



Annual Internal Review
Tourism Commission
(covering meetings from August 2018 – August 2019)

The Board/Commission mission statement (per the City Code) is:

Provide Expertise and Recommendations to the City Council concerning hotel occupancy tax revenue collected by the city and issues related to and that promote tourism.

1. Describe the board's actions supporting their mission during the previous calendar year. Address all elements of the board's mission statement as provided in the relevant sections of the City Code.

(Reference all reports, recommendations, letters or resolutions presented to the City Council on mission-specific issues. If some of the elements of the mission statement were not acted on by the board in the past year, the report should explain why no action was taken.)

As a new Commission, meeting for the first time in August of 2018, the first few months were spent reviewing prior bodies of work and documentation related to the mission as well as electing officers and discussing the mission and bylaws. Presentations, discussions and resulting actions taken over the last year are outlined in chronological order:

- FY 18-19 Budget Overview presentations from the Austin Convention Center Department, Visit Austin, Heritage Tourism (Economic Development Dept.) and Cultural Arts (Economic Development Dept.)
- Review of current revenues and applicable tax code, including presentation by City Legal regarding legal framework for Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) allocation.
- Review of key performance metrics from Texas Tourism Office
- Presentation of Visitor Impact Taskforce findings
- Presentation of Heritage Grant Working Group findings
- Review of City of Austin's legislative plan for the 86th Texas Legislature
 - [Approved a recommendation](#) to 'Support legislation that empowers greater local control of how City uses local hotel occupancy taxes, including expanding allowable uses in Austin to spending on homelessness, parks, watershed protection and preservation projects, arts and public safety'. (6-2-1)
- Review of Commission Bylaws and vote to amend bylaws to include standard language relating to the formation of working groups (9-0-0)
- Formation of working groups including:
 - Heritage Tourism and Arts working group
 - Parks and Environment working group
 - Short-Term Rentals working group

- Presentation on the Convention Center operational budget and allocation of Hotel Occupancy Taxes as compared to other cities.
- Presentation regarding demand data and unmet requests [for meeting / group business] from Visit Austin
- [Recommendation to](#) Council to ‘Revisit the collection of Hotel Occupancy Taxes from short-term rental[s] and prepare some analysis on what the delta is between what’s collected and what’s out there for the market demand for short-term rentals.’ (6-0-0)
- [Recommendation to](#) Council to ‘Adopt and implement the recommendations of the Visitor Impact Task Force (VITF) as a guiding framework for the future expansion of the Austin Convention Center and allocation of Hotel Occupancy Taxes. (9-0-1)
- [Recommendation that](#) Council to work to reach agreements with the Short-term Rental Platforms to collect Hotel Occupancy Taxes in aggregate for all bookings through such platforms. That current proportional allocations of such HOT be maintained with some earmarks for criteria for Arts funding derived from such revenues. That such negotiations should also include pursuing a voluntary 1% assessment on such short term rental books and revenues derived from such an assessment be allocated to addressing issues relating to homelessness in Austin.

2. Determine if the board’s actions throughout the year comply with the mission statement.

(If any of the board’s actions were outside the scope of the mission statement, the report should explain the non-compliance issues.)

The board’s actions throughout the year largely align with the mission as stated. The majority of deliberation, however, has been related the subject of Hotel Occupancy Tax allocations and not as much to ‘issues related to and that promote tourism’. The scope of the mission is broad, with many interrelated issues affecting an industry representing 12% of Austin’s workforce and significant growth over the past decade. There was a strong need for education on the topics for commissioners who were not as entrenched in the industry as others. This was coupled with a turnover of three commissioners due to changes in elected officials and new appointments in January 2019.

By and large, the first year of the Tourism Commission has produced recommendations that were broadly supported through near unanimous consensus by the Commission.

3. List the board’s goals and objectives for the new calendar year.

FY19-20 I believe the goals for the commission should reflect the underlying economic impact of the Tourism Industry, discussing ways to support and further an already robust and successful sector of the Austin economy. Further, the commission should work to advise on matters related to ROI on investments from all allocation of HOT as it specifically relates to promoting tourism in line with current State law. The commission should also work to better engage with other city commissions (Arts Commission, Music Commission and Public Safety Commission) to identify topics coming before each that have an impact on tourism and the Hotel Occupancy Tax. A discussion and possible recommendation to amend the mission should be undertaken to lend more gravitas to the promotion of tourism and less to the issue of HOT allocation.