



May 17, 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 May 17, 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
Fred Domenick, Vice Chairman
Richard Franks, Secretary/Treasurer
Cameron Klepac, Director
Linda Nelson, Director
Monique Sharp, Director
Jenny Taylor, Director

Staff Present: Bret Strong, Legal Counsel; Elizabeth Eddins, Executive Director; Ashley White, Marketing Director; Josie Lewis, Sales Director; Monique Sharp, The Woodlands Township President/CEO; Mary Murphy, Public Relations Coordinator; Nick Wolda, Director of Economic Development/President, Visit The Woodlands; Julie Quinn, Sales & Servicing Specialist; Ashley Fenner, Senior Sales Specialist; Gabby Pena, Administrative Analyst

Attendees: Kellan Shaw, The Woodlands Township Director of Finance, Dana Lemons, The Woodlands Township Help Desk Analyst, Cynthia Armatys, The Woodlands Township Executive Assistant

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.

3. Public Comment;

None.

4. Receive, consider, and act upon the Proclamation for National Travel and Tourism Week;

- Chairman Bailey read the proclamation. Executive Director Elizabeth Eddins spoke on how staff and Board members advocated for the importance of the travel and tourism industry in the U.S. and how it was celebrated in The Woodlands. In conjunction with Market Street's Spring Concert Series, Visit The Woodlands had a Popcorn and Postcards Activation where staff distributed popcorn and other promotional items to concert attendees and discussed importance of Tourism. Visit The Woodlands also collaborated with The Woodlands Parks & Recreation Department to offer a discount to visitors at Texas TreeVentures and the Riva Row Boat House. This offer continued through the end of May.

5. Consider and approve Minutes from the March 8, 2023 Regular Board Meeting;

Motion to approve the Minutes as read passed unanimously.

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

Vote: 7 - 0 Passed

6. Consider and approve the Financial Report through March 2023;

- Kellan Shaw, Township Director of Finance, delivered the Financial Report. At the end of March, actual revenues totaled to \$808,812, compared to a \$578,824 budget, resulting in a favorable variance of \$229,988. The supplemental hotel tax revenue showed a favorable variance of \$61,433, and there was also a favorable variance in operating transfers of \$161,981. The favorable variance in operating transfers was due to the Township transferring more supplemental tax to Visit The Woodlands than budgeted due to expenditures being higher than budgeted due to timing.

- As of March 31, 2023, the undesignated fund balance for Visit The Woodlands was \$1,235,799.

- Director Taylor asked if we were going to reach the 2019 number of \$9.2 million HOT tax collected. Director Sharp said that we were expected to reach that number.

- Motion to approve the Financial Report through March 2023 passed unanimously.

Motion by Vice Chairman Fred Domenick, seconded by Director Jenny Taylor

Vote: 7 - 0 Passed

7. Receive, consider and act upon an update on April 2023 events;

- President Wolda delivered a recap on major international events that occurred during the month of April, starting with The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival that occurred from April 14 - 16, 2023. He mentioned more than 20,000 people attended the event. The Chevron Championship took place the following weekend, April 20-23, 2023, and had 37,609 attendees. This was the first time this tournament has been played outside of California in 51 years. Lilia Vu was the champion among competitors from 28 different countries. Between the Golf Channel and NBC, more than 6.7 million people watched the event making this the most watched LPGA event in NBC Sports history. Mr. Wolda reported that in the same weekend, on April 22, 2023, The Woodlands hosted

the Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Texas Americas Championship. Over 2,000 athletes competed in the event, coming from over 57 countries and 49 states. There were also 2,500 volunteers. Rudy von Berg from Colorado captured the overall victory with a finishing time of 7:44:51 and Kate Matthews from the United Kingdom was the women's victor finishing at 8:32:52. The Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Texas was recently named the best overall race, best finish line, and best post-race experience in IRONMAN Athlete's Choice Awards. To conclude April's events recap, President Wolda talked about The Insperity Invitational, held April 24-30, 2023 at The Woodlands Country Club Tournament Course. This tournament was televised on the Golf Channel with 9 hours of live coverage and 9 hours of replay coverage being broadcasted in 170+ countries and territories. There were nearly 1,000 volunteers and 40,000 attendees over the course of the week. This tournament alone generated an estimated economic impact of \$18-20 million.

- Ms. Eddins showed the Board a collection of social media posts featuring April 2023's events. She showcased the positive feedback viewers were sharing in comments on Visit The Woodlands' posts, talking about their great experiences at these various events. She praised the creativity and efforts of Communications Coordinator Amber George, who filmed, edited, and posted all Visit The Woodlands video reels. She applauded Ms. George's ability to create quick, relevant content for social media, highlighting the LiveNation Concert Week post that informed Visit The Woodlands' followers about an upcoming week of ticket discounts.

- Motion to approve the update on April 2023 events passed unanimously.

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

Vote: 7 - 0 Passed

8. Receive an update from the Marketing Department on Visit The Woodlands advertising efforts;

- Marketing Director Ashley White presented an overview of the fashion-forward advertising campaign, highlighting ad placements and the overall results from the campaign so far. Since the launch of this campaign, Visit The Woodlands' advertisements have been in print and online publications such as *Vogue*, *Golf Digest*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, and *Bon Appetit*. Mrs. White mentioned that Visit The Woodlands uses an omni-channel advertising approach and has begun using broadcast and connected TV advertisements this year. Visit The Woodlands has entered the second year of a partnership with LiveNation. This partnership provides an opportunity for Visit The Woodlands to collect data on who these advertisements reach and retarget advertisements for them in the future. The goal of this advertising partnership is to increase visitor length of stay and repeat visitation. Last year, Visit The Woodlands captured new video assets and used them to create 6, 15, and 30 second ad placements. These video assets were also used to create a 2-minute video that is used as a commercial and a tradeshow video used when The Woodlands as a destination to meeting planners. Mrs. White mentioned that having this creative has allowed the Marketing Team to take advantage of great ad placements at remnant rates because they can provide the creative quickly and fulfill advertiser's needs. One example of this is during the Insperity Invitational where Visit The Woodlands received 2 complimentary 30-second spots due to having the creative fill two available spots.

- Motion to approve the update from the Marketing Department passed unanimously.

Motion by Director Linda Nelson, seconded by Director Jenny Taylor

Vote: 7 - 0 Passed

9. Receive, consider and act upon the request to go out for RFP for a website redesign and SEO services;

- Mrs. White reported that in 2019, TWCVB worked with its current website vendor, Simpleview, to develop a new website for Visit The Woodlands. She reported that since its launch in 2020, www.visitthewoodlands.com has been very successful in driving awareness for The Woodlands, both as a leisure travel destination and as a place to hold meetings and events. Mrs. White said a few highlights from the current website have been the increase of overall users from 172,915 in 2017 to 708,804 in 2022, an increase in overall pageviews on the website from 358,482 in 2017 to 1,795,714 in 2022, and the launch of the hotel booking engine which tracks referrals to hotel properties in The Woodlands. There has also been the launch of forms to collect and fulfill requests for visitor guides, meeting planner guides, eNewsletter signups and RFP submissions, launch of microsites to support Visit The Woodlands sales and marketing initiatives, including the launch of a Spanish microsite, emergency microsite, COVID response microsite and others, and the launch of custom integrations and tools, such as a social feed curating user generated content, use of dynamic and related content modules, blog and article modules and others.

- Mrs. White said that industry standard is to refresh a website every 2-3 years. It has been 3 years since the website launched in 2020 and will take roughly a year to complete a refresh, which means the new website could launch mid-late 2024. In addition, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) plays a key role in ensuring the ongoing success of a website. Mrs. White asked the Board for approval to issue an RFP for a website redesign and SEO services. This project will include a re-assessment of the current sitemap, a refresh to the website creative and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) support to cover keyword research, content optimization, custom analytics setup, technical diagnoses and fixes and customized reporting. Mrs. White did note that Visit The Woodlands isn't looking for a new website hosting provider as that contract is still active; but rather, only looking to refresh website creative and enter into an SEO contract.

- Motion to accept the request to issue an RFP passed unanimously.

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

Vote: 7 - 0 Passed

10. Receive, consider and act upon the request to issue an RFP for Destination Marketing Media Buying & Creative Services;

- Ms. Eddins reported that in 2018, TWCVB worked with its previous Agency of Record, Adcetera Design Studio, to develop a brand story and identity for The Woodlands. A new advertising campaign to reflect this branding was rolled out in 2018 with a new website following in 2020. As The Woodlands began to see the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry in 2020, Visit The Woodlands reduced advertising expenditures and moved media buying and creative services in-house. In 2021, Visit The Woodlands issued an RFP for these services and selected Madden Media, a well-known agency in the tourism industry, as the vendor. Visit The Woodlands is currently in the second year of a contract with Madden Media.

- Ms. Eddins asked the Board for approval to issue a request for an RFP for Destination Marketing Media Buying & Creative Services. Leveraging the Visit The Woodlands brand as the guiding principle, this vendor works closely with the Director of Marketing, Ashley White to create dynamic and engaging advertising, content and collateral for Visit The Woodlands.

- Motion to accept the request to issue an RFP passed unanimously.

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

Vote: 7 - 0 Passed

11. Receive, consider and act upon updated cost expectations for hosting Connect Texas 2023 in The Woodlands;

- Sales Director, Josie Lewis reported that planning for Connect Texas in October has begun. The original approval process for this event occurred in 2019 for the event to be held in The Woodlands in 2021. Due to COVID-19, this event was pushed back until after the recovery period. Because of the size and visibility of the event, Visit The Woodlands wanted to make sure it was a successful event. In 2021, this event was brought back to the Board for approval to hold the event in 2023. During the initial approval process for the event, the cost expectations for the event were approved at \$50,000, with the expectation that staff would bring back any additional needs when more concrete planning began. With the increase of costs due to inflation, Visit The Woodlands is requesting additional funds be made available to cover costs of hosting expectations.

- Director Nelson asked what was entailed in the event. Mrs. Lewis responded and said that, within the two-and-a-half-day event, Visit The Woodlands will be hosting the opening night reception at The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion Woodforest Bank Club for up to 200 attendees. There will be welcome gifts from the staff for the meeting planners attending this event and activations conducted by staff taking place throughout The Woodlands to showcase The Woodlands. Visit The Woodlands staff will also be coordinating transportation to and from the opening night reception.

- Director Taylor asked if the cost increase from \$50,000 to \$75,000 would be enough to go above and beyond for this event. Mrs. Lewis said that with \$75,000, Visit The Woodlands would be limited to how much it would be able to do, but could still produce a good event. Director Taylor said that she believes that the Board should approve \$100,000 for this event to make sure that staff has the resources to ensure this event is a true representation of The Woodlands. Mrs. Lewis said that would allow room and does not expect exceeding the \$100,000 budget.

- Motion to increase the budget for Connect Texas hosting responsibilities to \$100,000 with the expectation that if additional funds are needed, staff would bring this request back to the Board for approval.

Motion by Director Jenny Taylor, seconded by Director Linda Nelson

Vote: 7 - 0 Passed

12. Staff Initiative Reports;

- Mrs. Lewis spoke about how Senior Sales Specialist Ashley Fenner has a site tour coming up where she will be working in conjunction with The Woodlands Resort and The Woodlands Waterway Marriott. Mrs. Lewis mentioned that she has been trying to bring the Texas Society of Association Executives (TSAE) New Ideas Conference to The Woodlands for a few years and recently heard back from the organization that they are officially considering the destination. The Sales Team is planning on bringing TSAE Staff here for a site visit soon to hopefully contract TSAE New Ideas Conference for 2024. Mrs. Lewis reported on the travel tradeshows that Ashley Fenner and herself have been attending which includes the Hill Country Chapter of MPI, and Small Market Meetings Summit, and the HelmsBriscoe Annual Business Conference in Denver. She discussed the Lunar and Planetary Science Conference where over 1,800 attendees walked from the Marriott over to the Pavilion parking lot to enjoy the Food Truck Village put on by the Sales Team and other staff. There were 9 food trucks every day from March 13-16, 2023.

- Director Taylor said that the Food Truck Village took some stress off Market Street restaurants

with having to service that many people.

- Global Meetings Industry Day was March 30, 2023, where the Sales Team did Partner Pop-ins with Hotel Properties to share the Proclamation. The first ever Meeting Planner Round Table was held at Tommy Bahamas where staff had the opportunity to meet with meeting planners and collaborate on new ideas. Visit The Woodlands will be hosting MPI Night Among the Stars on June 2, 2023. It will be hosted at The Woodlands Resort with 100-150 industry professionals and meetings planners in attendance.

- Ashley White reported that the Marketing Team created event pages for The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival, The Chevron Championship, Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Texas, and Insperity Invitational. Staff also created the Tourism Toolkit, consisting of a welcome letter, links to event pages, traffic impact maps, welcome signage and more. On the Social Media side, Visit The Woodlands recently collaborated with partners on The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival, The Chevron Championship, Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Texas, and Insperity Invitational. There were also influencer collaborations done with Becky's Travel List and Sincerely Karin. Mrs. White gave an update on the Art Gladness competition where followers had the opportunity to vote on all public art in The Woodlands. The winner of the competition was At Waters Edge which is located under The Waterway Bridge. Mrs. White reported on the photo and video assets that had been captured in Q1 and the beginning of Q2. Material was captured at the Texas Travel Alliance Unity Dinner, Economic Outlook Conference, Lunar & Planetary Science Conference, Global Meetings Industry Day and the big events in April. Digital assets that will be captured soon will include local museums, shopping centers, Trolleys, and Town Center.

- Ms. Eddins thanked staff and board members for their participation in the Visit The Woodlands National, Travel and Tourism Week event at Market Street. Staff hosted an activation at the Spring Concert Series passing out Postcards and Popcorn to attendees. The marketing team visited partners throughout the week to show appreciation for the support they offer Visit The Woodlands. Ms. Eddins reported on the recent Media Placements Visit The Woodlands has had in *Community Impact*, *Houston Chronicle*, *Texas Meetings + Events*, *Hello Woodlands*, *We Women Golf*, *City Lifestyle Magazine* and more.

- Motion to approve staff initiatives passed unanimously.

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

Vote: 7 - 0 Passed

13. Receive, consider, and act upon the 2024 Budget Proposal of Visit The Woodlands;

- President Wolda discussed the budget planning process and how the approvals work within The Woodlands Township and through Visit The Woodlands.

- Ms. Eddins gave an overview and budget breakdown of how it is allotted in the 2023 budget of \$3,303,212. That total is allocated to General Expenditures, Strategic Partnerships, Marketing and Promotion, and Convention Sales. The proposed Budget for 2024 is \$3,500,000. An increase in budget would reflect a proposed increase in Visit The Woodlands staff by 2.5 positions, to be reviewed and determined by the Board.

- Motion to approve the 2024 Budget Proposal passed unanimously.

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

Vote: 7 - 0 Passed

budget would reflect a proposed increase in Visit The Woodlands staff by 2.5 positions, to be reviewed and determined by the Board.

- Motion to approve the 2024 Budget Proposal passed unanimously.

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

Vote: 7 - 0 Passed

14. 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;
15. Reconvene in public session;

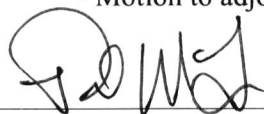
No executive session.
16. President's Report;

 - President Nick Wolda congratulated Ashley Fenner, Senior Sales Specialist, on her upcoming Leadership Montgomery County (LMC) Graduation. He also congratulated Market Street for winning Best Shopping District Statewide as well as The Woodlands Waterway Arts Council winning Best Art Festival/Event for Big Market from the Texas Travel Awards. He mentioned that the Texas Travel Alliance awarded Elizabeth Eddins the Best Step-On Guide and The Woodlands as the Best City/Community in the Greater Houston Region in their Best of Texas Awards. Mr. Wolda gave a shout-out to the Marketing Committee for winning the Hermes Gold Award for their Fashion Forward Advertising campaign and the Gold Award for the Social Media Ambassador Program. The Woodlands Waterway Marriott and Visit The Woodlands Vice Chairman Fred Domenick were congratulated on winning Hotel of the Year 2022 for Premium and Distinctive Brands for Marriott International.
17. Board Announcements;

 - Chairman Bailey asked for a Strategic Planning Meeting to be planned in June that will consist of Visit The Woodlands staff, Board Members, and various Marketing Committee Members. This meeting will be used to collaborate and come together on new ideas to keep The Woodlands a top destination for Meeting and Leisure Travel.
18. Agenda items for next meeting;

None.
19. Adjournment at 9:44 a.m.;

 - Motion to adjourn passed unanimously.



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

19 July 2023
Date