



## MINUTES OF THE DOWNTOWN MEMPHIS COMMISSION

Friday, March 24, 2023, 9 AM  
114 North Main Street

**Board Members Present:** Benjamin Orgel (Chair), Demar Roberts (Vice Chair), Commissioner Mickell Lowery, Elizabeth Low (Secretary), Williams Brack (Treasurer), Ashley Cash (for Mayor Strickland), Julie Ellis, Ed Stephens III, Councilwoman Cheyenne Johnson, Lauren Stimac, and Victoria Young

**Board Members Not Present:** Cheryl Pesce, Deni Reilly, John Pontius, John Zeanah (for Mayor Harris), and Senator Raumesh Akbari

**Staff Present:** Paul Young, Brett Roler, Christine Taylor, Penelope Springer, Penelope Huston, Sara Barrera, Lawrence Green, Abe Lueders, and Sam Caldwell

**Guests:** Constance Brown, Lauren Stimac, Jayme Stokes, Jonathan Lindsey, Ruthie Sills, Dean Dennis (Renasant), Corinne Kennedy, and Member of the Public

Chairman Benjamin Orgel called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. Christine Taylor called roll for board members present to confirm quorum. Chairman Orgel called for approval of the February 24, 2023, minutes. Ed Stephens motioned to approve the minutes as presented, Demar Roberts seconded the motion, after roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously. A quick introduction from new board member Lauran Stimac. She is lawyer at Glassman, Wyatt, Tuttle & Cox.

### **Chairman Benjamin Orgel called for agenda item III: Chair's Report**

Chairman Orgel started the update with giving a shout-out to Brett Roler and Abe Lueders (Planning & Development Department) for their leadership and hard work on the PILOT review. The new policies were adopted by the CCRFC in February and go into effect July 1<sup>st</sup>. Also, thanked the board members for their participation in the group exercise at last month's meeting to help staff with priorities in the upcoming year for the budget season. A special thanks to the entire staff for everything they do to make Downtown better for everybody.

### **Chairman Benjamin Orgel called for agenda item IV: Financial Update**

Penelope Springer presented the financial update, and monthly highlights. Staff Accountant, Sam Caldwell presented DMC garage performances.

### **Chairman Benjamin Orgel called for agenda item V: Convention Center Update**

Paul Young introduced our guest speaker Dennis Dean, Senior Vice President, and General Manager of Renasant Convention Center. Dennis Dean presented an update on the newly renovated convention center. The convention center is about 300,000 square feet of exhibit space, with 46 breakout rooms, with the attached Cannon Center, which is home to the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, which host about 100 shows annually. Since renovation the Renasant has hosted several signature events including, Mid-South Farm &

Gin, ALSAC/St. Jude, AutoZone, AKA SE meeting Anime Blues Con and the return of COGIC. CY 2022 had 268 events with over 240,00 in attendance. The FY24 Budget/Projections: Convention revenue highest ever – \$1.649M, Tradeshows revenue highest ever - \$440K, Meetings - \$858K, Consumer shows 2<sup>nd</sup> highest back to 2007 - \$286K, and Banquets highest at nearly \$500K. The Cannon Center 2022 has had 120 event days with over 85,000 in attendance, with a record year for: On-sale dates, attendance, revenues creating content for the City of Memphis. 2023 & 2024 are looking to be the biggest year we have ever had. After the presentation, a few comments were heard from board members and Mr. Dean answered questions.

**Chairman Benjamin Orgel called for agenda item VI: President’s Report**

Paul Young gave brief updates on ongoing Downtown projects. The Memphis Grizzlies are in the playoffs and Downtown will host watch parties at the Fourth Bluff Park. Upcoming spring events are Africa in April and the return of Memphis in May to Tom Lee Park. DMC has purchased a vehicle for BSB that started an overnight patrol to deter property crime. Brief update on the Diversity meeting that was lead by Tori Haliburton.

**Chairman Benjamin Orgel called for agenda item VII: New Business/ Adjournment**

Chairman Orgel made brief closing remarks, seeing no other business, the meeting was adjourned.