Visit Pensacola Executive Committee Meeting

Tuesday, August 4, 2026
VIC Conference Center – Visit Pensacola

Board Members Present: Sterling Gilliam, Maria Goldberg, Gabe DiCianni, Diana Graff, and Yash Patel.

Board Members Absent: N/A

Staff Members Present: Nicole Stacey, Wandy Samuel, and Sarah Samsa

The meeting was called to order at 3:08 pm by Sterling Gilliam.

No Public Comment

Finance Committee Update & Comptroller Discussion

The Executive Committee reviewed the organization's current financial position and ongoing cash flow challenges. As reported during the recent Finance Committee meeting, Visit Pensacola had approximately $600,000 in cash reserves as of June. While the organization remains operationally stable, concerns continue regarding liquidity throughout the remainder of the fiscal year due to delays in reimbursement payments from the County. Staff reported that the current line of credit matures in October 2026, and Regions Bank advised that any request to increase the line of credit would need to be considered during the renewal process at the conclusion of the fiscal year.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on reimbursement delays associated with marketing expenditures managed through Showcase. Under the current process, Visit Pensacola pays Showcase, which then pays its advertising vendors before reimbursement requests are submitted to the County. Committee members expressed concern regarding a recently imposed requirement by the Comptroller's Office to provide cleared checks from Showcase's individual vendors before reimbursements will be processed. Members noted that this additional level of verification had not been required in prior years and questioned whether it exceeds the contract's standard of providing "reasonable documentation" for reimbursement purposes.

Staff reported that approximately $1.3 million in expenditure has already been paid and are awaiting reimbursement, while an additional $1.7 million in future Showcase-related obligations are expected. At present, reimbursement submissions remain delayed pending receipt of final cleared-check documentation from two Showcase vendors. Committee members acknowledged that these delays have created a significant strain on cash flow and have contributed to a growing reimbursement backlog.

Following discussion, the committee agreed that pursuing an additional advance or increasing the line of credit would not address the underlying issue and would only postpone the financial challenge. Members emphasized the need to resolve the reimbursement process itself and voiced support for further discussions with the Comptroller's Office regarding the secondary cleared-check requirement. Staff also reported that ACH payment options are being explored with Showcase and its vendors to expedite payment verification and reimbursement processing.

The committee directed staff to continue pursuing reimbursement of all outstanding amounts and supported escalating discussions with the Comptroller's Office as necessary to seek a more efficient and reasonable documentation process moving forward.

Board Representation Discussion

The Executive Committee discussed a board representation matter following Diana Graff's announcement that she has now transitioned into a new position with Hotel Tristan and Hotel Morgan. As a result of this career move, the geographic area she represents on the board will change. Staff reviewed the board's representation structure and identified a potential solution involving a reassignment of representation areas with another board member, Yash Patel, whose hotel portfolio aligns with Diana's new district. The committee discussed whether this adjustment could be handled administratively or if formal board action would be required under the organization's bylaws.

Committee members expressed strong support for retaining Diana's service on the board and recognized the value of her continued involvement. To ensure the reassignment is completed in accordance with the bylaws, the committee agreed that legal counsel should be consulted to determine the appropriate process and whether approval by the Executive Committee or the full Board is required. Sterling Gilliam will contact Robbie to obtain guidance on the necessary steps for adjusting board representation assignments and maintaining Diana's board eligibility.

President & CEO Search Committee Update

Maria Goldberg provided an update on behalf of the CEO Search Committee, reporting that SearchWide Global has identified seven qualified finalists for consideration. The candidate pool represents a diverse range of geographic markets and professional backgrounds within the destination marketing industry, including experience in destination marketing organizations, sales, hospitality, tourism marketing, and sports tourism. Committee members expressed confidence in the quality of the applicant pool and noted that search committee participants have been highly engaged throughout the review process.

After discussion, the search committee determined that all seven finalists will advance to the interview stage. Virtual interviews are scheduled for August 19 and August 21, 2026, with committee members participating in person while candidates interview remotely. The committee believes interviewing all seven candidates will provide the broadest perspective before narrowing the field.

Following the initial interviews, the committee intends to reduce the candidate pool to two or three finalists who will be invited to Pensacola for in-person visits. Discussion focused on developing a structured itinerary that will provide finalists with meaningful opportunities to engage with key stakeholders while also allowing stakeholders to evaluate the candidates. Proposed stakeholder groups include Visit Pensacola staff, board members and past board chairs, government representatives such as county officials and the Clerk's Office, and community and tourism partners. The committee also discussed hosting a broader networking reception or partner event to provide additional opportunities for interaction with local tourism stakeholders.

The CEO Search Committee will conduct interviews with all seven finalists on August 19 and 21, narrow the pool to two or three candidates for onsite visits, and develop candidate schedules that include stakeholder meetings and engagement opportunities during the finalist selection process.

Nominating Committee

Staff provided an update on the work of the Nominating Committee, reporting that the committee has identified approximately 12 to 13 qualified candidates who currently meet the eligibility requirements for board consideration. Application submission concluded on July 31st and is currently being reviewed to verify membership status, dues standing, and overall compliance with nomination requirements. Committee members expressed confidence in the quality of the candidate pool and noted that several strong candidates have emerged through the review process.
Sarah also reported that she will be meeting with Rachel Gillette to review the nominating process, confirm procedures, and finalize the documentation required for the committee's work. This meeting will help ensure that all nominations are properly

vetted and that the committee is prepared to move forward in accordance with established Bylaws and procedures. The Nominating Committee is scheduled to meet the following week, August 13, to review candidates and continue the selection process.

Additional Discussion

Board member Diana Graff and Visit Pensacola staff member Kaya Man met with partner Emily Mikel representing Springhill Suites and TownePlace Suites to discuss concerns and feedback raised following the Quarterly Marketing Update on July 29, 2026. The meeting was productive and provided an opportunity for open dialogue, with all participants expressing that the conversation helped foster a greater sense of understanding and resolution. During the discussion, Visit Pensacola's mission and marketing efforts were reviewed, emphasizing the organization's commitment to promoting Pensacola as a destination while showcasing the diverse attractions, experiences, and communities throughout the area. Although Pensacola Beach remains a key tourism driver, Visit Pensacola continues to invest in strategies that increase awareness and visitation across the entire destination. Diana and Kaya also shared industry insights, sales and marketing strategies, and recommendations for driving hotel occupancy and attracting additional visitors to Emily's market area.

Adjournment

The committee supported continued discussions with the Comptroller's Office to seek a more efficient and reasonable documentation process. Staff also reported exploring ACH payment options with Showcase and its vendors as a potential solution to accelerate payment verification, reduce processing delays, and improve the overall reimbursement timeline. The committee reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining financial stability while pursuing solutions that streamline reimbursements and improve cash flow.

Members also discussed the importance of moving forward with the President & CEO search process according to the established timeline. In preparation for finalist visits, the committee agreed that key stakeholder groups and/or pods should be identified to ensure candidates have the opportunity to engage with staff, board members, government representatives, and community partners.

The Executive Committee expressed confidence in the progress being made across all initiatives and reaffirmed its commitment to collaboration, communication, and organizational continuity.