

**CLAYTON COUNTY TOURISM AUTHORITY
BOARD MEETING
THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 2023**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER:

Vice Chair Tonya Clarke called the meeting to order at 4:12 p.m. Beth Bailey conducted the roll call.

II. ROLL CALL:

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Damon T. Williams	Chairman	Present via Zoom
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, Finance & Administration Manager

III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA/CONSENT AGENDA

CONSENT AGENDA

MINUTES

1. February 2023

FINANCIAL REPORT

1. January and February 2023
 - a. Tourism Authority
 - b. Convention & Visitors Bureau

END OF CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve, Gabe Johnson; second, Lynda Browning. Unanimous approval.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

1. FY24 Draft Budget
 - a. Tourism Authority
 - i. Ms. Patridge reminded the board that she contracted with two companies that monitor both the hotel/motel and short-term rental activities in Clayton County which allows her to closely monitor the income that is

expected to be collected and subsequently budgeted to the Tourism Authority.

- ii. Ms. Patridge provided the board with a line-by-line report of the budget, discussing each item and addressed all questions asked by the board.
 1. Under the contract services account, the Clayton County CVB funding remains the same. Ms. Patridge reported that she has budgeted to continue the operations of the Convention & Visitors Bureau without a request for an increase for FY24. Ms. Patridge explained new line items: "New Tourism Product Programming & Events" will be used for promotional events, speakers' fees and other expenses related to the new exhibit at the Visitors Center, celebrating African American actors and their accomplishments beyond their work in *Gone With the Wind*; The "Road To Tara Museum Exhibit Update" is for the completion of the new exhibit including artifacts, display cases and other items needed; Clayton County Water is a new line item that was added for clarification at the request of County Finance; Other Contracts is funding for miscellaneous expenses, product development, marketing, sponsorships, repairs, etc., and can be transferred to other accounts as needed.
 2. Funds have been added this fiscal year in office supplies and other minor equipment to cover expenses that may be needed for upcoming projects and have been split into two categories: Office Supplies are \$500 and under, and Other Minor Equipment is for expenses over \$500.
 3. There has been an increase in advertising to assist in promoting new events such as Clayton County Restaurant Week and Clayton County Black Restaurant Week, as well as the new museum exhibit. This will include adding a billboard, print and digital advertising.
 4. At the request of the board, additional funds were added to the promotional account to allow for additional event/table sponsorships.
 5. The FY2024 budget will begin with funding in building repairs & maintenance that will be used for all real estate owned or leased by the Tourism Authority. Previously, when repairs were made funds had to be transferred to this account in a process that involved a request to Clayton County Finance. Finance staff made the recommendation that funding be provided in a line item.
 6. General assistance, from which the tourism grants are paid, has been increased by \$10,000, to assist the Tourism Authority in increasing the amount of grant awards.
 7. The total Tourism Authority budget requested for FY24 is \$1,226,877.00 which represents an increase of \$125,677, a 10.8% increase over the previous fiscal year.

Women of Clayton County member Valerie Fuller is creating an information packet for that purpose and they already have commitments from local businesses B'Mari, Arts Clayton, and Fig Tree Café to be a part of the events. Ms. Browning said that Andrew Simpson with the City of Jonesboro is their liaison for the city and he is helping them reach out to the owners of vacant buildings on Main Street to either place art work in the windows or place a promotional poster. Ms. Browning stated the organization will be placing lights in 12 crepe myrtle trees and will change the color each month as a part of their plan to garner attention and beautify the area. They will also have feather flags and pole flags along Main street. For both Art Walk and Art Festival, there will be food trucks. Member Bourget asked if Women of Clayton County plan to apply for a tourism grant. Ms. Browning stated that the timing would not allow for that this year. Ms. Bourget inquired if there would be a conflict of interest since Ms. Browning is a member of the Authority. Ms. Browning and Member Clarke both stated they would recuse themselves from any vote on this matter as they are both active members of Women of Clayton County. Ms. Bourget inquired if we would still have a quorum without Ms. Browning and Ms. Clarke and Ms. Patridge stated that we had 4 voting members in addition to them so there is a quorum. Member Johnson voiced his support for the upcoming events. Chairman Williams stated the event would bring much needed attention to Jonesboro Main Street. Ms. Browning stated the first Art Walk would be Friday, May 19, and will kick-off at B'Mari, have jazz music on the depot platform, open mic event and piano player at Fig Tree Café. Member Chapman expressed her excitement for the events and said she would be in attendance to support. Ms. Browning shared the sponsorship levels and benefits of each. Chairman Williams asked if the board wanted to vote at this meeting. Member Johnson stated that he thought this was a great way to support the arts and increase tourism. He suggested the Tourism Authority sponsor at the \$5,000 level.

- i. Motion to sponsor the Jonesboro Art Walk and Art Festival at the \$5,000 level made by Gabe Johnson; second by Myla Chapman. Motion passed unanimously.
- b. Discussion continued as Ms. Chapman asked how the organization plans to call for artists. Ms. Browning explained that they have software that allows artists to register, pay dues, etc. She reiterated that it is not a craft show. Ms. Browning stated that it is a fine art show highlighting diversity. She asked that members who may have contacts with artists to please refer them to her so she could contact them. Chairman Williams asked if local restaurants would be asked to set up at the Arts Festival. Ms. Browning stated that the promotional materials are being finalized and those would be distributed to local restaurants to encourage participation. Ms. Chapman asked if volunteers were needed and offered to volunteer if needed. Ms. Browning indicated that volunteers would be needed and she would add Ms. Chapman to that list.

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. FY23 Tourism Grants Update
 - a. Ms. Bailey reported that the grants application went live on the website seeclaytoncountyga.com on Monday, April 3.
 - b. Ms. Bailey stated that guidelines and applications were also sent to all organizations that had applied for tourism grants in previous years. The documents were also sent to the commissioner aides for distribution to eligible organizations.
 - c. Ms. Bailey reported that a press release was sent to local media outlets, Clayton News and Clayton Crescent.
 - d. Ms. Bailey said that she had received calls from several organizations that stated their intention to apply.
 - e. As in previous years, Ms. Bailey stated Tourism Authority members will receive a notebook with all qualified grant applications ahead of the June grant meeting.
2. Black Restaurant Week Update
 - a. Ms. Patridge reminded members that Clayton County Black Restaurant Week will be held June 19-25, 2023. She reported that 15 restaurants had signed up and that the staff had been doing an amazing job with personal visits, calls, and emails. The goal is to secure at least 40 participants. Staff posts on social media each time a new restaurant signs up to help create buzz for the week. Ms. Patridge reported that she has adopted a corporate model with the staff for the restaurant week, which includes staff being responsible for and maintaining relationships with a client list of restaurant partners. Ms. Patridge has trained the staff to listen for signs of distress and report any worries to her so that she can pass along information to the appropriate county department and/or community organization. Ms. Patridge stated that it is imperative that she pay attention to the small businesses that are a part of our hospitality industry and help in any way possible. Ms. Bourget complimented Ms. Patridge on the corporate approach in dealing with the restaurant community and said it provides continuity and exudes professionalism.
3. Museum Exhibit Renovations Update
 - a. Ms. Patridge reported that the museum exhibit renovations are underway and that the structural and electrical portions are complete. She has been working on finding the flooring that will be both aesthetically pleasing while appropriate for a commercial setting. Ms. Patridge stated that we are currently in the phase of identifying and collecting artifacts. A collector that has loaned items to the museum in the past has offered several items for loan to the new exhibit. Ms. Patridge acknowledged that our museum will be the only museum in the world that has a space dedicated to highlight the contributions of black actors from *Gone With the Wind*. Ms. Patridge stated she is pleased with the construction renovations, especially having the safety issues removed.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT AND GENERAL DISCUSSION

None

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

VIII. MOTION TO ADJOURN

1. Motion Myla Chapman; second Lynda Browning; unanimous approval.
2. Meeting ended at 5:22 p.m.