**City of Sandy Springs, Georgia**
**Hospitality Board Minutes**

**Regular Meeting**
**Thursday, January 23, 2025**
**8:00 A.M.**

**Barfield Room (City Hall) 2nd Floor**

Member(s) Present: Mayor Rusty Paul, Chairman
Tom Mahaffey, Vice Chairman
Pam Rosenthal, Secretary/Treasurer
John Visconti, Board Member
Jason Sheetz, Board Member
Amanda Singer, Board Member

Staff Present: Adam Berrios, Executive Director-Visit Sandy Springs
Samantha Marks, Director of Marketing & Communications-Visit Sandy Springs
Mitchell Gunn, Content & Communication Manager-Visit Sandy Springs
Ericka Goggins, Office Manager-Visit Sandy Springs
Myriam Hysa, Director of Sales-Visit Sandy Springs
Craig Hurlbut, Sales and Marketing Coordinator-Visit Sandy Springs
Toni Carlisle, CFO, City of Sandy Springs

Others Present: Kristi Trostle, Director of Sales, WaterWalk
Deveney Whitley, General Manager, WaterWalk
Raven Boykin, Director Sales, Hilton Suites
Chris Burnett-Director of Economic Development
Madison Melton, Economic Development Specialist

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 A.M. by Mayor Paul.

Mayor Paul asked for a motion to approve the January 23, 2025, Hospitality Board meeting agenda. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Sheetz and seconded by Mahaffey. The meeting agenda was unanimously approved by Board members present.

Mayor Paul asked for a motion to approve the December 5, 2024, Hospitality Board meeting minutes. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Sheetz and seconded by Visconti. The meeting agenda was unanimously approved by Board members present.

The board welcomed Adam Barrios as the New Executive Director of Visit Sandy Springs.

## I. Finance
**Toni Carlisle**

Financials were presented for November 2024 and December 2024 in the board packets. Carlise provided an overview of the November and December financials. The December revenue reflected a 15.3% decrease from the previous year, primarily due to reduced hotel occupancy. Expenses for December showed a 10% increase due to year end activities.

Financial highlights reports were included in the board packets.

## II. Sandy Springs Hospitality & Tourism Reports — Adam Berrios

**Marketing and Public Relations**
**Samantha Marks**

Marks presented digital ad campaign reports for November 2024 and December 2024 with Ravenel Consulting across Meta, Instagram, Facebook and Google highlighting success in exceeding goals for awareness and site visits. Marks also presented the latest public relations and print ads for November and December 2024. There was a discussion to explore advertising strategies and media scheduling to better align with seasonal business levels.

Berrios and Mayor Paul discussed developing a plan to capitalize on big events like the World Cup and to coordinate with the Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau along with the Metro Atlanta Embassies to promote Sandy Springs as a satellite destination during The World Cup.

An Access Atlanta partnership ran a six-month campaign featuring hotel giveaways, dining, and staycations. A highlighted successful social media campaigns, such as the “Seven Things to Do in Sandy Springs “video and the “Sparkle Sandy Springs” event.

The Restaurant Row campaign (10-mile stretch of Roswell Rd promoted as a culinary destination) has an illustrated map featuring over 120 restaurants along a 10-mile stretch. A virtual version of the map allowing users to filter by cuisine type. A plan is in place to distribute the map to hotels to assist visitors. Fox 5’s Paul Miller King featured three restaurants on "Good Day Atlanta." Additional media coverage from MSN, Eater Atlanta, and Georgia Trend.

Marketing and Public Relations highlights were included in the board packets.

**Social Media**
**Mitchell Gunn**

Gunn presented the social media reports for Instagram and Facebook. Gunn also reported blog and newsletter content for November 2024 and December 2024. It was reported that our reach is slightly up from last year on our Instagram, but our profile visits and engagement rate remain strong. It was noted women are our highest demographic, as well as 35-44 on Facebook, our reach to profile visits on increase, which means our content is resonating more with our

audiences, and we have over 21,000 followers on Facebook with demographics very similar to Instagram. Instagram engagement slightly down but remains above industry average.

Social media highlights were included in the board packets.

**Sales**
**Myriam Hysa**

Hysa reported on the various sales efforts including attended attending several tradeshows including the Atlanta Mitzvah Connection Expo, The Group Sales, Marketing and Services Symposium. In addition, to upcoming sales shows in RCMA, Wedding Extravaganza Show and the Rendezvous South in Florida in February. international visitors.
The sales team participated in local networking events and tradeshows which resulted in additional leads and connections.

- 520 total sales calls were made to member/partners and meeting sales.
- 7 sales leads were generated total of 75 rooms
- YTD 41 sales lead 32 were booked

Hysa mentioned the significant engagement with other CVB and meeting planning companies. Established a collaboration with Ethereo, a local company specializing in association management and meeting planning. Ethereo's expansion and merger details were discussed, emphasizing their impact on local business opportunities.

Visit Sandy Springs hosted a VIP backstage tour during "Frozen," inviting 15 local meeting planners who had not visited the venue before.

Sales were highlighted in the board packets.

**Adam Berrios**

Berrios introduced himself and his background in destination marketing and sales highlighting his experience in various cities including Alpharetta, Greenville, and Little Rock Arkansas. He also outlined his plan to build a sales and marketing strategy for the city, emphasizing the need to compete with themselves and partner with stakeholders. In addition, he expressed his excitement about working with the team and the Board of Directors and opens the floor for questions.

**Smith Travel Report**

Smith Travel Report was provided in board meeting packets.

III. **Discussion**

Chairman Paul shared his experience at the US Conference of Mayors, where he discussed the FIFA World Cup 2026 with other mayors. Chairman Paul emphasized the need to start preparing now for the World Cup, as the draw will only occur in December, leaving only six months to target teams and organize accommodations. He suggested focusing on consulates in the metro area and organizing events to introduce the city to the consular corps.

Chairman Paul discussed the redevelopment plans for various areas, including the relocation of a cafe and the potential for a Four Seasons combination hotel and condo project. Chairman Paul suggested organizing a luncheon of event for consulates to introduce them to the city's amenities and facilities.

A discussion on implementing a group rebate program like Dunwoody's. There are Legal concerns due to Georgia's gratuity clause, which prohibits direct cash incentives without a defined service exchange. Visconti and Chairman Paul talk about the importance of involving local businesses and organizations in the planning process to create a cohesive marketing strategy.
The conversation is concluded with a focus on the need for a comprehensive plan and the involvement of local resources to ensure a successful World Cup experience.

Mayor Paul asked for a Motion to adjourn the Board Meeting. Mahaffey made the motion to adjourn the meeting, and the motion was seconded by Sheetz. The motion was passed unanimously. Chairman Paul adjourned the Board Meeting at 9:50 AM.

Next Meeting: March 27, 2025

**Faithfully submitted:**

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Chairman Russell K. Paul

**ATTEST:**

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Adam Berrios, Executive Director-Visit Sandy Springs