



**MALC Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
In Person and Zoom**

September 5, 2024

4:00 PM

Visit Mobile Boardroom | Mobile Convention Center - 4th Floor

Voting Board Members in Attendance:

Kent Blackinton – President of the MALA Representative
Judi Gullede – Attractions Representative
Margo Gilbert – Downtown Mobile Representative
Aaron Watz – West Mobile Representative
Hunter Omainsky – Restaurant Representative

Voting Board Members Not in Attendance:

Pinal Patel – Tillman’s Corner Representative
Ken Patel – Downtown Mobile Representative
Raj Desai – Tillman’s Corner Representative
Duncan Millar – West Mobile Representative

Non-Voting Board Members and Others in Attendance:

David Clark – Visit Mobile Representative
Patty Kieffer – Visit Mobile
Tom White – Visit Mobile
Oliver Dorgan – Visit Mobile
Tara Lawson – Visit Mobile

Meeting Called to Order by Kent Blackinton at 4:02 PM.

Approval of Minutes from the July 25 meeting.

Margo Gilbert motioned. Aaron Watz seconded.

A unanimous vote of approval followed.

**There was no monthly financial report in Bobby Hall’s absence*

Guest – Tina Poiroux, Executive Director of the Southwest Mobile County Chamber

- Tina Poiroux presented the SWMCC Gateway Initiative, along with Brett Orrell of Polysurveying, Chairman of the initiative.

- Gateway Initiative for Tillman's Corner / Mobile Southwest area is a project they have been working on for over 5 years, presenting to Mobile Area Lodging Corporation because it aligns well with the Tillman's Corner Beautification Project that MALC approved in July for Capital Improvement.
- The Gateway Initiative includes welcome signage and landscaping that creates an inviting corridor into the Tillmans Corner area. The signage would be a stone or brick welcome sign on an area that is approximately 15-20 feet in length.
- The SWMCC would work in conjunction with the state for a maintenance agreement and potentially work out an agreement with the Holiday Inn located on that corner.
- The goal of the project is to promote growth of the businesses and hotels in the immediate surrounding area.
- The SWMCC has secured \$8,000 towards the project. Estimated budget is \$47,500 in total for the landscaping, lighting, permitting, flagpole, etc.
- Tina and Brett thanked the Board for their time and left the meeting so that the Board of Directors might discuss options for the project.

Discussion: This is a project that aligns with the goals of the Board. Margo Gilbert and Judi Gulledge both suggested committing the entire remaining cost of the project, which would be approximately \$40,000. SWMCC would be great partners in assisting with the landscaping project that has already been approved and future Capital Improvements.

Concern: Ensure there is no duplication of efforts overlapping with the project that has already been approved. After install, who is the entity responsible for the maintenance of the land?

Proposal: MALC will contribute \$50,000 towards the funding of the gateway project, not assuming responsibility for maintenance. MALC will pay invoices directly to the vendors and contractors involved and will have the Tillman's Corner representatives of the Board, Pinal Patel and Raj Desai, attend meetings and discussions involving the planning of this project.

*Kent Blackinton made a motion to approve. Margo Gilbert seconded.
A unanimous vote of approval followed.*

2023 Audit Presentation – Deborah Hodges

- *Opinion: the financial statements present fairly in all material respects.*
- *Overall highest opinion the Board could hope to receive, all money is being spent as it should.*
- *All cash was available at the end of the year.*
- *Risk with the termination of the district would be included in the termination of MALC's contract with the City.*

- *Once this audit is approved by the Board of Directors, Deborah Hodges will issue the final audit report.*
- *The final audit report will be posted to mobilearealodgingcorporation.com when approved.*

Marketing & Promotions – Tara Lawson

- Digital Campaign Results
 - Expedia – campaign is performing well, the marketing team believes the decision to vary the spend amounts according to market trends throughout the year is benefitting the overall results of the campaign.
 - Display, CTV/OTT – campaigns are performing as expected, September will be the last month with the current vendor for these services. The marketing team is exploring other options for vendors in FY2025.
 - GDS Campaign – increase in results from June to July, contract has been extended.
 - Wrapping up all print advertising commitments for the fiscal year.
- Convention Marketing
 - The FAM trip is being rescheduled to late fall due to scheduling conflicts with the original attendees.
 - The sponsored appointment clock at Connect was a success.

Capital Update

- Visitor Kiosks
 - The kiosk for the Convention Center has been delivered.
 - Two out of three parts for the Welcome Center have been delivered.
 - Delivery of the outdoor kiosk has been scheduled; the Downtown Alliance has agreed to keep the kiosk at their office until final install date is scheduled with the City.

Renewal Update

- Kent, Margo, David, and Tara Lawson have been meeting with Civitas and have an updated timeline for renewal.
- Civitas will draft the new District Management Plan, Hand Arendall Harrison Sale LLC will draft the ordinance and city agreement.
- Due to the mechanics of the District Management Plan staying the same, there will be no petition process to renew.
- There is a meeting with Mayor Stimpson next week to negotiate the baseline funding for Visit Mobile and the City’s desire to increase lodging tax; hoping to reach a common ground that will keep hotel operators happy and benefit everyone.
- Topic of assessing \$1.50 for year one and \$2.00 for years two through five: Will it be more of a hurdle for hoteliers to have to change their booking systems twice?

Annual Budget

- The Board will have to approve two budget options this year: A stub budget that ends in May of 2025 if the MTID does not renew, and a full fiscal year budget with the allocated increase in assessment if the MTID does renew.
- The Board will vote on the stub budget at the October meeting, and present at a public hearing in November for official adoption. This adoption will trigger the sunset period on the current MTID.

Future Meeting Dates

- October – Thursday, October 17
- November – Annual Meeting, Thursday November 7

Open Discussion

Meeting Adjourned at 5:26 PM by Kent Blackinton.