

**CLAYTON COUNTY TOURISM AUTHORITY
BOARD MEETING
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2022**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Damon T. Williams called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. Beth Bailey conducted the roll call.

II. ROLL CALL:

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Damon T. Williams	Chairman	Present
Miyoshi Bourget	Board Member	Present via Zoom
Lynda Browning	Vice Chair	Present
Myla Chapman	Board Member	Present via Zoom
Tonya Clarke	Board Member	Present via Zoom
Gabe Johnson	Board Member	Present via Zoom

Staff: Tamara Patridge, Executive Director; Beth Bailey, Special Projects Manager/Interim Finance Manager

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA/CONSENT AGENDA

CONSENT AGENDA

MINUTES

1. October 2022

FINANCIAL REPORT

1. September and October 2022
 - a. Tourism Authority
 - b. Convention & Visitors Bureau

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve, Myla Chapman; second, Lynda Browning. Unanimous approval.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Visit
 - a. Ms. Patridge reported that the Clayton County Convention & Visitors Bureau and Road To Tara Museum welcomed 75 members of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority to

celebrate the sorority's 100th anniversary. Ms. Patridge explained how the event was secured. Ms. Tonya Pugh, sorority member and event planner, saw the newly installed banners of African American actresses Hattie McDaniel and Butterfly McQueen on the exterior of the visitors center/museum, and was interested in learning more about what was inside the Road To Tara Museum. Ms. Pugh stated that she was "thrilled" to see the exhibits highlighting Hattie McDaniel's contributions to the entertainment industry as an actress, radio personality, television star and more, as opposed to her role as the character "Mammy" in *Gone With the Wind*, which is something she was accustomed to seeing. Ms. Patridge remarked that Ms. Pugh's sentiments validated the administration's and board's work over the past 4 years toward a more inclusive and educational experience for our visitors. Ms. Patridge reported that Jonesboro City Manager Ricky Clark was also in attendance at the event and shared publicly during his remarks that he appreciated the contributions the CVB has made to enhance the City of Jonesboro. Ms. Patridge followed up with Ms. Pugh after the event to express her gratitude for allowing the CVB to host an event that was so important to her and her sorority. Ms. Pugh said that she would be happy to help share the museum to other sorority chapters throughout the United States with a goal of securing additional events that may include overnight stays in the county. Ms. Patridge reported to the board that securing events of this type has the potential of increased hotel/motel tax revenue for the county.

2. 2023 Priority Projects

a. Hattie McDaniel/Butterfly McQueen Exhibit Expansion

- i. Ms. Patridge reported that one of her priority projects for 2023 is to expand the exhibits on Hattie McDaniel, Butterfly McQueen, and additional African American actors from *Gone With the Wind*. She will renovate the former Civil War exhibit space in the Road To Tara Museum. Ms. Patridge shared that she has interviewed 3 museum design companies but as each surveyed the space and scope of the project, they all reported that the project was too small for them to accept. Ms. Patridge met with staff and decided that her team, along with her network of *Gone With the Wind* subject matter experts, will do the necessary work to create the exhibit. Representatives from the Sigma Gamma Rho local chapter have expressed interest in helping to locate artifacts related to Hattie McDaniel for the new exhibits. The sorority has also offered to volunteer in any way that Ms. Patridge needs them.
- ii. Ms. Patridge reminded the board that the FY23 Tourism Authority approved budget included \$100,000.00 for new or expanded tourism product development. Ms. Patridge shared that from what she has learned, visitors are seeking experiences and places to learn new aspects and perspectives of history. The Road to Tara museum has a niche market in place, however, the addition of new exhibits will provide something for previous visitors to consider revisiting, and a product to attract a new

market. Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority committed to hold their November anniversary event at the museum. Member Browning inquired if the exhibit would be permanent. Ms. Patridge said it will be a permanent exhibit with rotating artifacts. Chairman Williams asked about cost for the requested expansion. Ms. Patridge explained that she did not expect the initial construction costs to be more than the FY23 budgeted amount of \$100,000.00. She is aware of the need to level the floor with the upper museum space for safety and that this would represent the larger cost of renovations. Ms. Patridge said that the timing is good to create a new tourism product as the effects of the pandemic are beginning to diminish and visitors are returning to their previous travel regimen. Member Clarke inquired about the previously planned film exhibit. Ms. Patridge replied that after having a temporary film exhibit and examining the use of the space over the past 2 years, she determined there was not adequate square footage to showcase the more than 300 film and television products the film office has hosted. Member Bourget inquired about the new exhibit on the African American actors and if there would be context in the exhibit that would not make excuses for the language and treatment of slaves in the story. Ms. Patridge responded that there would be and reminded that when she took her position in 2018, she made immediate changes to the museum by removing offensive displays and text and created narratives to educate visitors on differing perspectives. Ms. Patridge stated that her goal remains to have visitors leave the museum having learned something new. Ms. Patridge shared that through a period of discovery, fans of *Gone With the Wind* often do not realize that everyone is not a fan of the book or the film. Ms. Patridge reminded that she had installed a large print replica of a boycott of the film based on its content and its treatment of slavery in both the book and film. Member Johnson asked if a replica Academy Award/Oscar could be created. Ms. Patridge responded that she will reach out to the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles, regarding access and permission for likeness, replicas of artifacts, and archival photos and video use in the new exhibit at the Road To Tara Museum. Chairman Williams stated to Ms. Patridge that if additional funding was needed for the project, that the board would be open to consider another request in addition to the budgeted \$100,000.00 when she needed it. All agreed that the exhibit should be a first-class experience.

- iii. Motion by Gabe Johnson to approve utilizing the FY23 budgeted \$100,000.00 for the Road to Tara Museum Hattie McDaniel and Butterfly McQueen exhibit. Motion second, Myla Chapman. Unanimous approval.

b. Black Restaurant Week

- i. Ms. Patridge announced that the first annual Clayton County Black Restaurant Week will take place June 19–25, 2023. Through personal interviews and an online application process, it was determined that nearly

80% of the restaurants that participated in Clayton County Restaurant Week in October were black owned. Restaurants and specifically black owned businesses were disproportionately impacted during the pandemic and have not recovered. Their marketing budgets are nearly nonexistent, and promotion is where the CVB can help. Ms. Patridge stated that personal visits to restaurants to speak with owners to hear their experience of success of Clayton County Restaurant Week were conducted and Black Restaurant Week was discussed. The majority of the previous participants have already committed to participate in Black Restaurant Week in June 2023. Staff will begin work on this project in January.

c. Grant Recipient Update

- i. Ms. Patridge informed the board that in the due diligence 6-month check up with our FY22 grant recipients, it was discovered that Arts Clayton's event for which they received a tourism grant, Caribbean Nights, would not take place in the current fiscal year. After a discussion with Arts Clayton Director Brian Hebert, clarification was made that the money received in the FY22 grant cycle is being used for expenses for the event, specifically marketing, contracts for entertainment, etc. Mr. Hebert provided a written explanation which was provided to the board. Ms. Patridge reported that Mr. Hebert has been instructed to provide invoices to support the expenditures and the dates of payment in the required grant wrap-up report that the board will receive in May 2023.

d. Tourism Authority Board Member Update

- i. Ms. Patridge reminded the board that each January an Ethics Compliance form is mailed through the USPS to all members of Commission-appointed boards and authorities in Clayton County. Ms. Patridge shared that Member Bud Smith would be resigning from the board, explaining he would no longer be a resident of Clayton County. Ms. Patridge conveyed that Mr. Smith expressed his appreciation for having the pleasure of serving alongside such a kind, welcoming, supportive, and dedicated board.

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Restaurant Week 2022 Debrief

- a. Ms. Patridge reported that CVB staff made personal follow-up visits to the restaurants that participated in Clayton County Restaurant Week. Each staff member presented a survey to the business owners to assess the success of the promotion from their perspective, and to consider what we can do for the next event to improve the experience for them. Restaurant owners and managers expressed that they were continuing to struggle from post pandemic effects, and that they were grateful to have support from the CVB. Ms. Patridge stated that she will continue to provide this service to Clayton County's restaurant owners, who remain a vital part of our hospitality industry. She will work with staff to

continue to conduct regular wellness visits and calls to keep the lines of communication open and continue to build relationships. Ms. Patridge reminded the board that while for-profit businesses were not eligible for the tourism grants, Restaurant Week is a way to support and drive business to them. Member Browning recommended partnering with the Women of Clayton County organization who currently host an event the first Thursday of every month at a Clayton County restaurant. She reported that members check for cleanliness, health scores, and overall aesthetics before booking events, and that average attendance is 40 people each month. Member Clarke suggested that the Women of Clayton County and Tourism Authority members find ways to support restaurants of all sizes. Ms. Patridge agreed and noted that even for the restaurants only offering take-out only or those that are too small for dine-in, there is an opportunity to support them by using them for catering events, which she has done for her organization, as well as referring to her network. Ms. Patridge reported that the Clayton County Restaurant Week story was picked up and reported on the local news by primary Atlanta television stations WSB-TV and Atlanta News First CBS 46.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

Chairman Williams extended congratulations to board members Lynda Browning and Myla Chapman for their recent reappointments to the Clayton County Tourism Authority and expressed his pleasure in working alongside them.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

No matters of real estate, legal, or personnel for discussion.

VIII. MOTION TO ADJOURN

1. Motion Lynda Browning; second Myla Chapman; unanimous approval.
2. Meeting ended at 5:19 p.m.