



News Release

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Mayor's prohibition on promotion drives urgency to broker compromise on Museum funding presented to Dauphin County Commissioners today

Harrisburg, PA – Mary Smith, President of the Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau (HHRVB) today addressed the Dauphin County Commissioners with urgency for a resolution to the ongoing standoff between Harrisburg's Mayor Eric Papenfuse and The National Civil War Museum over museum funding.

"This ongoing issue is now prohibiting our organization from fulfilling one of our primary missions – Destination Marketing," said Smith.

According to Smith, the Mayor has prohibited the HHRVB from fulfilling its legal obligation under a Pennsylvania Statute to annually invest a portion of the funds it receives from the Dauphin County hotel tax into the appropriate and reasonable marketing and promotion of tourism in the City of Harrisburg.

In July 2014, the Mayor officially disengaged two City representatives from the Marketing Committee that was established between the City and the bureau in accordance with a Tourism Promotion Agreement, according to Smith. Prior to the Mayor's disengagement, the Marketing Committee successfully developed the "Summer in the City" [campaign](#) launched in June 2014 to rebrand Harrisburg as a tourist destination.

"Beyond putting our organization in an unwarranted position as it relates to our obligations under the ordinance, this disengagement on the part of the City has served only in hurting the businesses located in the City who benefit the most from our city-specific advertising and promotional efforts," said Smith.

Smith explained that without the committee in place the HHRVB has in effect been prohibited from any further planning of campaigns that would promote the City of Harrisburg. Smith noted critical missed opportunities for the City including a Holiday Campaign, promotions around New Year's Eve, and the 99th Annual PA Farm Show which had record attendance this year. She also noted the enormous missed opportunity to drive business into the City for dining, shopping, and entertainment during the 2nd Annual Great American Outdoor Show starting this weekend with an anticipated 200,000 attendees over nine days.

Smith reported that the unutilized funds to date have accumulated to approximately \$170,000 and could equal a projected \$230,000 by June 2015.

Smith said that she believes the Mayor withdrawing from the committee was a tactic to apply additional pressure on the museum and the bureau to renegotiate the terms of the 2008 Funding Agreement between the City and those two entities which provides funding for the museum until 2023.

Smith was hopeful that the Commissioners would be receptive to the proposed compromises outlined in the plan that was being submitted to them today by HHRVB and The National Civil War Museum. Smith said that if a resolution was reached soon and the Mayor reengaged the committee in a timely fashion that a designated Harrisburg Campaign could still be developed in time for Spring 2015.

Smith said she hopes to present the plan to the Mayor for his consideration following a decision by the County Commissioners to participate in the plan as outlined.

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The Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau (HHRVB) is the official non-profit partnership-based Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) serving Pennsylvania's Dauphin and Perry counties. This Destination Marketing Association International ([DMAI](#)) accredited organization is committed to actively marketing the region locally, domestically, and internationally to leisure and business travelers; meeting & convention planners; sporting event producers; and group tour leaders. For more information go to VisitHersheyHarrisburg.org, or call 877-727-8573.