City of Sandy Springs, Georgia
Hospitality Board Minutes

Regular Meeting
Thursday, April 17th, 2025
8:00 A.M.

(City Hall) 3rd Floor
Meeting Room A

Member(s) Present: Mayor Rusty Paul, Chairman
Tom Mahaffey, Vice Chairman
Pam Rosenthal, Secretary/Treasurer
John Visconti, Board Member
Eugene Jordan, 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
Chris Burnett-Director of Economic Development
Bill Haggett-Executive Director of Performing Arts Center
Caroline Galvin-Executive Project Manager

Others Present: Deveney Whitley, General Manager, WaterWalk Atlanta-Perimeter Center Extended Stay Suites

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

Chairman Paul asked for a motion to approve the April 17, 2025, Hospitality Board meeting agenda. A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Visconti and seconded by Mr. Mahaffey. The meeting agenda was unanimously approved by Board members present.

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

I. Finance
Toni Carlisle

Financials were presented for January 2025 and February 2025. This included a review of revenues and expenses.

Ms. Carlise provided an update that notices will be sent for those businesses remitting tax payments late. In addition, an audit will be conducted to ensure correct taxes are being reported.

Chairman Paul stated that Mr. Berrios was developing a plan to spend the fund balance down.

Ms. Carlise then presented the year-to-date income statement.

II. Sandy Springs Hospitality & Tourism Reports
Adam Berrios

Executive Report

Mr. Berrios shared the new mission, vision, and social inclusions statements for Visit Sandy Springs. He also presented the newly developed organizational core values.

Mr. Berrios presented a research brief provided by Tourism Economics on the anticipated effect on the travel industry from trade wars and federal job cuts.

Mr. Berrios highlighted the importance of being creative in sales efforts and remarked that the Sandy Springs hotel market had rebounded year over year in the first quarter.

Mr. Berrios also spoke about the organization's Q4 outlook and strategic priorities moving into the next fiscal year and remarked about hiring new personnel to manage the database and website.

Mr. Mahaffey inquired about data to better understand the group vs leisure segments.

Mr. Visconti noted that there was a significant drop in federal government travel & hotel bookings due to the current economic situation.

Mr. Whitley, GM for Waterwalk Atlanta-Perimeter Center Extended Stay Suites stated that his hotel lost significant projected revenue due to federal job cuts.

Ms. Rosenthal stated that she was excited about the trajectory of the organization. In addition, she encouraged Visit Sandy Springs to leverage the board as a resource for guidance and brainstorming opportunities.

Mr. Whitley encouraged Visit Sandy Springs to invest in technology to gain market insights for the hotel community.

Mr. Berrios emphasized that the Sandy Springs market had limitations on how much future group business the destination could acquire but opined that Visit Sandy Springs could improve in helping the hotel community close more business.

Chairman Paul stated the importance of Visit Sandy Springs furthering its relationship with local corporations.

Marketing and Communications
Samantha Marks

Ms. Marks discussed ongoing marketing projects highlighted by Wheel the World, Carvertise, and Restaurant Row. She also stated that Visit Sandy Springs was updating video assets and presented an example.

She announced that Sandy Springs was the first city in the state of Georgia to receive a "destination verified" designation from Wheel the World for its accessible travel assets.

Ms. Marks stated that former Visit Sandy Springs Executive Director, Jennifer Cruce, was contracting with the organization to help distribute collateral to market the Restaurant Row initiative.

In addition, Ms. Marks shared further insight into Visit Sandy Springs' partnership with Carvertise. She explained that Visit Sandy Springs has wrapped 15 rideshare vehicles to deploy via "swarms" around the Atlanta market during key events over the next three months.

Ms. Marks also shared a copy of an advertisement Visit Sandy Springs placed in the 2025 Atlanta Braves print and digital yearbook.

Ms. Marks emphasized the importance of community engagement and advocacy, and the need to enhance the visitor experience with additional services.

Social Media
Mitchell Gunn

Mr. Gunn showcased a recently purchased camera and supporting equipment. Mr. Gunn explained that the investment would increase production value. He also emphasized his commitment to community engagement and advocacy by announcing the launch of a new video series-Sandy Springs Stories. The new video series will showcase the stories behind local businesses.

He also presented Visit Sandy Springs' first "viral moment" which featured an Instagram post about a Sandy Springs restaurant that received over 413,000 views and over 20,00 likes and shares.

Sales
Myriam Hysa

Ms. Hysa outlined the recent sales efforts which included participation in 2 wedding shows.

She also stated the organization was working with hotels to help them close business and discussed the organization's efforts to enhance service offerings to increase its value to meeting planners and groups.

Ms. Hysa discussed her trip to the Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA) EMERGE Conference, which she attended with a hotel partner. Ms. Hysa stated Sandy Springs was able to acquire 3 request for proposals from the conference.

Ms. Hysa presented a luncheon that she partnered with the Sandy Springs Performing Arts Center to host. The luncheon featured independent meeting planners from around Atlanta and showcased what the Performing Arts Center could offer groups.

Mr. Whitley emphasized the importance of partnering with Visit Sandy Springs to generate additional business opportunities.

Ms. Hysa outlined a hotel Director of Sales luncheon meeting that was recently held.

III. **Discussion**

Chairman Paul announced the return of the Town Turtles and the unveiling of a new art gallery in City Hall, which highlights a new artist each quarter. He also announced the start of City Green Live concerts.

Chairman Paul also stated that the city's new foundation was planning a gala to celebrate the city's 20th anniversary with proceeds going towards enhancing entertainment, cultural offerings and arts education.

Bill Haggett announced a launch party for the new season at the Performing Arts Center, inviting everyone to attend on May 24, 2025.

Chairman Paul asked for a motion to adjourn the Board Meeting. Mr. Mahaffey made the motion to adjourn the meeting, and the motion was seconded by Mr. Jordan. The motion was passed unanimously. Chairman Paul adjourned the Board Meeting at 9:33 AM.

Next Meeting: May 29, 2025

Faithfully submitted:



Chairman Russell K. Paul

ATTEST:



Adam Berrios, Executive Director-Visit Sandy Springs