



Town of Hilton Head Island  
**Accommodations Tax  
Advisory Committee**

Thursday, April 4, 2019 at 9:00 am  
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**Present from the Committee:** Brad Marra, *Chairman*; Dru Brown, *Vice-Chairman*; Rob Bender, Jim Fluker, Julie A. Smith, Richard Thomas

**Absent from the Committee:** Roger Freedman

**Present from Town Council:** Tom Lennox, Glen Stanford & Tamara Becker

**Present from Town Staff:** Josh Gruber, *Assistant Town Manager*; Brian Hulbert, *Staff Attorney*; John Troyer, *Director of Finance*; Jennifer McEwen, *Director of Cultural Affairs*; Cindaia Ervin, *Finance Assistant*

**Present from Media:** Katherine Kokal

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### **1. Call to Order**

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

### **2. FOIA Compliance**

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and mailed in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.

### **3. Approval of Minutes**

- a. Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee, November 1, 2018

Mr. Bender moved to approve the minutes from November 1, 2018. Mr. Thomas seconded and the motion was approved by a vote of 6-0.

### **4. Chairman's Report - NONE**

### **5. Unfinished Business - NONE**

### **6. New Business**

- a. Hearing Regarding the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce/Visitor & Convention Bureau's proposed 2019-2020 Marketing Plan and Budget of Expenditures for the 30% Allocation of State Accommodations Tax Funds for the Advertising and Promotion of Tourism.

Ariana Pernice, VP of the HHIVCB, started the presentation by showcasing the HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce/Visitor and Convention Bureau's (VCB) marketing plan book and reviewing its layout. Ms. Pernice explained to the Committee that the purpose of a DMO is to represent the destination and help in the long-term development of a community through the creation and implementation of a travel and tourism strategy. The VCB is the destination marketing division of the Chamber and the marketing efforts put forth by the VCB are delivered on a consistent bases to a well-defined consumer that aligns with the Chamber/VCB visitor research. The goal is to mutually lead its membership, travel and tourism industry by marketing and guiding the Hilton Head Island destination brand experience to generate sustainable economic strength. Mrs. Pernice stated that in 2018 based on the metrics received Hilton Head Island was favorable with its competitors. The Hilton Head Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) is \$127.00 (average daily rate), occupancy was down -2.2%, the average daily rate was up 7.1% and revpar is up 4.8%. Having successful metrics in 2018 helped lead to the 2.26M visitors to Hilton Head last year.

Public relations efforts in 2018 were also successful. In 2018, there were over 1,600 stories and mentions with over 1.8B impressions worth \$21M in ad value. Continued use of ADARA allows tracking each segment's activity from search to booking using behind the scenes marketing tools. The digital marketing strategy & web platform focuses on building one-to-one connections with prospective visitors to the destination via the new comprehensive HiltonHeadIsland.org web platform. The VCB also continues to focus on the keys of success in the meetings and business group sales sector –personal relationships, decision-makers putting eyes on the ground in Hilton Head, continuous tradeshow participation and partnerships with market research firms focused on print, social media and digital spots to enhance leads and boost bookings.

The Hilton Head Island Visitor & Convention Bureau designs campaigns to reach Hilton Head's target audience (HHI \$150+, affluent woman aged 25-64 who live in key Northeast, Midwest and Southeast markets) keeping emerging and international markets top of mind. A continued focus of the VCB is also international marketing. The top three international markets are: Canada, UK, and Germany. The approach with the international market is to utilize the Brand USA Multi-Channel Program to create a targeted, international campaign with a 2-1 value source. The VCB has embarked on a vigorous digital, print and social media campaign partnering with Expedia to reach international travelers. The goal of the Destination Marketing Organization is to focus on personalization and customization when speaking to today's traveler through ensuring choices and options. Digital marketing strategies and website platforms allow the VCB to focus on building valuable connections with prospective visitors to our destination with a more comprehensive website. Personalizing the new web platform enables the VCB to improve the overall communication strategy for the destination to make the content, visuals, offers and video more relevant to each visitor. By investing in the content marketing strategy, the holistic social media strategy will continue to be a big priority for our destination. Social media efforts are geared to drive awareness for the destination and referrals to the website, which will increase paid media support to connect with past guest and potential new ones.

The Committee thanked Mrs. Pernice and the VCB for providing the 2019-2020 budget and marketing plan. The overall consensus of the committee was that they are excited to see that the comments from last year were heard and how well the VCB is taking action to keep Hilton Head Island current. The Committee is continuously impressed with the format and content of the marketing plan and budget. Continuing to stay relevant on the visitors mind with the marketing tools provided has shown a positive effect. In addition, the Committee commented on Ms. Pernice's positive influence on how she and her team prepared for and handled the presentation. The Committee remains encouraged with the direction of the Island's destination marketing efforts and applauds the VCB's extensive tourism research and planning. Overall, the Committee believes the

VCB is representing the Island well and will continue to evolve Hilton Head as the travelers needs change.

Mr. Bender made a motion to approve the 2019-2020 Destination Marketing Organization plan and budget as submitted. Mrs. Smith seconded. The motion was approved by a vote of 6-0.

**7. Executive Session - NONE**

**8. Adjournment**

Chairman Marra adjourned the meeting at 9:42 a.m.

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Cindaia Ervin, Secretary

Approved: July, 11, 2019

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Brad Marra, Chairman