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**TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
TRAVEL POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
Council President Aaron L. Bowman, TDC Chairman  
Thursday, December 6, 2018  
3:30 P.M.  
117 West Duval Street  
City Hall, Fourth Floor, Suite 425  
Conference Room B**

**ATTENDANCE**

City Council President Aaron Bowman, Board Chairperson (dep. 4:30)  
City Council Vice President Scott Wilson, Board Vice Chairperson (arr. 3:38)  
City Council Member Lori N. Boyer, Board Member  
Dawn Southworth, Board Member

Sarah Maples, TDC Administrator  
Sondra Fetner, Interim TDC Staff  
Rachel Merritt, Interim TDC Staff  
Kim Taylor, Assistant Council Auditor  
Lawsikia Hodges, Deputy General Counsel (dep. 4:32)

**Meeting Convened: 3:33 p.m.**

**Meeting Adjourned: 4:55 p.m.**

**Introduction – Council President Aaron Bowman, TDC Chairperson**

Council President Bowman called the meeting to order. Self-introductions followed. He stated that the purpose of the meeting was to decide on a policy for the tourism department, which is legal, covers the city, and provides clear standards for the vendor, Visit Jacksonville (VJ), and for the staff who review receipts for payment.

**Travel Policy Discussion**

Ms. Sondra Fetner began the discussion with an overview of the three areas that needed clarification: entertainment expenses, local travel and meals for VJ employees, and out-of-town travel and meals for VJ employees. President Bowman verified that the policy would be in accordance with code.

#### **Local entertainment limits**

The first topic, presented by Ms. Fetner, addressed whether there should be maximum entertainment expenditure limits, such as maximum amount per guest, or a maximum amount per day per guest, or maximum tickets per guest. Ms. Dawn Southworth, TDC Committee Member, asked if that should vary based on whether entertainment is local or while traveling? President Bowman stated that he agreed there should be a difference, but that he did not feel there was a need to set hard limits and would suggest a threshold, but with an approval process for anything above that threshold. He stated his objective was to give leverage and latitude, but not carte blanche.

Council Member (CM) Boyer suggested \$200 per person might be a reasonable amount for local entertainment. President Bowman and Ms. Southworth expressed that amount might be high. President Bowman suggested \$150 per person, inclusive of tip, as an alternative. CM Boyer agreed, but suggested that amount apply to dinner, with a maximum amount of \$225 per person per day. President Bowman clarified that amount should include food and beverage, excluding entertainment, and that VJ employees should have the same limits as guests.

CM Boyer suggested VJ should have to provide names of guests attending, their affiliation, dates, and the budget line from which the request was being funded in order to justify reimbursement.

President Bowman raised the question of what to do about guests who may be covered by a non-disclosure agreement, but it was determined that had never been an issue and the topic would be tabled until such time as it became necessary to address it. He Bowman reiterated proposal of \$150 per meal, inclusive of meal, beverage, and tip, with a limit of \$225 total per person, per day for local events. All agreed. Ms. Lawsikia Hodges, Deputy General Counsel, indicated that she would review the Florida Statutes regarding non-disclosure exemption from public records requirements.

#### **Limits for local entertainment**

CM Boyer opened the discussion on local entertainment costs by asking VJ whether \$200 per person was a reasonable cap. VJ agreed it was. CM Boyer suggested the policy be \$200 per person per day, unless preapproved by TDC Chair.

#### **Limits for out-of-town entertainment**

VJ expressed that costs in other cities, such as Chicago, were generally more expensive than local costs, stating that sales managers generally spent about \$200 per person for entertainment or meals in Chicago. CM Boyer pointed out that, when entertaining locally, you were more likely to go to events, but when entertaining out-of-town, dinners were more common. She suggested \$250 per day per person was sufficient. Ms. Kim Taylor, Assistant Council Auditor, clarified that the \$250 amount pertained to VJ employees when they were entertaining, but were different from the per diem amounts employees would normally receive if dining alone while traveling. President Bowman confirmed.

#### **Sponsors**

Ms. Fetner asked if VJ was allowed to solicit sponsors. And, if so, how any remaining funds originally budgeted for a trip should be spent. CM Boyer said yes to sponsors; President Bowman agreed. CM Boyer stated that VJ would turn in receipts and be reimbursed only for what they actually spent and

could then request TDC approval to use remaining funds for another approved event. President Bowman agreed.

### Gifts

Ms. Fetner asked if there should be a maximum reimbursable amount for gifts and whether the gifts should represent Jacksonville, or whether they could be anything. President Bowman expressed that he didn't believe there should be restrictions on what type of gift they give, but that there should be a limit on amount. President Bowman suggested that amount be limited to \$50 per person. CM Boyer stated that VJ should provide name of gift recipient, date, amount, occasion, and type of gift.

### Employee Event Attendance

Ms. Fetner asked whether there should be a limit to how many VJ employees can attend a single event. Ms. Southworth asked VJ if they currently had any guidelines. VJ said a sales manager and one other employee was standard. Ms. Southworth asked when more employees might be justified. VJ stated that FAM events require more employees, but it is usually two employees, a sales manager and a services person. CM Boyer suggested perhaps no more than two employees per guest was a good ratio; President Bowman suggested two employees for up to five guests and one employee for each additional three guests, with preapproval by TDC Chair available for anything exceeding that ratio.

### Gratuity

Ms. Fetner asked if there should be a limit on authorized gratuity amounts, such as 15 or 20%. President Bowman stated there may be times when exceeding 20% would be justifiable. VJ stated that, when services or products are comped, it is accepted industry practice to tip on the pre-comp amount. CM Boyer suggested sticking with the previously agreed upon daily limits and no setting a standard tip amount. All agreed.

### Alcohol Consumption

Ms. Fetner asked whether employees should be allowed to consume alcohol while working in an official capacity, and, if so, was there a limit to number of drinks and would those drinks would be reimbursable. CM Boyer stated that the TDC did not want to be explicitly authorizing alcohol consumption by employees. However, she stated that, when employees receive per diem, there are no receipts. Ms. Southworth stated that their policy was that employees could not get reimbursed for alcohol when alone, and that, if entertaining, there must be food as well as alcohol on any bill. President Bowman expressed that in his business there are often times when after dinner drinks may be appropriate. CM Boyer pointed out that President Bowman's example pertaining to private industry funds, not public. Ms. Southworth said the issue was really about liability. CM Boyer suggested requiring food on the bill when entertaining, unless preapproved, but that she wouldn't want pretzels, for example, to count as the food. She also suggested perhaps a percentage of the bill, such as 50%, should be food. Ms. Fetner commented that might be difficult, as alcoholic drinks are expensive. CM Boyer suggested the committee table the discussion at this time. Ms. Lawsikia Hodges, Deputy General Counsel, suggested approaching risk management to see what their opinion was. President Bowman agreed to table the issue for the time being. Ms. Fetner asked what the policy should be with regards to reimbursements in the meantime. VJ stated that they did not believe any receipts submitted for reimbursement in the interim would be an issue.

### Local Industry Guests

Ms. Fetner asked what the limit should be when VJ is hosting guests and local industry representatives also want to attend. Should there be a limit to number of local attendees? CM Boyer suggested local

industry attendees should pay for their own meals, since they are also promoting their own products and services. VJ stated that they usually split the bill, or offset the costs in other ways. CM Boyer suggested not more than one hotelier or other industry person at a meal can be covered by TDC. Others agreed.

#### **Gift Cards**

VJ stated that they only provide gift cards for writers and influencers on the marketing side, in lieu of providing specific reimbursement for food and beverage. CM Boyer stated she was comfortable with gift cards as long as: they were limited to bloggers/influencers; did not exceed \$100 per person, per day; and VJ provides a signed and dated acknowledgement by writer/influencer confirming receipt of card, original receipt for purchase of card, and name/affiliation of the recipient and the dates they are in town.

#### **Mileage Reimbursement**

Ms. Fetner introduced the topic of mileage reimbursement for VJ employees. She clarified that travel to and from primary place of work, as well as travel to and from TDC meetings and parking for those meetings, is not reimbursable. Should they be reimbursed if they are going to a location that is not their primary place of work? Council Vice President Scott Wilson suggested all employees be reimbursed if they are required to go to a work location that is other than their primary work location. CM Boyer suggested they should also be reimbursed for site visits, but not for sampling new restaurants. Ms. Fetner clarified that they would be reimbursed at the IRS mileage reimbursement rate and that they would need to submit date, purpose, and mileage for reimbursement. Ms. Taylor suggested that mileage be submitted on a monthly basis to make submittals more manageable.

#### **Out-of-Town Travel Per Diem**

CM Boyer clarified that VJ employees currently received GSA, as opposed to COJ, per diem and suggested that should remain in place. VJ suggested that, following those rules, they should receive 75% of per diem on travel days when they are not traveling for an entire day. Ms. Fetner suggested that meals submitted for entertaining expenses be subtracted from per diem. Ms. Maples suggested that also apply to meals provided at conferences or trade shows. CM Boyer agreed.

#### **Previous Non-Conforming Travel**

Ms. Taylor introduced the topic of previous trips submitted for VJ for approval, which were not on the previously approved travel list, and trips that were, but had nonconforming items submitted for receipt. She asked if approximately \$19,000 in previously submitted nonconforming costs could be processed under old travel rules if trips were preapproved; CM Boyer confirmed they could, as long as VJ provided people attending and other relevant details. Ms. Fetner asked what should be done about costs associated with non-approved trips. CM Boyer said VJ would need to request approval for those trips at January TDC meeting. If approved, those previously completed trips will be submitted under rules in place at time of trip. Also, any FY18/19 costs submitted prior to the January meeting will be reviewed for compliance with new policy. If in compliance, they can be reimbursed. If they do not comply, they will need to request exception from TDC Chair.

#### **Conclusion**

CM Boyer requested the new TDC policy draft be made available to TDC members prior to the January TDC meeting, so that members can vote on the policy at that meeting. All comments pertaining to the policy should be directed to Ms. Fetner.

Public Comments – none

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 p.m.