

CITY OF CHARLESTON TOURISM COMMISSION

February 26, 2020

A meeting of the City of Charleston Tourism Commission was held this date at City Hall, Council Chamber.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Mr. Robert Seidler, Chair, Mrs. Lorraine Evans, Mr. Ernest Long, Mr. Barry Kalinsky, Mr. Allan Stello, Ms. Vanessa Turner Maybank, Mr. Louis Weinstein, Mr. Chad Yonce. **STAFF:** Mr. Tim Domin, Esq, Clawson and Staubes, LLC, Mr. Lee B. Burbage, Tourism Commission Manager, Mr. Dan Riccio, Director, City of Charleston Department of Livability and Tourism, and Mrs. Amy Southerland, Tourism and Special Events Manager, City of Charleston Department of Livability and Tourism.

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence.

Approval of minutes

Minutes were deferred.

Public Input

None

New Tourism Commission Member Appointment and Terms

Mr. Riccio said it was still in the process of who the new members would be.

Mr. Burbage said while looking through the applications for the new Tourism Commission members, they noticed there were a few more that had reached the lifetime allotment by ordinance. Chair Seidler, Mrs. Elizabeth Alston and Ms. Carol Etheridge had all reached their lifetime allotment. They can't be reappointed to the Commission any longer. However, they could continue to serve on the Commission until their positions were replaced. He thanked them for their service.

Mr. Burbage said they would be reaching out to the other Commission members individually who were eligible to reapply if they wanted to be reappointed. Dr. Weinstein and Mrs. Evans were the only two whose terms continued through to 2021.

Mr. Riccio said the information should be on the website but the new appointments weren't on the website.

Dr. Weinstein asked if there was a committee to vet the people who were applying, was it the Mayor's aegis, or the Mayor just decides?

Mr. Riccio said he met with the Mayor and Mike Tito. The applicants would have interviews with him, the Mayor and Mr. Tito.

Chair Seidler said he thought that Mr. Long's term had come to an end. Mr. Riccio said it did. Chair Seidler concluded Mr. Long had the option to ask to continue. Mr. Riccio said yes.

Chair Seidler ask if there was anyone else on the Commission whose term had ended but they had not aged out.

Mr. Riccio said Mr. Kalinsky and Mr. Saboe could also ask to return to the Commission. Chair Seidler surmised they had the potential for significant turnover on the Commission. Mr. Riccio said yes.

Chair Seidler suggested the Commission members should know where they stood. There were three who didn't have the option to continue but there were some who could continue if they chose to do so. He said it would be good to let them know whether they had that option or not.

Mr. Jerue said the current Commission members could continue to serve until they were replaced. He noted knowing the Mayor's schedule and how the interviews might take a while to occur, he assumed the current Commission would still be here for the next Commission meeting.

Chair Seidler said he had been personally approached by some of the Commission members who might want to continue and others who might not. He felt it would be appropriate to clarify that with each of the Commission members who did have the option to continue for another term.

Old Business

Dr. Weinstein asked Mr. Riccio what was the status of the inclement weather policy.

Mr. Riccio said during this instance, they were conferring by phone and/or email keeping in touch with the companies. They were going to try to maintain that path moving forward, test it out and see how it goes.

The only other ordinance that was in a holding pattern was the accident reporting. Mr. Riccio said it was good to go. It might be coming up at the next meeting.

New Business

Mrs. Evans asked what had come up with the tourists walking in the middle of the street.

Mr. Burbage said there an ordinance passed by the Commission and City Council regarding walking tours and sidewalk management. It wasn't specifically for tourists but walking tours in general. After the ordinance passed, the Tourism Officers haven't written a summons on it.

Mrs. Evans said she was referring to tourists who weren't on tours but those congregating at the end of Elliot Street on Broad Street. They sit in the windows along Printer's Row and there was a lot of activity on that corner during the day.

Mr. Brown asked if the walking tours received the new rules.

Mr. Burbage said there was a lot of news coverage on it. There were a number of interviews with walking tour guides about the ordinance. If the Tourism Officers found someone in violation, unless it was very egregious, they first issued either a verbal or written warning, talked about the issue and informed the individual who was in violation. If there were repeat issues, then the individual would be issued a summons and taken to court.

Mrs. Evans said she wasn't referring to walking tours. She was talking about tourists who were unorganized.

Mr. Long said during peak periods around Charleston Place at Meeting and Market Streets where tourists cross the street, he felt a traffic control officer or Tourism Officer to help with the tourists crossing the street by telling them when to stop, when they should and not continue to cross the street. There was some anger with some of the people in cars trying to turn on some of those streets.

Mrs. Evans said she had been speaking to Traffic and Transportation about doing something about East Bay Street and North Market Street where people put their baby carriages and themselves out into the street.

Mr. Jerue said East Bay Street was a state street, not a city street. They have spoken to the State about that. He said they were exhausted talking to the State about that.

Mrs. Evans asked if there was a way to place stanchions on the corner with chains between them like they do in Italy so people were forced to go around the corner. If they removed the crosswalk, which was crooked, and straightened it out, it would run directly across the street so people would go around the corner and cross there.

Mr. Jerue said the State controlled the signalization and the right-of-way. The City discussed having a four-way traffic stop crossing at all directions to get through that intersection at one time. In response to a question by Mrs. Evans, he said he would give her the address of South Carolina Department of Transportation Secretary Christy A. Hall. He said he would also take her suggestion to the City's Traffic and Transportation office to see if they could pressure the state to do something about that intersection.

Mr. Burbage reported on the yearly stats comparing 2018 and 2019. The second page was the parking/transportation permits for the motor coaches and the last page was 2018-2019 total carriage tours broken down by months.

In response to a question by Chair Seidler, Mr. Burbage said some months they were lower this year compared to 2018, other months they were higher.

Chair Seidler noted that transportation and parking permits were up considerably but not tour permits. Carriage tours were in line with last year.

Chair Seidler asked Mr. Jerue if there would be some communication to the Commission members as to who would be able to apply for reappointment, and those whose term had expired and they wished to leave the Commission.

Mr. Jerue said yes. If anyone was interested in continuing, they should go on the website and make clear they would like to continue serving. For those whose who had the ability to serve additional terms, they would go through that and the Mayor will interview people. They had to make sure they had Commissioners in the right categories according to the ordinance. The Mayor would review and make recommendations to City Council. City Council would then vote on the recommendations.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

Marcia L. Grant
Administrative Assistant II