

# Georgia International and Maritime Trade Center Authority

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors  
**Wednesday, March 11, 2015**

Jasper Board Room, Savannah International Trade & Convention Center

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**Members present:** Baxter, Center, Jackson, Marinelli, Quattlebaum, Sanders and Smith. **Members absent:** Cook, Cutter, McAlister, Polote and Tollison. **Also present:** Counsel Tom Gray, Mary Mayle (SMN), Nick Helmholdt, Jeff Hewitt, Jody McIntyre, Michael Owens and SITCC staff Bob Coffey, Stephen Hall, Ronnie Hickman, Judy Johnson, Fredia Brady, Jamie Parks and Gail Terrell.

Chairman Smith convened the meeting at 11:01am.

Chairman Smith noted a quorum, and asked for approval of February 2015 Minutes and Treasurer's report. Motion Mr. Baxter; second Mr. Center, approved by voice vote.

Mr. Smith asked for the financial reports. Mr. Hall reported a favorable variance to the Center budget for February, and an unfavorable variance to budget for year-end. Mr. Hall commented on the inclusion of required accruals for expenses related to unused employee leave and additional post-employment benefits related to State Retirement System. Mr. Hall further commented that a line entry will be included below the Net Income (loss) to account for the accrued unused leave. Mr. Hall reported an unfavorable month and an unfavorable year-end projection for Water Transportation. Mr. Smith commented on the ongoing net loss to Water Ferry operations. Mr. Smith stated that a resolution of water ferry funding long term is needed. Mr. Smith commented on writing a follow up letter to the County regarding funding assistance to ferry operations. In response to Ms. Quattlebaum's question, Mr. Coffey responded that although one potential outcome of Chatham Area Transit (CAT) taking over ferry operations could be charging a fare, factors weighing against doing so include not just the extraordinary effort and expense of administering a fare system; but also that the current funding support structure--intended to keep the ferry and other local visitor transportation platforms fare-free, would very likely fail. Mr. Coffey commented that GIMTCA's legal obligation to fund the Water Ferry operations <<under terms of a 2007 Agreement with CAT and GADOT>> has expired; however, the scenario it created has been stable for 15 years and changes should be approached carefully. Mr. Coffey then introduced Mr. Nick Helmholdt, dot Administrator, who will be involved in related discussions. Mr. Smith commented on a future meeting to be held to discuss an overview of ferry expenses to include any options such as water taxis, funding structures and zones, and the options for obtaining a more suitable funding commitment from Westin.

Mr. Hall continued with the Authority's financials, noting a favorable performance for February; and a forecasted favorable year-end, noting also favorable hotel/motel taxes year to date.

Mr. Smith asked for Counsel's Report. Mr. Gray responded no report at this time.

Mr. Smith asked for the Sales and Marketing Report. Ms. Brady noted 15 definite bookings for February which included smaller close in social events and annual business. Ms. Brady also highlighted tentative bookings for the Healthcare Convention & Exhibitors Association in 2016; and IBM Corporate Annual Shareholder Meeting (2016). Ms. Brady reviewed the year over year booking ('pace') report and event statistics. Ms. Brady noted sales calls on new corporate prospects and meetings in Atlanta in February.

Mr. Smith noted that the PKF report cited approximately six groups who will eventually outgrow the available space at the Trade Center. Mr. Smith requested a report in memo form to be circulated to the board members. Mr. Marinelli also suggested adding a list of groups who did not consider Savannah due to the size of the facility. Ms. Brady commented on increased client requests for more break-out space

for their programs. Mr. Marinelli noted that stronger economic conditions typically yield higher convention attendance, in addition to the destination's appeal. Mr. Marinelli also recommended including those groups citing a shortage of hotel rooms on Hutchinson Island in the lost business report.

Mr. Smith asked for the Food and Beverage Report. Mr. Parks reviewed SAVOR Savannah's February financial statement, favorable customer feedback from January; and introduced a new report detailing SAVOR Savannah's monthly service statistics by event type such as banquets, retail foods, refreshments and receptions. To Mr. Marinelli's question, Mr. Parks clarified the various event types on the report.

Mr. Smith asked for the Operations Report. Mr. Hickman noted Capital Program updates, including Ballroom door & frame project, generator upgrades, Exhibit hall B rollup door and Ballroom service hallway surface improvements. To Mr. Marinelli's question about any electrical savings impact with the new River Concourse HVLS fans, Mr. Hickman and Mr. Hall replied that the fans are working as intended, de-stratifying and circulating the air to maintain efficient temperature balance on both cold and hot days.

Mr. Hall also noted that the recent International Flower Show at Trade Center was of very professional quality, with client encouraging flower donations to multiple local agencies and NFP at show closing.

Mr. Smith asked for the GWCCA report. In Mr. Duvall's absence, Mr. Coffey commented on the proposed convention hotel development on the Atlanta campus. Mr. Coffey stated that the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was in release, with a number of responses already received.

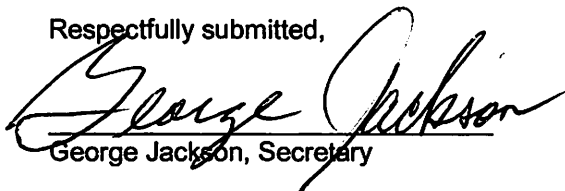
Mr. Smith asked for the General Manager's Report. Mr. Coffey commented on the budget schedule memo in the board packets. Mr. Smith requested an emailed version of the preliminary budget to the board members prior to the next scheduled board meeting in April. Mr. Coffey noted that the Special Board Meeting minutes enclosed in the board packets also needed board approval. Motion Mr. Center, second Ms. Quattlebaum, approved by voice vote. Mr. Coffey commented on the latest repairs to the City Hall Landing ferry dock.

Mr. Smith commented on a letter of agreement being drafted to the Westin and its ownership group with regards to intent to expand the hotel.

Mr. Marinelli commented on an upcoming Visit Savannah meeting on April 17 to discuss the results of a Tourism Futures Study regarding a review of Savannah's core visitor markets. The meeting will be held at 8:30am in Oglethorpe Auditorium at Trade Center.

Mr. Smith requested any further business; hearing none, Mr. Smith adjourned the meeting at 11:53am.

Respectfully submitted,

  
George Jackson, Secretary