

MINUTES

HOUSTON FIRST CORPORATION

**Operations Committee Meeting
December 10, 2020 – 2:00 P.M.
Live Video and Audio Conference Meeting**

The Operations Committee (“Committee”) of Houston First Corporation (the “Corporation” or “HFC”), a Texas local corporation created and organized by the City of Houston as a local government corporation pursuant to TEX. TRANSP. CODE ANN. §431.101 et seq. and TEX LOC. GOV’T. CODE ANN. §394.001 et seq., posted a meeting via live video and audio conference on Thursday, December 10, 2020, commencing at 2:00 p.m.

In accordance with the modified Texas Open Meetings Act provisions announced by Texas Governor Greg Abbott on March 16, 2020, this Agenda is posted for public information, at all times, for at least 72 hours preceding the scheduled time of the meeting online at <https://www.houstonfirst.com>.

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m. and a quorum of Committee Members was established with the following members present virtually: Desrye Morgan (Chair), Reginald Martin (Co-Chair), Alex Brennan-Martin, Elizabeth Brock, Bobby Singh, and Sofia Adrogué.
2. **Public Comments.** None.
3. **Review and approval of minutes from prior meeting.** Following a motion duly seconded, the minutes of November 12, 2020 were approved as presented. Council Member David Robinson was not present for the vote, but did appear later in the meeting.
4. **Presentations, Reports, and Updates** [Item taken out of order and discussed following item 5A].
 - A. **Programming Update.** Chief Operating Officer, Luther Villagomez, informed the Committee that some organic activity is beginning to take place on Avenida Houston due to the Deck the Trees event at George R. Brown Convention Center (GRB) and the ice-skating rink at Discovery Green. He then introduced the Director of Live Events and Experiences, Todd Holloman, to provide a 2021 programming update.

Todd Holloman stated on average there are 500 people a day at the Ice at Discovery Green, which adds to additional parking revenues and activity on Avenida Houston. The Deck the Trees event, he added, has upwards of 100 attendees at night and will be on display through January. Mr. Holloman also discussed the success of the Super Feast Grab and Go event in collaboration with City Wide Club of America for Thanksgiving. Staff, said Mr. Holloman, are preparing to host an event on Christmas Eve that will include upwards of 25,000 pre-prepared meals for those in need. He then asked Committee Co-Chair, Reginald Martin to discuss his involvement with the event.

Mr. Martin informed the Committee that he attended a press conference with Mayor Sylvester Turner to discuss the importance of the Christmas Eve event at GRB in partnership with HFC, Levy, Lemond Kitchen, and other culinary teams as part of the H.E.R.S. Program. To date, he added, Lemond Kitchen has distributed 80,000 meals and is on track to distribute 160,000 meals by the end of the year, so Mr. Martin is very happy to partner with HFC.

Desrye Morgan thanked Mr. Martin for his participation and asked if the Operations Committee could be of further assistance. Mr. Martin replied that he will keep the Committee informed and said staff have been very responsive and supportive.

Ms. Morgan also asked if staff could include a toy drive in connection with the event. Mr. Holloman confirmed that a toy drive will take place the day before the event.

HFC Chief Financial Officer, Frank Wilson, commented that he also volunteered to serve as a sous chef along with his daughter.

HFC Acting President & CEO, Michael Heckman, asked Mr. Martin if he experienced any challenges in organizing the event. Mr. Martin stated that he has not encountered any challenges and credits his background as a chef in working well with Levy.

Mr. Holloman added that the Thanksgiving event went very well from a traffic standpoint and thanked the Mayor's Office for their support to ensure a successful event. He further stated that he anticipates the Christmas Eve event will be a success as well.

Continuing the programming update, Mr. Holloman then read a list of events planned for 2021, but also informed the Committee that HFC will continue to be nimble in light of the pandemic. Beginning in February, he said, there will be a number of activations and experiential activities in celebration of Black History Month. Part of the programming, he added, will include a series that began last year in partnership with KHOU and the Smithsonian called "Cultural Conversations." He announced that the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Lonestar Chapter awarded KHOU with a Lonestar Emmy for its broadcast on black entrepreneurship last year. The show, said Mr. Holloman, was broadcast at Kulture Restaurant and HFC looks forward to expanding Cultural Conversations in a digital format in 2021 for all heritage month celebrations. Additionally, Mr. Holloman explained, HFC will install an interactive LED wall that features local African-American artists. Additionally, Mr. Holloman said HFC will curate an outdoor market called the BLCK Market for local vendors every Saturday in the month of February. He noted that there will also be several art exhibitions displayed in Partnership Tower and the GRB.

Desrye Morgan thanked HFC staff for their thoughtful programming. She also discussed the challenges local artists have faced with the Houston Arts Alliance and asked if those artists have been engaged. Mr. Holloman stated that all of the artists featured in the digital celebration wall are members of the Houston Arts Alliance and there will be other opportunities for participation.

For the spring season, according to Mr. Holloman, many of the outdoor events that have natural physical distancing will continue, such as Coffee & Cars; Flea by Night will also return to Discovery Green and help generate traffic on Avenida Houston. Mr.

Holloman said HFC will also host Asian Fusion in celebration of Asian Pacific-Islander Heritage month and will partner with the Enterprise Division on a series of events to increase patronage to Avenida restaurants and the convention campus.

During the summer, said Mr. Holloman, HFC will curate an interactive art installation called Roseaux inspired by motion and another local art installation will also be on display at the wharf as well as a chalk draw in celebration of Pride month. Lastly, he said, HFC will monitor local Houston sports teams to host watch parties on Avenida Houston.

Michael Heckman thanked Mr. Holloman for his presentation. He stated that HFC will continue to be agile in light of the on-going health crisis, but he fully understands the importance of bringing business to downtown Houston.

Bobby Singh stated that he has not been in downtown Houston at night for some time and was shocked at the amount of activity on Avenida Plaza and Discovery Green. He encouraged staff to continue to create activations because there is pent up demand.

Elizabeth Brock echoed the sentiments of her fellow Committee Members and stated that the Houston Clean initiative has also been a big help in building consumer confidence and promoting activity in downtown Houston.

Michael Heckman informed the Committee that he had a discussion with Lou Charlton of RIDA Development and the Marriott Marquis and the hotel has seen a lot of movement with hotel packages. He noted that Marriott Marquis invested in Christmas decorations for the rooftop pool deck and plans to expand the display next year. As a result, Mr. Heckman said he has committed to creating even stronger campus-wide packages next year.

Luther Villagomez echoed those sentiments and stated that the Deck the Trees event at the GRB has been a great success and hopes that HFC can create a new annual tradition.

5. **Committee Business.** [Item taken out of order and discussed following item 3].

A. *Consideration and possible recommendation of a Landscaping Services Agreement with Western Horticultural Services, LP.*

Mitch Miskowski, Purchasing Agent, gave a presentation of the landscaping services solicitation. Mr. Miskowski stated that landscaping services is one of HFC's smaller contracts, but maintaining the outward appearance of HFC's facilities is very important. Approximately 30 attendees participated in a virtual pre-bid meeting on October 1, 2020, according to Mr. Miskowski, and proposals were due to HFC on October 15, 2020.

The Committee Chair recognized Council Member David Robinson for joining the meeting.

Mr. Miskowski resumed his presentation and discussed the advertisement, selection criteria, and selection committee for the solicitation. HFC, he explained, received a total of eight proposals with an average annual fee of \$272,000, and

Western Horticultural Services, LP (WHS) received the highest score. WHS is a Houston based company founded in 1991. The selection committee, he added, expressed concern with the high turnover rate under the previous contract and was impressed with the tenure of WHS staff. Mr. Miskowski said some of their clients include HP and Discovery Green. He noted that WHS previously provided services to HFC from 2010 to 2015 and had an annual fee of approximately \$210,000.

Following a motion duly seconded, the Committee had discussion.

Bobby Singh asked who the incumbent contractor was for landscaping services. Mr. Miskowski confirmed it was Maldonado Nursery and said that they placed 5th overall. Mr. Singh asked for additional information on the scores of each proposer and the spread between the top three finishers. Mr. Miskowski explained that WHS was in 1st place and/or tied for 1st place in all categories. He further explained that there was a 100-point spread between the 1st and 2nd place proposers. Mr. Singh inquired about WHS's performance under the previous contract in 2010.

Mr. Villagomez stated that to his knowledge there was no performance issue and that the decision to go with another firm was due to price. The General Manager of Miller Outdoor Theatre, Shaun Hauptmann, echoed those sentiments and stated that WHS provided exceptional service and the decision to hire another contractor was based on simple economics.

Following a motion duly seconded, the recommendation of a Landscaping Services Agreement with Western Horticultural Services, LP was approved unanimously.

6. **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 2:42 p.m.