

TOURISM ADVISORY COUNCIL
REGULAR SESSION

NOVEMBER 3, 2015

The Tourism Advisory Council met in Regular Session on Tuesday, November 3, 2015, 4:00 p.m. in the Derek D. Daniels Conference Room of the Athens Partnership Center with the following members present, to-wit:

Mike Coston
Brad Smiley
Rae Priestley
Deanne Boswell
Virginia Reeder

Philip Rodriguez, Manager
Bonnie Hambrick, City Secretary

Constituting a quorum at which time the following proceedings were enacted, to-wit:

ROLL CALL

Chairman Coston did a roll call of the Tourism Advisory Council members; Chet Patel and Toni Clay were absent.

Philip Rodriguez, City Manager informed the Tourism Advisory Council that Ms. Sherri Skeeters has resigned from her position as Tourism Coordinator and it was effective immediately.

Mr. Rodriguez stated there is great talent within the members of the Tourism Advisory Council, and he asked that the committee brain storm and determine what Tourism should look like for the City of Athens.

There was much discussion regarding the next steps for the Tourism Advisory Council.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No action was taken.

CHAIRMAN OF TOURISM ADVISORY COUNCIL

A. STATUS REPORT ON HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX FUNDING FOR FISCAL
YEAR 2016

This item was not discussed.

PRESENTATION FROM VICKY SODENBERG, CYGNET STRATEGIES,
INTRODUCING SERVICES AND DESTINATION ASSESSMENT/IDENTITY
DETERMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN PROPOSAL

There was no presentation.

DISCUSS APPLYING FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016 COMMUNITY TOURISM
ASSESSMENT THROUGH THE TEXAS TOURISM PROGRAM

Chairman Coston explained that the Texas Tourism Program offers a three (3) to five (5) day assessment of the City. He stated the committee would walk the streets of Athens and assess the needs of signage, way finding, what kind of restaurants, and what types of retail businesses are needed to attract tourism in the city. The Texas Tourism Program Committee would meet with the Tourism Advisory Council and the City Council and provide their findings of ways the city may attract tourism. Mr. Coston stated several cities apply for this assessment.

Member Reeder asked the cost for the assessment? Mr. Coston explained that to his knowledge there was no cost associated except for the lodging and meals while performing the assessment, however he would call and find out if there is a cost and report his findings at the next meeting. Chairman Coston further explained they will look at the strengths and weaknesses and the overall area of Athens.

There was more discussion around generating tourism and creating an image that says "Athens". There was lengthy discussion on the topic of Heritage Culture, which included Fuller Park, the old hotel, and Downtown Athens.

Member Priestly stated she wants to host a "Sips and Suds" and would like to arrange a meeting with other wineries and begin the process of planning for a Wine and Craft Beer Festival. Chairman Coston suggested that the he would like to be involved during the conversations as he can promote what Athens is doing with other Chamber of Commerce offices.

DISCUSS/CONSIDER DESTINATION/TOURISM ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATION

It was the consensus of the Tourism Advisory Council to table this item.

STAFF REPORTS

A. STATUS REPORT ON CURRENT ACTIVITIES/PROMOTIONS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

This item was not discussed.

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**DISCUSS/CONSIDER SCHEDULING SPECIAL SESSION TO DISCUSS FISCAL
YEAR 2016 TOURISM PROJECTS**

Member Priestly stated she will have a meeting with local wineries on November 15th to discuss a Wine Festival. Chairman Coston stated the Tourism Council may look at having a meeting during the 1st week of December.

CONSENT AGENDA

**A. CONSIDER APPROVING MINUTES OF THE JULY 29, 2015 SPECIAL SESSION
(CORRECTION TO CHANGE COUNCILMAN COSTON TO CHAIRMAN
COSTON) AND SEPTEMBER 1, 2015 REGULAR SESSION**

A motion was made by Member Reeder, seconded by Member Priestley to approve the minutes of the July 29, 2015 Special Session (correction to change Councilmember Coston to Chairman Coston and the September 1, 2015 Regular Session. The motion carried unanimously.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZENS TO EXPRESS ITEMS OF CONCERN

There was no discussion.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS THE 2nd DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2016.

Mike Coston, Chairman

ATTEST:

Bonnie Hambrick, City Secretary