

# Tourism Management Plan Town Hall Meeting 6/12/14

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## Kittie Robinson

I commend the City for initiating this update. City and Advisory Committee are committed to the purpose of the committee vision statement. We are eager to hear from the audience. The process is designed for public input including advisory committee and subcommittees. Hope passion is channeled into productive ideas. Lots of research already has taken place. We are partnering with the city to engage Gabe Klein, one of the country's top experts, to assess transportation issues.

## Mayor Riley

Introduced City Councilmembers, Keith Waring and Dudley Gregory. Started managing tourism 1978, no tourism regulations prior to that. Update in 1994 and 1998. We have vibrant growth now. We need to sharpen and hone regulations and understand what our challenges are. At this point we have created an Advisory Committee. (Committee was introduced and thanked for coming to the meeting). The committee is looking forward to your ideas.

## Tim Keane

The main point of our meeting tonight is to get feedback from you. We will give you background on where we are in the process. We will keep this a very public process throughout. This started with the creation of the Advisory Committee. The committee members were listed. What we did in phase one of the process is collect ideas.

- At the first public meeting we collected over 200 questions and comments.
- The College did a resident survey.
- The Committee asked the peninsula neighborhoods to give feedback. Common Themes :
  - Parking
  - Enforcement
  - Restrooms
  - Tourism Growth
  - Management of tourism
  - Special events + filming

In Phase II now

The Committee was broken up into subcommittees including:

- Mobility\Transportation
- Tourism Management
- Special Events
- Visitor Orientation
- Quality of Life

We realize there are things we need to do and can start working on now. There has been a lot of concern with enforcement. We moved the enforcement into the Livability Division.

- Adding three TEO's (Tourism Enforcement Officers)
- Direct line for complaints
- Patrol in vehicle, bike and on foot

There is a moratorium on any new tour vehicle certificate of appropriateness during the study and a late night establishment ordinance is under consideration. Another change that has been made is not taking on any new events. An ordinance for low speed vehicles was adopted to stop these new types of vehicles from operating in the City. This ordinance includes golf carts used for shuttling purposes (unless you own both the pick-up and drop off location).

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## Questions and Comments

### Speaker A

Has worked in the tourism business since Vanessa was hired. 3 subjects.

1. New tourism officials need to be very well trained. The fines have gone up tremendously.
2. Construction on Battery is causing a detour that is causing accidents. Should not allow parking on S. Battery while this is happening.
3. Restrooms at Hazel Parker Playground should be used. They are typically empty. Fort Sumter House would be the second option- use a few parking spots there for a portable restroom.

### Speaker B- artist in Charleston.

Concerned with the items from China sold at the Market. Tourist should experience the locals. Homeless should benefit from tourism.

### Speaker C

Started 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday, added bike racks, believes tourists should ride bikes and walk around the City. Bothered by the 12 am closing. We have young people that make their living off of these hours. Tourists go out in the evening. We are the #1 restaurant city in the Country. Restaurant and Bar people build their stuff out- retailers do not do this. 12am is not what this City is about. We need to keep the City full of life for all of us.

**Mayor Riley replies** to Jamie Price: Many components to Charleston. Many people live adjacent to the commercial area. The ordinance says we won't have any more or new late night establishments. The impact on the neighbors if we have more and more leaving bars at 1:30-2:00 in the morning is damaging to the quality of life for the neighborhoods.

Also, what happens on a main street when there is a predominance of late night establishments is that during the day it is no longer a great street. We need to maintain a good balance between all of these elements. We believe that if we do not the city will be damaged irreparably. We are not closing anything that is now open. Section 54-110 of the Zoning Ordinance deals with grandfathering. This protects the use for a period of 3 years after the use is discontinued. This means that a new business can open within that 3 year period and continue to operate under the 2am closing.

We are working very hard not to be ANYPLACE, USA.

### Speaker D

We see the need for the plan to be updated and appreciate the opportunity to review this again. We appreciate the openness of this process. There seems to be a tendency to have plans without enforcement. Four things that have been enacted are a good sign. We can't look at tourism as an isolated case and must also look at things like zoning. Keep an open mind and keep in mind that without enforcement nothing will happen.

### Speaker E

Cruise Ships- Carnival owns the Cunard line and other lines that are more upscale. Could we put into the agreement that they bring in the smaller upper scale ships too and not just the lower level ones?

Also, should we cap or reduce the number of carriages?

### Vanessa's response

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20 carriages can operate per hour. They can only put 20 on the street at one time, but they may own more carriages than that.

### **Mayor Riley's response**

Legally we cannot ask for them to bring in the higher end ships- free enterprise.

### **Speaker F**

Thank you Mayor Riley for bringing the amenities to Charleston, but we are at a tipping point. Please require shore power for the cruise ships. This is worse than the cargo ships. I urge you to partner with SPA and Carnival and take care of this and reduce the public health threat.

Bike and pedestrian traffic are ignoring the road signals. Tourists and others do not pay attention to these signs. Could we add an audible signal to help with this?

### **Speaker G**

What are the intentions of the mobility study and the closing of the streets due to cruise ships?

#### **Tim's response**

Gabe Klein will be joining us to do the study and will help with strategy for transportation. We have 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century streets in downtown and that is all we will ever have. More and more people will need to drive less and live without a car.

The cruise ship terminal will reopen Concord St. and help with the street closings.

### **Speaker H- lives in French Quarter**

One of the problems with the bike lanes is that they only exist for a few blocks and then the bike rider is still in the lane. Sharrows seem to be a good idea. Helmets are something we don't do here and we don't signal either. Bikers should signal not only when they are turning, but also when they are stopping. We need to know the rules and to use them.

I get emails letting me know when there will be a ship in from the SPA. It would be nice if we got emails when there will be an event that affects our neighborhood.

The African American Museum will also affect traffic.

The new plans for the cruise ship terminal show a huge parking lot. Why does the parking have to be at the terminal and not remote?

### **Speaker I**

I believe that the city has tipped already. In the past 5-8 years the city has really become overburdened. The cruise ship terminal is going to continue to burden us. We need shore power.

I saw 6 carriage tours go down Legare in 40 minutes last week.

### **Speaker J**

Carriages are excessive. I don't like to be told as a resident that I need to walk more. Most people come to Charleston to see South of Broad.

Neighbor pulled 9 separate permits to circumvent the BAR process. Let's not screw Charleston up.

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## **Speaker K**

I want to ask you to put teeth in the enforcement. Don't want mega buses. Don't want new big office building at 80 Calhoun.

Would like a drunk bus subsidized by the bars and restaurants.

## **Speaker L**

I am on the Board of Charleston Moves. Love that the upper King Street merchants wanted bike racks. I don't like that the illegally parked bikes are confiscated. I would like to see more bike racks on upper and lower King Street. Yesterday I got an email from a couple that parked their bikes and didn't realize what they were doing was illegal. When they were walking back to their bikes, the bikes had been taken away. The man that took them was not friendly or helpful.

I notice that during Marion Square Farmers market people are still parking illegally. Charleston Moves is now providing a bike valet, but this is temporary. We need more bike racks.

## **Speaker M**

Advocate for change. Two way streets.

## **Speaker N**

I am an admissions counselor at the College of Charleston and adjunct faculty. I don't understand the late night ordinance. Why stifle success? Will create more activity in neighborhoods.

### **Tim's response**

Intention of the ordinance is not to manage where the drunks will go. This is about the concentration of these establishments. We can't think of our City as having entertainment districts. We have neighborhoods and these establishments damage the quality of life for these neighborhoods. They need other things and not just restaurants.

## **Speaker P**

I am a local attorney who is representing local restaurants and bars. The face of the opposition to the late night ordinance is local responsible business owners. I value two things: demonstrable evidence and open and honest dialog.

### **Mayor Riley's response**

Give me a call.

## **Speaker Q**

Mayor Riley is my neighbor. How can we be sure that the tourism ordinances will be enforced? The last plan was not enforced. Why does it seem that we have so many unauthorized vehicles in our neighborhoods? Pedi cabs are touring and not just delivering people. Sergeant Heath King didn't do enough to enforce our ordinances. We need more than just 3 TEO's (Tourism Enforcement Officers). We need to hold the companies responsible for their employees.

## **Speaker R**

Carriages bring life to the city and are part of our history that we need to uphold. We need a technology portal for events etc. We need a point system for the tour license.

## **Speaker S**

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We never know when the streets will be blocked for events etc. Suggested a board announcing street closings at city entrances. We should consider changing our street signs to include number on block and showing which are one way.

We should put carriages north of Calhoun and spread the wealth.

We need to consider hospitality when we look at where the people are getting off of the big buses on Concord Street. They step out onto a railroad trusses and rock. This is not hospitable.

We also need to improve sidewalks.

We need bathrooms at the battery. We have bathrooms at Colonial Lake and there is not nefarious activity. Use Hazel Parker bathrooms- they should be made public to all.

### **Speaker T**

Safety. Lots of police officers on the streets for the drunks. We need more bike racks. Concord is dangerous to bike and walk.

### **Conclusion of meeting.**

**Mayor Riley** thanked everyone for coming.

**Kitty Robinson** thanked everyone for coming and said that we are interested and listening.

The next committee meeting is July 18<sup>th</sup>.