

# MINUTES

## HOUSTON FIRST CORPORATION

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**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**  
**September 26, 2024, beginning at 8:00 A.M.**  
**Partnership Tower, 701 Avenida de las Americas, Suite 200**  
**Houston, Texas 77010**  
**HOUSTON FIRST BOARD ROOM**

The Board of Directors (“Board”) of Houston First Corporation (the “Corporation”), 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., held a meeting at Partnership Tower, 701 Avenida de las Americas, Suite 200, Houston, Harris County, Texas 77010 on Thursday September 26, 2024, commencing at 8:00 a.m.

Written notice of the meeting, including the date, hour, place, and Agenda for the meeting was posted in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

- I. **Call to Order**. The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. A quorum was established with the following Board Members in attendance: Jay Zeidman (Chair), Sofia Adrogué, Alex Brennan-Martin, Elizabeth Brock, Nicki Keenan, Ryan Martin, Paul Puente, Bobby Singh, Roxann Neumann, Shareen Larmond, and Wea Lee. Tom Segesta was not present.

II. **Public Comments**

Claudia de Vasco, Managing Director of the Miller Theater Advisory Board addressed the Board and thanked the Corporation for supporting Miller Outdoor Theatre.

Gabriel Esparza, Publisher and CEO of Que Onda Magazine, addressed the Board and thanked the Corporation for working with his publication to assist the Hispanic community.

Vladimir Naranjo, Board Member of Mariachi Festival, addressed the Board and stated that the 2024 festival was the largest in its five-year existence. He expressed his gratitude to the Corporation for its support. Mr. Naranjo further stated that the organization was looking into having a Mariachi Conference in Houston in the future.

III. **Minutes**. Following a duly seconded motion, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of the June 27, 2024 meeting as presented. Paul Puente and Sofia Adrogué were not present for the vote.

IV. **Presentations, Reports, and Updates**

A. **Chairman's Remarks**

Board Chairman Jay Zeidman praised the Corporation for another successful State of the City event; Board Member Bobby Singh echoed the sentiment.

Mr. Zeidman announced that Board Member Nicki Keenan has been recognized as a 2024 Women Who Mean Business Award honoree for her exceptional leadership in the hospitality, restaurant, and retail sectors.

B. **President & CEO Report**

Michael Heckman, President & CEO, emphasized the hard work of Corporation staff and Greater Houston Partnership, who co-hosted the event this year.

Mr. Heckman noted that Gastech took place at the George R. Brown Convention Center from September 17-20, attracting 45,000 attendees from 156 countries and over 1,000 exhibitors. He highlighted its success and announced that Houston will be included in future conference rotations.

John Solis, Sr. Vice President of Sales and Client Services, informed the Board Members that he had been pursuing Gastech since 2015. He stated that Gastech's CEO was ecstatic with the results of the event in Houston and wants to put Houston in rotation to come back every four years. John Gonzalez, Senior Vice President & General Manager, added that this event was massive and maximized the use of services in the convention center.

Nicki Keenan, Board Member, highlighted the economic boom in restaurant and hotel business due to hosting Gastech. She said it again underscores Houston as the energy capital of the world.

Mr. Heckman emphasized that the Corporation is focusing on celebrating Heritage Month with several events, including Party on the Plaza at Avenida Houston and a Lunch and Learn for employees at Old Town Harrisburg.

Nathan Tollett, Vice President of Citywide Convention Sales, explained the process for securing business, hosting site visits, and curating experience and providing value creation, as well as partnering with organizations such as the Greater Houston Partnership, Texas Medical Center, Educational Institutions, and LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce.

Holly Clapham, Chief Marketing Officer, reported major gains in social media with increases in Visit Houston and Hola Houston impressions. She illustrated the Mexico strategy for the remainder of 2024 and early 2025, which she said will include trips to Mexico. She stated that Houston is ranked at the top of the list as a culinary and cultural city and highlighted that the James Beard Foundation Women's Entrepreneurial Summit and Taste America events.

Cindy Decker with Tourism Economics presented a market report on the travel economy across the United States and the Houston market. She said the national travel indicators indicate that the United States has recovered since the pandemic. Ms. Decker remarked that air passengers have recovered well above 2019 levels and that national hotel recovery confirms long-term trends.

Mr. Heckman updated the Board Members on the Convention District Transformation Project. He stated that the Hines team has been working steadfastly and will attend the November Board meeting. He introduced Frem Reggie and Michael Desguin, two Hines team members participating in the project.

Board Member Paul Puente joined the meeting during the President & CEO Report at 8:14 a.m.

#### C. Financial Report

Frank Wilson, Chief Financial Officer, provided a brief report on total revenues, less total expenses and the variance between budget and actuals.

Board Member Sofia Adrogué joined the meeting during the Financial Report at 9:05 a.m.

### V. Executive Session

Executive (closed) session pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 and 551.072 for the purpose of consultation with an attorney and deliberating regarding certain real estate matters related to the George R. Brown Convention and Convention District Transformation Projects.

The executive session was announced and began at 9:14 am. All Board Members remained in the room, along with Michael Heckman, Paula Whitten-Doolin, Frank Wilson, Luther Villagomez, and Tim Smith.

At 9:36 a.m., Stephen Jacobs, outside counsel with Locke Lorde, joined the executive session and Tim Smith left the executive session.

The executive session ended at 9:52 a.m. Board Member Nicki Keenan left immediately following executive session.

The Board meeting resumed at 9:52 a.m.

## **VI. Board Business**

- A. Consideration and possible approval of a resolution authorizing the purchase or acquisition of Block 309 and Block 310 in the Central Business District in connection with the George R. Brown Convention and Convention District Transformation Projects.

Elizabeth Brock, Board Member and Finance & Asset Management Committee Chair stated that the committee met on September 24, 2024 to discuss the item and voted unanimously to recommend Board approval.

Paul Whitten-Doolin, General Counsel, then briefly reviewed the item.

Following a motion, duly seconded, the Board approved the item unanimously.

- B. Consideration and possible approval of a resolution approving an Architectural Services Agreement with Populous, Inc. in connection with the George R. Brown Convention and Convention District Transformation Projects.

Ms. Brock stated that the Finance & Asset Management Committee met on September 24, 2024, to discuss the item and voted unanimously to recommend Board approval.

Mr. Heckman explained that a Request for Qualifications for Architectural Services was issued on August 6, 2024. He noted that the evaluation committee reviewed responses and narrowed the list to four firms for in-person interviews. He said that Populous was selected on August 23, 2024 and that their agreement will include a 30% diversity goal.

Following a motion, duly seconded, the Board approved the item unanimously.

C. Consideration and possible approval of a resolution approving a Promissory Note with the City of Houston in connection with the 2022 settlement with the Houston Municipal Employees Pension System.

Ms. Brock stated that the Finance & Asset Management Committee met on September 24, 2024, to discuss the item and voted unanimously to recommend Board approval.

Mr. Wilson provided a brief overview of the settled litigation between the City of Houston and the Houston Municipal Employees Pension System and outlined the schedule for repayment to the City under the promissory note.

Following a motion, duly seconded, the Board approved the item unanimously.

D. Consideration and possible approval of a resolution approving certain spending authority in connection with the Professional Convention Management Association (“PCMA”), 2025 PCMA Convening Leaders event in Houston, inclusive of a talent appearance contract.

Ms. Brock stated that the Finance & Asset Management Committee met on September 24, 2024, to discuss the item and voted unanimously to recommend Board approval.

Mr. Heckman briefly discussed the PCMA and likened the event to the Super Bowl of professional convention management associations.

Following a motion, duly seconded, the Board approved the item unanimously.

**VII. Adjourn**

Just prior to adjournment, Mr. Zeidman announced that this would be Sofia Adrogué’s last Board meeting due to her appointment to the new Houston Business Court Division. Ms. Adrogué expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:21 a.m.