

PINE BLUFF ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

July 28, 2025

The regular meeting of the Pine Bluff Advertising and Promotion Commission was held on Monday, July 28, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. at the Merrill Museum, 1203 W. Pullen. This meeting was audibly recorded. These minutes are a summarization.

PRESENT:

Advertising and Promotion Commission

Mr. Glen Brown, Jr., Chair
Mr. David Knott, Secretary-Treasurer
Mrs. Reneta Harper
Mr. Lloyd Holcomb, Jr.

Staff

Mrs. Sheri Storie, Executive Director
Mr. Jimmy Cunningham, Tourism Development Director
Mrs. Betty Brown, Recorder

Guests

Michael McCray, Economic and Community Development
Byron Tate, Pine Bluff Commercial

Call to Order:

Brown called the meeting to order at 4:55 PM.

Brown asked for consideration of the minutes for the regular meeting of June 23, 2025. Harper moved to accept the minutes as presented. Knott seconded. The minutes were approved.

Director's Report

Storie reported the tax collections for June noting that we are 5.8% greater than our budget but not yet year to date with last year's collections.

Storie informed the Commission that our GovOS online payment system is on target to begin receiving payments on August 1 for taxes that were collected in July.

Storie gave an update on the ITI Digital implementation to our website calendar of events. It is now interactive and provides opportunity and information for a wide variety of events. These events can be submitted by others and will always be approved before being published. We also can print a PDF from the portal that shows events for specific dates for groups coming into town for reunions and place it in their swag bags or in the hotels and restaurants in town.

Storie spoke on the Music Cities Convention hosted in Fayetteville, September 15-18. This is a global event focused on the role of music for community development and economic growth and will feature 30 speakers, opportunities for workshops, networking and exploration of best practices. Since Pine Bluff's music is an integral part of our tourism it is an opportunity to be one of the sponsors of this event. Storie shared the commitment of \$5,000, coming from the tourism development budget for the closing showcase. The event features talented artists from Arkansas,

including Pine Bluff and Dumas providing an exceptional platform for Cunningham to share the initiatives underway in Pine Bluff. Storie stated that the sponsorship comes with a reserved table for eight and invited the Commission to participate as representatives of Pine Bluff A&P/Explore Pine Bluff.

Cunningham added that the conference will inform and instruct the “how to” methods of telling a narrative, branding and placemaking. He stated that we now have things to point to and are lining up with the best practices already established. Cunninham will be attending the entire conference and Storie will be attending the final day and closing ceremony.

Storie informed everyone that she and Cunningham met with Mayor Flowers to discuss the Arkansas Gospel Music Heritage Month two-day event presented by the state coordinator. Storie received a sponsorship packet from Dedric Jones, the State Coordinator, and she feels comfortable committing to \$2,500 toward advertising for this event. She included the packet within the commissioner’s binder in case they wanted to increase that amount. They agreed to \$2,500.

Storie then informed the commissioners that the Whistleblowers Summit is another event that she would like A&P to sponsor for \$1,000 due to the definite Martha Mitchell connection to the whistleblowers.

Michael McCray shared that the event will be held in Little Rock, July 30-31. Pine Bluff has unique assets of Martha Mitchell that no other whistleblower has, including Martha Mitchell Expressway, a bust at Memorial Gardens and her home all present tourism attractions. The Kickoff reception will be in the Martha Mitchell home. He thanked A&P for their support.

Storie shared the latest information on Trolley Hop Thursdays in collaboration with the Economic and Community Development, Downtown Development and Parks and Recreation. It has been established to increase foot traffic in downtown Pine Bluff. It will kick off on August 14. There will also be digital connections with QR Codes at different locations throughout the downtown area. The plans are ongoing and include the overall tourism experience for the downtown area.

Cunningham updated everyone that he would be attending the Just Blues Gala in Biloxi to meet with the board members for future collaboration. The Blues Hall of Fame in Memphis and Just Blues foundation in Atlanta are interested in connecting with the Delta associations and are considering Pine Bluff’s amenities, the Blues history, current music festivities, Saracen Casino and talk in the industry as progress worth noting.

Cunningham, Storie and Blankenship met with Adam Long of The Delta Byways Travel Association, to discuss plans on bridging our music aspects and creating signage and developing a trail to attract Delta visitors to Pine Bluff.

Cunningham continues to talk with the Mellon Foundation regarding further funding for the other phases of the Cultural District. He shared a letter he had received from the foundation. He reminded everyone that the district is built on the National Trails intersecting our city.

Storie presented a very preliminary budget for 2026 and reiterated the Commission’s commitment to not use reserve monies to fund the future budgets as was done beginning in 2023. She shared her internal struggle to project a workable budget to meet the needs of the A&P mission as well as

funding the convention center and other grant funding recipients. Storie explained the preliminary budget with thorough details, answered all questions and asked the commissioners to review it and she welcomed feedback.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee – Knott presented the financial summary report for month ending June 30.

Brown shared his recent experience touring the downtown area with perspective business investors and encouraged involving the city with the overall upkeep of the area. Storie and Cunningham both assured Brown that they would report their findings on a regular basis to the city.

Holcomb asked for Pop's new barber shop facility and owner to be included in downtown planning.

Storie noted that the Aramark legal matters are closed, and their lawyers have dismissed the legal fee reimbursement since A&P was timely and complete with the tax reimbursement.

A brief discussion was held regarding recent events in the city, Catfish Friday, Black Rodeo and the 4th of July fireworks. Storie informed Brown that she would follow up with the Pine Bluff Festival Association board to work together to plan a bigger festival for the holiday in the future. The need for overall sponsorship other than A&P was mentioned for all future events.

New Business

Cunningham presented the information included in the Commission's meeting binder, the plans for a Juke Joint façade for the restrooms in the Blues and Wellness Plaza. He added that UAPB is on board leveraging \$30,000 from the Wingate Foundation and requests they consider using \$45,000 from the matching grant funds to accomplish this project.

Knott made a motion to approve use of \$45,000 from the matching grant funds to accomplish the Juke Joint façade for the restrooms at the Blues and Wellness Plaza. Holcomb seconded. The motion was approved.

With no further business to be discussed Holcomb moved to adjourn. Knott seconded. Brown adjourned the meeting at 6:09 PM. Juanita Currie, Merrill Museum Director, offered a tour.

The next regular meeting will be on Monday, August 25, 2025, at 5:00 PM at the offices of the A&P Commission.

Respectfully submitted,


Glen Brown, Jr., A&P Commission Chair
/beb


Sheri Storie, A&P Executive Director

*The minutes contained herein follow the best practices of **Robert's Rules of Order** and is not a transcription of the meeting. As is standard procedure, these minutes serve as a record of the action(s) taken by the Commission and is not a record of detailed discussion that took place during the meeting.*