

Executive Committee approves moving 2023 SBC meeting

April 29, 2022

NASHVILLE (BP)—In a special called meeting, the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee voted unanimously to move the 2023 annual meeting from Charlotte to New Orleans.

The Executive Committee also received an update on the cost of the investigation into allegations of mishandling sexual abuse claims.

Jonathan Howe, vice president for communications, explained it was “simply a matter of math” leading to the decision. When Charlotte was originally selected, it reflected the annual meeting attendance at that time, he said. Annual meeting locations scheduled through 2028 are in line with current attendance projections, he noted.

Charlotte was confirmed as the 2023 host city by messengers to the 2016 SBC annual meeting in St. Louis. Since that meeting, attendance at the annual event has grown, meaning the 280,000-square-foot Charlotte Convention Center is not large enough to host the event, which is expected to draw more than 15,000 attendees. Space requirements for hosting an SBC annual meeting now exceed 400,000 square feet.

Making the decision more than a year out saved costs that could have occurred had the decision come closer to the annual meeting, said Bill Townes, former chief financial officer now assisting the Executive Committee on a contract basis.

As it stands, costs to fulfill contracts and obligations to Charlotte as well as secure new contracts in New Orleans “may range from \$150,000 to \$230,000,” Townes said.

Howe noted remaining in Charlotte could have cost the convention more than \$900,000 in lost revenues and sponsorships due to space constraints.

Update on costs of sex abuse investigation

The majority of the nearly two-hour meeting concerned the cost of the Guidepost investigation. Townes, in particular, wanted to offer clarification on the financial resources available in the Executive Committee's reserve funds.

The most recent financial report available for the February 2022 Executive Committee meeting, he pointed out, came from September 2021. Townes said it is true there was \$12.2 million in unrestricted reserves, but just under \$5 million is connected to EC property, equipment and board-designated funds.

The actual figure of resources available, including contingency and operation reserves, for the costs of the investigation was closer to \$7.3 million, Townes said.

Executive Committee members were informed that since Oct. 1, a total of \$1,661,530 has been paid toward Guidepost Solutions and \$17,478 toward Task Force travel and meetings.

In September, the Executive Committee voted to allocate up to \$1.6 million toward the work by Guidepost Solutions. In February, they voted to increase the funds allocated to \$2 million for the investigation or the "coverage of any other direct expenses without further approval."

Legal fees directly related to supporting the work of the Sex Abuse Task Force since then have totaled less than one-third of the \$2 million originally approved by the Executive Committee in February. The legal firms of

Bradley; Arant, Boult and Cumming; Guenther, Jordan and Price; Blank Rome; and Locke Lord have provided services to the Executive Committee as it has supported the investigation.

The most recent Executive Committee financial report, dated March 31, showed total contingency and operating reserves of nearly \$5.2 million.