

HARRIS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

May 17, 2022; 8:00 a.m. networking; 8:30 a.m. meeting
Harris County Community Center

In Attendance

In person: Kathy Carlisle, Sonny Horton, Alex Johnson, David Hawkins, Eric Seldon, Ralph King, Theresa Robertson, Steve Wells, Kimberly McElveen, Lindsey Platt, Tim Cockrell, Tyler Dunn, William Pendergraph, Ken Pope, Wes Tyus, Joel Ames

Staff: Kim Tharp, Conner Olds, Gloria Boyer

2022 Board of Directors Meeting

At 8:31 a.m., **Kathy Carlisle** brought the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. She called for a motion on the previous Board meeting minutes and **Eric Seldon** moved, with **Joel Ames** seconding the motion. The motion was approved. Kathy then called for a motion on the financial statements and **William Pendergraph** moved with **Joel** seconding, since he had thoroughly read the financials and sought clarification on an item with **Steve** and **Kim** previously. The second motion was approved.

Kathy gave the Board an update on the TSPLOST status. She thanked the Board for its endorsement to approve the TSPLOST and stated that there would soon be print and social media releases, urging passage and highlighting the transportation and infrastructure improvements (roads and bridges) that would be possible through TSPLOST funds. **Eric** asked about how well the messaging would resonate with Harris County citizens and **Kathy**, **Kim Tharp** and **Theresa Robertson** all responded that it was a good message and would most likely not alienate the anti-growth, anti-economic development residents of the county.

Kathy also explained that **Vance Smith** had been retained as an interim CEO and president of the Chamber beginning June 1 for three months, with an option to extend to five months if needed. There were general comments from the Board about **Vance's** strengths in that role and agreement with that move. **Kathy** told the Board that the plan was to produce an up-to-date job description for the CEO and president and to bring that to the Board to do a "soft search" of candidates the Board felt would meet the criteria. She said we would also engage the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and possibly other venues to advertise the position.

Kathy then transitioned into a special recognition for **Kim** and reviewed her work as Chair since January with **Kim**. **Kim** was presented with a pinkish obelisk commemorating her time at the Chamber and **Theresa** also presented her with a framed painting of the Pine Mountain main street businesses. **Kim** thanked everyone and said the time is right for her to give attention to the health of her mother and her daughter and to take some time to focus on her future. She said she didn't want a boss again, after **Colin Martin** departed, so she applied to be the CEO and that nothing else will ever match this role for her. She felt that she had found her calling and worked with nine interns in her years at the Chamber. She just received her 20-year plaque from the Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives this past month. Most Board members commended **Kim** for her service, passion for the county, commitment and her dedication to the Chamber.

Kim called on **Gloria Boyer** to discuss tourism. **Gloria** said Pine Mountain vendors and businesses seemed very pleased with the Taste of Pine Mountain the previous weekend. It was her first outing in her new capacity with the Chamber and everything seemed to go well. There were approximately 75 members involved and all were complimentary. The need for more parking may hinder desired future expansion, however. There are

currently no external activities scheduled for June or July; however, in the future, Chamber activities will require additional volunteers to help with all aspects of any events. **Gloria** reported that the upcoming tourism presentation to the County Commissioners was ready and that she and Conner and others had worked hard to make it a professional, factual presentation.

August 24 will bring the debut of a new meeting entitled Tourism Together that will include small businesses, elected officials and guest speakers to discuss collaboration to leverage tourism in Harris County. The Executive Director of Georgia Tourism will address the group.

Sonny Horton requested that the Chamber include a request to the County Commissioners to increase the existing Bed Tax from 5% to 8%. **Sonny** stated that every other county in Georgia with a major tourism attraction (like Callaway Gardens) has an 8% Bed Tax in place. After some discussion about the timing and preparation of the Commissioners for such a request, **Sonny** moved that the tourism presentation include this request. **Wes Tyus** seconded it and the motion passed.

Joel stated that he'd like to see the tourism PowerPoint and others concurred; staff will send out the presentation to the Board.

Kim reminded the Board that the Chamber had sponsored two events within the last 30 days that drew over 1,000 people. The Pine Mountain event had the most vendors ever and over 500 people attended on Saturday alone. **Theresa** spoke up that the event was like something in Asheville, South Carolina or Boone, North Carolina with live music, good food and many shops open. She was very complimentary of the event.

Kim also commented that **Gloria** had recently filmed a short promotional video with the daily electronic newsletter, the *Columbus CEO*.

Kim asked **Conner Olds** to describe the individualized member bags each Board member had been given as a sample of what each Chamber new member is given. He stated that in the future, the Chamber will need volunteers and Board members to help stuff and distribute the bags, since there are currently 370 Chamber members. **Kim** described each item in the bag that includes a map of the county, a bottle of Callaway Blue water, a cornflake cookie from the Candy Man, a Harris County decal and other promotional materials.

Kim reminded the Board of upcoming events:

Tuesday, May 24, 4:30-7:00 p.m.: Regional Business After Hours with Greater Columbus Chamber and East Alabama (Phenix City) Chamber, Art Park by Whitewater in Phenix City, AL

Thursday, May 26, 5:30 7:00 p.m.: DEI Mixer focusing on education at the Ellerslie Lodge

Eric spoke about the Mixer and urged the Board to attend next week, pointing out that Communicorp was co-sponsoring it with the Harris County School District and that continuing education would also be discussed on the agenda.

Kim then showed the *Georgia Trend* magazine article spotlighting Harris County and said she was proud to be photographed with **Sonny** at Callaway. Many Board members commented that the coverage was well done and should bring more exposure for the county.

Kathy concluded the meeting by thanking the Executive Committee for the extra hours and unanticipated meetings to address the Chamber CEO vacancy. She pointed out that the Chamber was moving ahead, seeking a new CEO and that Board members with input about anything were welcome to email or call her.

Kathy adjourned the meeting at 9:17 a.m.

2022 Board meetings will be held the **2nd or 3rd Tuesday** of **March, May, August, October and December** (**March 22, May 17, August 23, October 18 and December 13**) at the **Community Center** with **8:00 a.m.** as **networking time** and **8:30 a.m.** as the **meeting time**

2022 Executive Committee meetings will be held on the **3rd Tuesday** of **February, April, June, July, September and November** (**February 15, April 19, June 21, July 19, September 20 and November 15**) with **8:00 a.m.** as **networking time** and **8:30 a.m.** as the **meeting time**.