



Minutes

**Visit Bastrop
Board Meeting**

**Bastrop Convention Center
1408 A Chestnut Street, Bastrop, TX 78602**

**Thursday, June 21, 2018
8:30 A.M.**

The Visit Bastrop Board of Directors convened in a regular meeting at the Bastrop Convention Center, 1408 A Chestnut Street, Bastrop, TX 78602, on Thursday, June 21, 2018, at 8:30 a.m. Notice of said meeting, giving date, place, and subject thereof having been posted as prescribed in Article 6252-17 V.A.T.C.S., Government Code, Chapter 551, with the following Board members present:

Brenda Abbott
Shawn Anthea-Pletsch
Clint Howard

Dave Jacobs
Marcus O'Conner
Kevin Plunkett

Tom Scott
Andy Sexton
Veena Tewani

Ex officio members present: Dale Lockett, Sarah O'Brien, Becki Womble

Guests present: Julie Hart, CFO by Design; Zona Sweeney, Hampton Inn; Jennifer Long, Bastrop Property Management; Elizabeth Zuerker, Account Director – Augustine; Samantha Maloney, Art Director – Augustine; Debbie Augustine, Founder - Augustine

Visit Bastrop staff present: Christy Hunn, Ashton LaFuente

Convened:

- I. **CALL TO ORDER - Clint**
Clint Howard called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

- II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Consider approval of minutes from May 17, 2018.
Kevin moved to approve the May 17, 2018 minutes. **Dave seconded the motion. The motion passed.**

III. REVIEW MARCH FINANCIALS – Julie Hart, CFO by Design/Kevin

Julie presented financial reports for May 2018. Julie stated client development, sales and marketing, and personnel make up the bulk of Visit Bastrop Expenses. Total cash in the bank is about \$762,000. The overage on research is due to a supplemental study for hotel feasibility.

Sarah suggested financials be submitted to the City Council. Dale said he would talk with Julie after frequency is defined.

Clint stated we are under budget and with pre-paid expenses, Hyatt has agreed to attend three tradeshow/conferences that have been pre-paid by Visit Bastrop. These shows are a Connect series. The two vacant employee positions will be filled after a new Executive Director is hired.

IV. PRESIDENT’S REPORT – Dale

Dale thanked Cindy Ginsel for recording May minutes.

Dale discussed problems with selling Bastrop Convention Center space. Potential clients have listed the issues that put us at a distinct disadvantage in booking the convention center, which include our inability to acquire adequate room blocks, the location of the convention center and the competitive landscape in Central Texas. This area has many large hotels that have an equal or larger amount of meeting space with hotel rooms onsite. The meeting planner also has the ability, due to on-site food and beverage availability, to leverage food and beverage costs, meeting space costs, and room rental. For this reason, there must be some elements that change in our package and product for us to have a significant impact in booking room nights generated by the convention center. The center does generate some room nights, but in the President’s Report we include only what Visit Bastrop’s efforts are generating, not what the convention center is generating.

Dale explained that when we report an “assist,” it is only when a hotel or the convention center comes to us to let us know they need assistance closing a sale for Bastrop. We do not consider it an assist when a group has already chosen Bastrop as their destination because Visit Bastrop did not provide leverage to bring the organization to Bastrop.

Dale discussed staffing. There are currently two positions filled. The communications director hire, Kathie Ryer, was recruited back to Shenandoah and sales manager, Shane Sorenson, has moved to BEDC. Dale recommended the positions remain open until the new President comes on board. Current staff is focusing on critical components of the organization.

Dale has met with Zona Sweeney from the Hampton and Dave Jacobs from the Hyatt regarding Visit Bastrop’s efforts for providing the best benefit to the hotels. The traditional DMO model does not, at this point in time, work for this destination. The traditional DMO model for group sales is to do whatever the hotels, by themselves, can’t or won’t do. In most destinations, that is going after city-wide conventions, bringing together multiple hotels in a bid process to present

the destination to bring in a large group. Due to the lack of an onsite hotel and inability to achieve significant room blocks, attracting city-wide conventions to Bastrop is not viable at this time.

Sarah O'Brien reminded the Board the Visit Bastrop contract with the City of Bastrop currently states Visit Bastrop is responsible to attract and secure meetings, events, and retreats and conventions to the City and its vicinity. She asked the VB Board keep this in mind while moving forward in evaluating the Sales Manager position. If this is not something VB wants to continue, contract negotiation discussions will be required. Also, there is currently an additional hotel study underway for the Convention Center property. Sarah believes the outcome of the study will weigh greatly on any of VB's future decisions regarding sales and marketing. The City of Bastrop is funding the hotel study.

Dale discussed the May President's Report. Sarah asked for clarification between the occupancy percentage and actual receipts. She stated while occupancy is important, she feels the most important is the revenue generated – whether overall monthly or quarterly revenue is up or down. Dale stated he would be cautious of the DMO trying to report this due to contracted rooms and reporting processes. Julie stated most CVBs only report occupancy.

Discussion regarding comparable sets versus competitive sets on the Smith Travel Report ensued. Dale stated future reports would include the comparative communities added as a list. The Board can then decide which communities they would like to change.

V. INDIVIDUAL REPORTS BY STAFF – Ashton

Ashton discussed the marketing portion of the President's Report. Dale discussed the success of the Bastrop Music Festival, especially exposure. He felt the festival was a success in all areas and recommended we host the event again. He recognized the City of Bastrop's hard work in helping put the music festival together. Becki said she felt like exposure is increasing due to Visit Bastrop's presence.

Clint discussed the agreement early on to specifically target events while VB worked on branding, photos, etc. He feels the Music Festival was a success because of the reach that was achieved.

Sarah stated Colin is working on a video for Stewart for the music festival. He captured several people on camera discussing their first visit to Bastrop.

Dale said he believes if Augustine does an outstanding job on our brand work that they be given the opportunity do our marketing.

VI. CHAIR REPORT – Clint

Clint stated the Marketing and Finance Committees need to set dates for meetings. Reports must be presented for board approval in August. He asked for drafts to be presented in July. The Finance Committee will work with Julie Hart, CFO by Design. Dale has asked Julie to provide an end-of-year financial forecast.

Kevin and Brenda will submit dates as soon as possible so a poll can be sent to committee members before the July meeting. Clint asked that at the next board meeting on July 19, both committees have a draft ready to discuss so that by August the Board will be able to approve what is presented. Drafts will not be sent out with board packets in July. Sarah suggested listing discussion as a work session, so documents do not have to be submitted with board packets.

Dale explained the review-only draft regarding HOT funds distribution provided to Board members will be discussed in the evening session. He explained disbursement of these funds is a board function, not a staff function. Staff will prepare paperwork. The Board will then vote on whether or not to provide funding. Dale asked Board members to review the draft before the evening session.

Regarding SearchWide, some of the applicants Nicole is working with have requested specific information, such as budget, by-laws, etc. Dale is working with Nicole to get that information to them. Clint will email the Board next week with an update on the search.

Clint expressed an interest in meeting with Kevin and Naseem about putting together an incentive for Hyatt guests to visit Bastrop during the months the Hyatt is at capacity. He suggested Visit Bastrop cover the cost of printing materials. Kevin is interested in meeting with Clint next week. Clint will invite Naseem to join them. Sarah said Kathy Danielson could help put together something for the downtown establishments if they need help. Printing materials will need to be reviewed by the Hyatt and possibly Sarah O'Brien. Dave suggested Ashton review the printed materials since she is familiar with Hyatt's requirements. Brenda suggested adding activities to the list of incentives.

Clint stressed the importance of attending the Joint Work Session with the City Council at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall.

VII. BOARD COMMENTS - Clint

No Board comments.

VIII. NEXT BOARD MEETING

The next board meeting date is July 19, 2018, at Lost Pines Art Bazaar, 603 Chestnut St., Bastrop.

IX. RECESS BOARD MEETING– Clint

Clint recessed the meeting for a break at 9:46 a.m.

X. RECONVENE BOARD MEETING – Clint

Clint reconvened the board meeting at 9:55 a.m.

XI. AUGUSTINE DISCOVERY PRESENTATION – Elizabeth Zuerker

Elizabeth presented a working session including feedback from Board members. She stated the feedback would be included in Augustine’s final creative brief.

XII. RECESS BOARD MEETING – Clint

Clint recessed the meeting at 11:45 a.m. to reconvene at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall.

XIII. RECONVENE BOARD MEETING – Clint

Clint reconvened the board meeting at 6:32 p.m.

Present: Brenda Abbott, Shawn Anthea-Pletsch, Bill Ennis, Cindye Ginsel, Clint Howard, Lynda Humble, Deborah Jones, Dale Lockett, Lyle Nelson, Sarah O’Brien, Bill Peterson, Kevin Plunkett, Drusilla Rogers, Connie Schroeder, Tom Scott, Veena Tewani, Tracy Waldron, Becki Womble

A. WORK SESSION

1. Lynda Humble reviewed Visit Bastrop’s contract with the City of Bastrop dated September 12, 2017 regarding scope of service and deliverables, along with purpose of an annual workshop.
2. Dale Lockett discussed Visit Bastrop’s FY 2018 contract performance, scope of services, business plan, forecast, hiring process for a new executive director, and branding initiative.

- Mayor Schroeder asked that a general financial statement be presented each month. Dale recommended event and financial reporting be presented every other month to avoid redundancy. Sarah stated the monthly financial statement the VB Board gets each month would be sufficient on a semi-annual basis for City Council, but it would be helpful to report by event what is being spent on marketing, and in the future, after branding is secured, what type of overall advertising buys are being made monthly.

City Manager Humble asked for quarterly reporting. Dale explained projected costs are reported in the annual budget; however, monthly and quarterly reporting will tell where the numbers are regarding that goal. Mayor Schroeder agreed quarterly reporting is sufficient. Dale agreed Visit Bastrop will begin quarterly financial reporting to the Council.

- Regarding the strategic plan, Mayor Schroeder asked that the business plan reflect steps being taken toward revenue enhancement.

3. Dale presented "HOT Report 101" to educate the Council on the elements of the monthly report.
 - Dale stated the comparative cities can be changed if requested by Council. Mayor Schroeder stated she thought the cities used on the report should be determined by the Visit Bastrop Board. Dale explained that staff selected the cities, and it was not challenged by the Board when presented.
 - Discussion took place regarding simplification of the monthly report. It was agreed that several slides should be omitted and replaced with a summary. City Manager Humble asked that acronyms be spelled out. Mayor Schroeder asked for the main charts to be combined on one slide for Council reports and color coded consistently. Dale said changes will not be ready for the May report but will be for the June report.
 - Mayor Schroeder asked for some clarification about convention center sales versus sales Visit Bastrop accomplishes.
4. Dale and Sarah discussed Essential Tourism Asset Policy & Special Events previously funded by the City of Bastrop through HOT Funds.

XIV. ADJOURN BOARD MEETING

Cindy moved to adjourn the meeting. Kevin seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 10:13 p.m.

Minutes recorded by: Christy Hunn, June 21, 2018

