

THE WOODLANDS

CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU



December 13, 2023

8:30 a.m.

MINUTES OF MEETING

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

THE WOODLANDS CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

The Board of Directors for The Woodlands Convention & Visitors Bureau (TWCVB) of Montgomery County, Texas held their Board Meeting on December 13, 2023 at The Woodlands Township located at 2801 Technology Forest Boulevard, The Woodlands, Montgomery County, Texas, 77381 at 8:30 a.m. The roll was called and those in attendance were:

Present: Brad Bailey, Chairman
Jennifer Gohagan, Vice Chairman
Richard Franks, Secretary/Treasurer
Cameron Klepac, Director
Linda Nelson, Director
Jenny Taylor, Director

Absent: Monique Sharp, Director

Staff Present: Nick Wolda, President; Bret Strong, Legal Counsel; Elizabeth Eddins, Executive Director; Ashley White, Marketing Director; Josie Lewis, Sales Director; Mary Murphy, Public Relations Coordinator; Julie Quinn, Servicing Specialist; Amber George, Communications Coordinator; Ashley Fenner, Senior Sales Specialist; Gabby Pena, Administrative Analyst

Attendees: Kellan Shaw, The Woodlands Township Chief Financial Officer, Aidan McSherry, The Woodlands Township Help Desk Analyst, Jordan Nutt, Adcetera, Jordan Sexton, Adcetera, Tara Vasovic-Frederick, Adcetera, Alex Pagliano, Adcetera

1. Pledge of Allegiance;

Led by Chairman Brad Bailey

2. Call to order and adoption of Agenda;

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m., and a motion to adopt the meeting Agenda passed unanimously.

Motion by Secretary/Treasurer Richard Franks, seconded by Director Jenny Taylor

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed

3. **Public Comment;**

None.

4. **Consider and approve Minutes from the November 2023 Special Board Meeting;**

Motion to approve the Minutes as read passed unanimously.

Motion by Secretary/Treasurer Richard Franks, seconded by Director Linda Nelson

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed

5. **Consider and approve Financial Report through October 2023;**

Kellan Shaw, Township Chief Financial Officer, delivered the Financial Report. At the end of October, year-to-date revenues totaled \$2,555,792 compared to a \$2,788,330 budget, resulting in an unfavorable variance of \$232,538. The supplemental hotel tax revenue showed a favorable variance of \$119,163, and there was a favorable variance in interest income. There was an unfavorable variance in operating transfers of \$375,901. The unfavorable variance was a result of The Woodlands Township transferring less supplemental tax to Visit The Woodlands than budgeted due to expenditures being less than budgeted.

The year-to-date expenditures at the end of October totaled \$2,704,587, compared to budgeted expenditures of \$2,938,330, resulting in a favorable variance of \$233,743.

As of October 31, 2023, the undesignated fund balance for Visit The Woodlands was \$1,087,004.

Motion to approve the Financial Report through October 2023 passed unanimously.

Motion by Director Cameron Klepac, seconded by Director Jenny Taylor

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed

6. **Receive, consider and act upon a Service Agreement between The Woodlands Convention & Visitors Bureau, known as Visit The Woodlands, and The Woodlands Township;**

President Nick Wolda presented the 2024 Service Agreement with The Woodlands Township to the Board. The Woodlands Convention and Visitors Bureau operates with a yearly Service Agreement between Visit The Woodlands and The Woodlands Township.

The 2024 Service Agreement between The Woodlands Convention and Visitors Bureau and The Woodlands Township was approved by the Township Board on December 6, 2023. Visit The Woodlands is the official Destination Management and Marketing Organization for The Woodlands Township.

Motion to approve the 2024 Service Agreement was passed unanimously.

Motion by Vice Chairman Jennifer Gohagan, seconded by Director Linda Nelson

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed

7. Receive, consider and act upon the 2024 staff tradeshow, travel and participation in support of Sales, Marketing and Tourism efforts outside of The Woodlands;

Executive Director Elizabeth Eddins presented the 2024 Travel and Tradeshow Schedule to the Board. This travel is essential to positioning and promoting The Woodlands as a premier destination for meetings and leisure. Ms. Eddins requested flexibility on the presented schedule as not all dates have been announced and may not be conducive to schedules that are already put in place. The schedule was divided up into Convention Sales and Tradeshow, Marketing, Media, PR, and Strategic Partnerships.

Director Nelson asked if any of the shows will include the sports market as was discussed in the Strategic Planning Session earlier this year. Sales Director, Josie Lewis, said that sports planners attend many of these shows and Visit The Woodlands will an opportunity to meet with them.

Chairman Bailey asked how the presented schedule compares to the 2023 schedule. Ms. Eddins said that with the addition of new staff members, the budget is smaller and more spread out across the schedule. She included that additional funds will help expand efforts.

Motion to approve the presented 2024 Travel & Tradeshow Schedule not to exceed the 2024 adopted budget of \$210,000 with flexibility to adjust as needed passed unanimously.

Motion by Secretary/Treasurer Richard Franks, seconded by Director Jenny Taylor

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed

8. Receive, consider and act upon the 2024 Media Placement Plan;

President Nick Wolda congratulated the Board on selecting the Agency of Record that Visit The Woodlands is very excited about: Adcetera Design Studio.

Executive Director Elizabeth Eddins presented the 2024 Media Placement Plan that was created with Adcetera Design Studio. In 2019, Adcetera helped Visit The Woodlands elevate the brand to align with the atmosphere of The Woodlands. Visit The Woodlands focuses on strategy, intention, and analytics. Visit The Woodlands looks at markets as an opportunity for geographic and demographic location which include first-time travelers, Houston, the Texas Triangle, International, and Meetings. Within the \$650,000 budget allocation by audience for Media Placement, 73% is leisure, 15% is paid social, 13% is print, 9% is paid search, 9% is display, 8% is partnership, 8% is digital publications, and 7% is OOH.

Director Nelson asked how Expedia plays a role in the media placement plan. Alex Pagliano from Adcetera Design Studio explained that the advertisements are placed when a user is in the market for a particular hotel search. There are no discounts given with these ads on hotel room nights. The advertisements take potential visitors to a landing page that features the 14 hotels in The Woodlands to drive traffic to The Woodlands hotel properties.

Vice Chairman Gohagan asked if Cvent had any allocations in the plan. Ms. Eddins said that Cvent is in the Web Support Line Item and that while there will be advertising in the Meetings item for this event, that it is not in that budget.

Ms. Eddins pointed out that the roll-out of these advertisements will overlap throughout the year.

Chairman Bailey asked what the plan would look like if The Woodlands had an Economic Development Zone. Ms. Eddins estimated that it would increase the media placement budget from \$650,000 to \$1.1 million. President Wolda said that it would allow for Visit The Woodlands to further its advertising reach with additional funds.

Director Nelson wanted to know if Visit The Woodlands has historically allocated this amount of money toward OTAs. Marketing Director, Ashley White, said that it has not happened in the past but there is a need for it as it is a challenge to track leisure travelers. When Visit The Woodlands works with OTAs, they are able to track to the point of sale.

Chairman Bailey asked about geo-fencing for events and venues like The Pavilion, and how it is incorporated into this plan. Mr. Pagliano said that when someone purchases a ticket through LiveNation, an advertisement will popup that will take them to a page to book a hotel in The Woodlands. This feature is part of Visit The Woodlands' LiveNation partnership. Mrs. White said that in January 2024, Tourism Economics Symphony Program will be launching with Visit The Woodlands and will give the team the capability to track things like credit card data and geolocation data. There are about 70 points of interests that will be tracked through this program.

Vice Chairman Gohagan asked when Visit The Woodlands will be moving away from the referral program on the website and if a new platform has been chosen for booking. Mrs. White said that Visit The Woodlands has partnered with Ripe, a hotel referral program, which can track hotel bookings down to the point of sale. It also has the capability to package hotels with leisure offers that can be made available for purchase on the website.

Chairman Bailey asked for clarification on what Adcetera's role is in this plan. Ms. Eddins said that Mrs. White will be managing the program in-house, but that Adcetera is a creative partner that will be utilized to do high-profile marketing projects to take them to the next level. Mrs. White said that Adcetera will offer a different perspective and help elevate the brand. Chairman Bailey said that one of the areas he wants Visit The Woodlands, to focus on is recruiting for C-Suites who live in The Woodlands to host their companies conferences here.

Motion to approve the 2024 Media Placement Plan as presented not to exceed \$650,000 passed unanimously.

Motion by Director Linda Nelson, seconded by Director Jenny Taylor

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed

9. Receive, consider and act upon a Service Agreement with The Woodlands Arts Council;

President Wolda presented to the Board an amended Facilities Agreement with The Woodlands Arts Council that was approved at the March 2023 Visit The Woodlands Board Meeting. After approval, the agreement was returned to the Arts Council. Visit The Woodlands and The Woodlands Arts Council have come to an agreement over the terms and are wanting to proceed with the presented Facilities Agreement for the next 5 years.

Legal Counsel, Bret Strong, clarified that the structure of the agreement has moved from a Sponsorship to a Facilities Agreement where Visit The Woodlands will be paying The Woodlands Township for the usage of the facilities on behalf of The Woodlands Arts Council up to \$25,000. Indemnity and liability were also discussed and these terms were changed in the

agreement. The Woodlands Arts Council Board has approved this agreement and accepted all change of terms.

Director Nelson asked if a specific weekend has been reserved for this event for the next 5 years. President Wolda confirmed that the second full weekend in April is reserved for the Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival every year.

Director Taylor asked what the Economic Impact of the event is. President Wolda provided an estimate of the Sales Tax and Hotel Tax collected from the event which consisted of a few million dollars.

Motion to approve the 5-year Facilities Agreement with The Woodlands Arts Council passed unanimously.

Motion by Secretary/Treasurer Richard Franks, seconded by Director Jenny Taylor

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed

10. Receive, consider and act upon a partnership with Market Street to manage the 2024 Visitor Services Program;

Ms. Eddins presented a continuation of Visit The Woodlands' and Market Street's partnership with the Visitor Services Program. The Visitor Kiosk is located at Market Street and is used as a center where visitors can grab collateral that will help show them around town.

Ms Eddins said that Market Street has always been a great partner to Visit The Woodlands and in this new agreement, they will add Valet Parking passes as well as continued use of venue space as schedule allows.

Directors Nelson asked if the \$48,000 includes Visitor Kiosk staff 7 days a week. Ms. Eddins said that it does it include daily coverage at the kiosk.

Chairman Bailey said that Market Street will also wrap vacant retail space with Visit The Woodlands promotional material.

Motion to approve the agreement between Visit The Woodlands and Market Street passed with 5 votes in favor and 1 abstained (Director Taylor).

Motion by Secretary/Treasurer Richard Franks, seconded by Director Linda Nelson

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed

11. Receive, consider and act upon the 2024 Visit The Woodlands Board of Directors Meeting Schedule;

President Nick Wolda presented a staff recommended 2024 Board Meeting Schedule to the Board that consisted of 6 Regular and 6 Special meetings.

Chairman Bailey requested that the Annual meeting in January be held on the 16th due to a scheduling conflict.

Motion to approve the 2024 Board Meeting Schedule as presented with a change of date to the Annual Meeting to January 16, 2024 passed unanimously.

Motion by Secretary/Treasurer Richard Franks, seconded by Director Jenny Taylor

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed

12. Staff Initiative Reports;

Director of Sales Josie Lewis reported on recent travel by the Sales Team including Destination Southwest in South Padre which consisted on 31 appointments. Destination Southwest will be hosted in The Woodlands in 2024 at The Woodlands Resort, so the 2023 show was an attendance builder for that event. Mrs. Lewis reported that after the Board Meeting, she and Ashley Fenner were heading to Austin for the TSAE Celebration Luncheon to host an activation. The Sales Team has been busy preparing for 2024.

Vice Chairman Jennifer Gohagan asked how many meeting planners attended Destination Southwest this year. Mrs. Lewis said that just under 50 planners were there.

Motion to approve staff initiatives passed unanimously.

Motion by Director Jenny Taylor, seconded by Director Linda Nelson

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed

13. Recess to Executive Session to discuss matters relating to real property pursuant to §551.072, Texas Government Code; deliberation of economic development negotiations pursuant to §551.087, Texas Government Code; discuss personnel matters pursuant to §551.074, Texas Government Code; and to consult with the Corporation's attorney pursuant to §551.071, Texas Government Code;

14. No Executive Session.

15. Receive, consider and act upon staff relocation;

No action taken at this time.

16. President's Report;

President Nick Wolda thanked the Board for all of the efforts and support that was offered this year for Visit The Woodlands.

17. Board Announcements;

Director Jenny Taylor thanked staff for an outstanding year and invited everyone to come out to Market Street for the re-opening of J. Crew later in the day.

Director Cameron Klepac announced that The Pavilion already has 12 shows on sale for the 2024 season.

Vice Chairman Jennifer Gohagan extended thanks to the staff for wonderful efforts this year and looks forward to the continued partnership in the New Year.

Chairman Bailey thanked the staff and vendors for all of the hard work this year. Mr. Bailey

announced that one of the goals for next year is to get signage on the back of The Woodlands Express Buses to promote The Woodlands to more of Houston. Another goal is to bring a TedTalk to The Woodlands in 2024. Mr. Bailey is also wanting to kick-off the Culinary Ambassador Program in the new year.

18. Agenda items for next meeting;

None.

19. Adjournment at 9:39 a.m.

Motion to adjourn passed unanimously.

Motion by Secretary/Treasurer Richard Franks, seconded by Director Jenny Taylor

Vote: 6 - 0 Passed



Richard Franks, Secretary/Treasurer
The Woodlands CVB Board of Directors

31 January 2024
Date

