



Minutes

**Visit Bastrop
Board Meeting**

**Bastrop Chamber of Commerce
927 Main St., Bastrop, TX 78602**

**Thursday, January 18, 2017
8:30 A.M.**

The Visit Bastrop Board of Directors convened in a regular meeting at the Bastrop Chamber of Commerce, 927 Main Street, Bastrop, TX 78602 on Thursday, January 18, 2018 at 8:30 a.m. Notice of said meeting, giving date, place, and subject thereof having been posted as prescribed Article 6252-17 V.A.T.C.S., Government Code, Chapter 551, with the following Board members present:

Brenda Abbott
Rick Brackett
Jamie Creacy
Cindy Ginsel

Tom Grundin
Clint Howard
Naseem Khonsari
Ashton LaFuente

Shawn Anthea-Pletsch
Kevin Plunkett
Tom Scott
Veena Tawani

Ex Officio Board Members present:

Dale Lockett, Sarah O'Brien, Becki Womble

Visit Bastrop Staff Present:

Ashton LaFuente, Christy Hunn, Shane Sorenson

Guests Present:

Vickie Soderberg, Cygnet Strategies; Julie Hart, CFO by Design

I. CALL TO ORDER

Clint Howard called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Consider approval of minutes from November 16, 2017.

Shawn moved to approve the November 16, 2017 minutes. **Naseem seconded the motion.** No discussion. **The motion passed.**

III. REVIEW NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER FINANCIALS – Julie Hart

Julie Hart presented financial reports for November and December 2017. Tom asked if current personnel costs include vacant Communications Director salary. Dale explained the current expenditures do not include the vacant position. Personnel expenditures will increase after the vacant position is filled.

IV. PRESENTATION – CULINARY DISTRICT AND CULTURAL DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN

- Vickie Soderberg, Cygnet Strategies

Sarah introduced Vickie and explained Cygnet was hired in 2016 to assist with efforts to reignite enthusiasm surrounding the Culinary and Cultural Districts. After 11 months of extensive research, the recommendation is to dissolve the Culinary and Cultural Districts and narrow collective efforts to enhancing Bastrop's tourism product to create the Bastrop Experience.

Vickie discussed new retail competition on Highways 130 and 71. Dale stated there are plans to build a large HEB at the site. He stated this is a large concern for the Mayor and City Manager due to the potential for a significant sales tax loss to Bastrop. Bastrop is largely dependent on its sales tax revenue. So, within the next two years, Visit Bastrop will be expected to help offset that loss with increased tourism revenue.

Tom asked how downtown is being defined. Sarah said the Bastrop Experience extends beyond Main Street. She stated the focus should be to enhance the Bastrop Experience, not the 62 square blocks of downtown. She stated the Main Street Program has been trying to step away from definitions and boundaries to enhance experiences. Vickie reminded the Board that when there is a focus on increased local tourism, there should also be a concern for quality of life among its citizens.

Sarah stated the presented Culinary District and Cultural District Strategic Plan is a **draft plan**. She invited the Board to submit feedback or comments in the next week if possible. Vickie asked that feedback and comments be submitted to Dale. Christy will email an electronic copy of the draft to the board.

V. BRANDING RFP – Dale

Dale stated Vickie's report will be the precursor to Visit Bastrop's branding campaign. We will make the Cygnet Strategic Plan available to our branding group once it is selected. Dale showed examples of the branding proposals for the Board to see after the meeting. He said we received a very good range of proposals ranging from \$25,000 to over \$100,000. We also had some companies that declined to bid after discussion.

Dale recommended to Brenda that the Marketing Committee find a date by Tuesday, January 22, to review submitted branding proposals. He asked the Marketing Committee to narrow the submissions to two finalists or to choose one that is noticeably better than the rest.

Dale discussed with the Board whether a branding exercise is something we need to pursue at this time. Since we have adopted a logo and tagline, it is not an emergency issue. He recommended that we move forward, however, as it will enable us to represent Bastrop in a way in which we can consistently meet performance standards.

Dale discussed event marketing versus destination marketing. According to Dale, we can provide event marketing without a brand because it is tangible. Destination marketing could get pushed back without a brand.

Clint expressed a concern that after the research, money, and effort are expended to find a brand, other Bastrop entities will use different logos and messages. Sarah said she believes the destination branding will be different from internal branding, but added the decision cannot be made until after the destination branding process is complete. Dale explained our brand must convey not only who and what we are, but how we are different from everyone else— and be able to communicate that. Our hope is that our exercise will produce such a successful brand that other entities within the community will want to use it as well.

Dale suggested Brenda move forward with the Marketing Committee meeting to review the proposals we received. If the Committee is interested in moving forward, we can then carve out a budget for the branding process.

Shawn asked about integrating what Vickie has done into the branding process. Dale assured her it would be integrated. Shawn asked that Vickie look at the branding proposals with the Marketing Committee. She is concerned the branding process will be repeated instead of building upon what has already been done. Vickie said she would be glad to look at the proposals. Dale explained that although there has been much work done to identify the internal attitude about Bastrop, he does not know how much research has been done based on external (client) input. He stated there would be an expected cost savings if the branding agency is able to use the information Vickie has put together.

VI. REVIEW AND POTENTIAL APPROVAL OF BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN – Clint/Dale

Because of time constraints, Dale requested review of the strategic plan be deferred since it is not time sensitive.

VII. ACCEPTANCE OF BOB JONES' RESIGNATION AND DISCUSSION TO REPLACE – Clint

Tom moved to accept Bob Jones' resignation. Cindy seconded. No discussion. Dale stated Bob would receive a thank you letter for his Board service.

Dale said he met with Barry Edwards, BISD Interim Superintendent. Superintendent Edwards gave a commitment that BISD will be engaging at a level that we have not seen before. He recommended Chico Portillo, Fine Arts Director, as a replacement for Bob Jones.

Cindy moved to establish a Nominating Committee for the vacant position in the sports sector. Brenda seconded the motion. The motion passed. Becki agreed to Chair the committee.

VIII. PRESIDENTS REPORT – Dale

Dale reported the STR report data for December is not available. Shane presented the Sales Report. Ashton presented the Marketing report.

Dale stated Visit Bastrop has been asked to help with the Small Business Revolution. Visit Bastrop will focus on getting state associations in Texas to support Bastrop.

Dale stated there is much more work to do. He reiterated we are a new organization and we need someone to help us tell our story. He has someone in mind to fill the Communications Director position and reported she will be visiting with the staff next week.

IX. CHAIR REPORT - Clint

Clint stated he would like to see Visit Bastrop establish a legal representative before our next Board meeting. He asked the Marketing Committee stay on top of brand proposals so that a recommendation can be made at the next Board meeting.

X. BOARD COMMENTS

Jamie recommended Visit Bastrop establish collaboration between boards and agencies in the community. Clint suggested a quarterly collaboration meeting between community organizations and boards.

XI. NEXT BOARD MEETING DATE

The next Board meeting date is February 15, 2018. Regarding location, Jamie will check on the Bastrop State Park Refectory's availability.

XII. ADJOURN BOARD MEETING

Naseem moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:22 a.m. Kevin seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

Minutes recorded by: Christy Hunn, January 18, 2018