolds, Chair

PRESENT: Keith Mills, Joseph Maher, Tony Rodio, Joseph Kelly, William Cheatham, David Greenblatt, (arrived 4:15 pm) Keturah Jackson, Sarah Beth Johnson, Cortez Martin,

ABSENT:

CRDA STAFF: Susan Ney Thompson, Sharon Dickerson, Lisa Britt Risteski, Stephanie Galantino

OPENING STATEMENT

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 5:00 p.m. Ms. Risteski 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 June 28, 2011 meeting. A motion to ratify the minutes was made by Mr. Martin and seconded by Mr. Rodio. The June Minutes were approved and adopted.

The Chair requested Susan Thompson, Interim Executive Director, present to the members a CRDA Overview. The Chair opened the matter to the members for questions.

Mr. Cortez Martin inquired as to amount billed the tax payers in the Tourism District. Ms. Thompson stated the amount is \$38. per \$100,000. Mr. Mills questioned how much is generated from the luxury tax regarding ACCVA. Ms. Thompson responded she did not know but thought approximately 10 million dollars annually. Mr. Mills inquired if that was ACCVA's budget or is there surplus. Ms. Thompson replied usually they operate the Convention Center on a deficit; part of those luxury taxes go to offset the operational expenses at the facilities. Ms. Thompson stated the Authority is looking into operating the Convention Center during mid week and the off season to activate special events in Boardwalk Hall.

Mr. Cheatham inquired if the luxury tax was available to the City. Ms. Thompson replied that predated her and she was unaware. Mr. Cheatham said he remembered when the City was able to use the luxury tax money to upkeep the City which was prior to CRDA.

Mr. Mills stated to the best of his recollection, when the City sold or gave up the rights to the Boardwalk Hall and Convention Center the Luxury tax provision was forfeited also. Ms. Thompson commented she imagined the Luxury tax funded operations of City government but if so, it probably predated the casino industry and economic growth of the real estate taxes that come into the City. Ms. Thompson went on to further state, if correct and the Luxury tax is \$10 million, the City currently derives \$230 million for it's annual budget plus \$150 million for it's school board tax. Ms. Thompson added the Convention Centers \$10 million pales in comparison to other taxes coming into the City presently.

The Chair then requested that each Commissioner briefly introduce themselves to the rest of the Commission for the record.

Ms. Thompson presented the Tourism District Activity Report. Highlights include:
-Land Use Division applications and public hearing

-Public Safety-coordinating with Lt. Col. Thomas Gilbert and law enforcement regarding crime prevention and best practices

Mr. Mills inquired if the Justice department would be able to accommodate more people in system. Ms. Thompson responded the Atlantic County Prosecutor was part of that particular discussion and was in favor of the project. Mr. Mills commented the jails were suffering from overcrowding. Ms. Thompson stated it is very frustrating for law enforcement knowing the offenders will be back on the streets quickly.

Mr. Cheatham questioned how many police officers live in Atlantic City. The Chair stated she does not have that information. Ms. Johnson stated the police do have certain residency requirement for a certain amount of years. Ms. Jackson inquired as to what with the program were the police were given incentives to stay in Atlantic City by the Authority. Ms. Thompson responded the Authority expended all the monies the Agency allocated to the program.

Mr. Cortez commented he was on the Boardwalk today and he did not see any posted biking hours. Mr. Cheatham stated there was a detour sign on Pacific and Albany Avenues claiming the Dorset Avenue bridge was closed for repair. Mr. Maher volunteered to rectify the situation.

Ms. Thompson went back to the Tourism District Activity Report's highlights:

-Tourism District Master Plan-receiving proposals

-Marketing Plan and Special Events-

-Mr. Rodio inquired as to the first 3 special events awarded. Ms. Thompson responded they are 1)Tony Marts Presents 2)AC Ballet and 3)The Black Magic Swing Band

-Mr. Maher questioned if this program will go forward over the next several years and if it will expand past the Boardwalk. Ms. Thompson replied it is a strong possibility and will be reassessed when it comes close to the end of funding.

-Ms. Jackson inquired if the City is permitted to apply for the Special Events funding. Ms. Dickerson responded affirmatively. Ms. Jackson commented that the City has a number of concerts at Gardner's Basin. Ms. Jackson inquired what the funds were allotted for. Ms. Thompson replied it could be used for any expense related to the event or event series which would include travel expenses, talent fee, advertising, etc. The Authority will not pay profit to any promoter.

The Chair moved to the next item: Committee Reports. The first report, Cleanliness, Safety & Health was presented by Mr. Cheatham and Mr. Cortez. Mr. Cheatham began with an ordinance that is not properly enforced in the City where residents must return their trash receptacles from the side walk. Mr. Mills volunteered to make it known to public works.

Ms. Thompson stated she met with Anthony Cox, Director of Licensing and Inspections, and they spoke of an idea on how CRDA might be able to assist in code enforcement issues. Mr. Kelly mentioned there is an existing study Perks Reuter Study which could be a usual reference for this type of assistance in Code Enforcement.

Mr. Cheatham went on to residential parking and how that is not enforced and is lost revenue for the City. Mr. Cheatham commented on the vendors on the sidewalks that do not put money in the meters. Ms. Thompson stated it is an enforcement issue.

Ms. Thompson stated in terms of some of these issues, there needs to be a determination of what the follow up will be. Ms. Thompson stated when a problem has been identified, there has to be a defined course of action as a remedy. Ms. Thompson asked Mr. Mills to bring it to the City's attention. Ms. Johnson commented additional parking enforcement was not needed in her neighborhood.

Mr. Cheatham continued with his report and the suggestion of having a Monopoly Park at Bader Field. Mr. Cheatham believes Atlantic Avenue should become a boulevard and parking should not be allowed. This would allow a bike lane in each direction.

Ms. Thompson responded when CRDA made improvements to Virginia and North Carolina Avenues, the plan was for the on street parking to be removed to improve traffic flow. The Authority made arrangements for public parking lots to replace on street parking. Ms. Thompson went on to state the Agency received City approval however in the middle of the project, the Authority was advised by the City that the parking had to remain on the streets as there were many complaints. Ms. Thompson feels it is a challenging issue and is hesitant for the Authority to take on.

Mr. Cortez finished the report for Mr. Cheatham. Mr. Cortez began by suggesting the City benefit through the revenue of the parking garages such as the new garage at Mississippi. Mr. Cortez added if that could not be done, perhaps the South Jersey Transportation Authority could raise it tolls. Mr. Cortez recommended speaking to the Casinos and ask them for some of their revenue they earn through their garages.

Mr. Rodio responded \$3 of every dollar that the Casino garages collect goes to the state of New Jersey. Mr. Rodio added he believes one of the reasons the numbers are down for AC Casinos is the result of regional competition.

Ms. Thompson stated \$3 is obligated to service the bond debt. Ms. Thompson added the revenues on the parking garage on Mississippi Avenue go to pay the debt that was bonded for construction. Ms. Thompson confirmed the City of Atlantic City has a \$230 million budget. Ms. Thompson feels there is a lack of capital planning at present in terms of capital infrastructure improvements on the long term.

Ms. Jackson inquired if there is going to be a fee on the Mississippi Avenue parking garage. Ms. Thompson stated yes, the fee has not been set but the rates will be competitive.

The Chair does not believe raising the toll is a decent idea. It will hurt the local people more than help raise revenues. Mr. Kelly stated what he is hearing is a consensus and that is what is it to make it easier for the working public and visiting public to come to Atlantic City. Ms. Thompson suggested the Committee reach out to the CRDA's Chief Financial Officer, Val Berzins and he could speak about the \$2.50 parking fee. Also, SJTA and speak to their CFO and discuss their tolls.

Mr. Mills stated he believed the purpose of this Board is to help generate City revenue for street improvements. Ms. Thompson stated she personally wouldn't support that. Ms. Johnson commented she also did not believe the purpose of this Committee is to generate more revenue for the City of Atlantic City.

Mr. Mahr inquired if the Authority has an idea what the Capital Improvement Plan is for the City. Ms. Thompson responded she has not ever seen a 5 year Capital Improvement Plan or Transportation Plan from the City. Mr. Mills stated yes the City does have a Plan. Mr. Mahr stated if you are not replacing the infrastructure, you are only patching holes.

Mr. Mills added the Sewerage Authority had their own Capital Improvement Plan, the Water Authority has their own Capital Improvement Plan, the Gas Company and Electric Company are independent. Mr. Mills went onto state he believes the main problem is the City is over 150 years old and the infrastructure could be 100 years old. Mr. Mills commented the burden is greater than the available resources on even a 5 year basis.

Ms. Thompson explained when CRDA came into the Tourism District; the Authority recognized there would be significant capital needs. The Authority asked an engineering firm to provide an assessment of needs. The Agency is in the process of putting together a list of projects. Ms. Thompson suggested asking the City to do a presentation of their Capital Improvement Plan for Transportation and other facilities.

The Chair requested hearing the other reports at the next meeting. Mr. Mills had a list of priorities that the City felt important to address. Those included a roller skating rink, 4 screen movie theaters, and a bowling alley contained in one complex. Mr. Rodio inquired as to the status of Atlantic City Live Project proposed for the site next to the Walk. Ms. Thompson replied it is still a possibility.

Ms. Jackson commented the need for a commercial for Atlantic City specifically and better marketing for visitors.

The Committee discussed the details of the Master Plan; what it would contain; would the Tourism Committee should and could contribute, etc. Mr. Rodio inquired if it would

be beneficial to share a condensed version of what the casino industry shared with the Governor's office in terms of the development aspect. Ms. Thompson believed that would be very helpful.

Mr. Martin worked on a mission statement and passed those out to the members.

Note for next month's meeting: The Committee will need to advance a set of By Laws which will be drafted by Sharon Dickerson. Ms. Dickerson also will arrange for Ethics Training.

Ms. Jackson mentioned a film The Greatest Potential and she would like the Committee to view. Ms. Thompson suggested meeting at 3:30 to screen the film and the normal public meeting begin at 4:00 pm.

The Chair opened the meeting to public comment. Ms. Linda Steel of Galloway addressed the Commissioners. Ms. Steel inquired if there was any possibility of getting together with the South Jersey Transportation Authority and the Municipal Utilities Authority for representation to come up with an infrastructure plan. Ms. Steel feels the Casino Industry and the City needs to work better with the Community.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.