

TDC MEETING MINUTES

April 10, 2014

Vice Chair René Affourtit called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Council members in attendance: Joe Murgalo, Rob Wells, Pamela Cronin, Fran Myers, Jeff Webb, Councilman Forrest Banks and Colleen DePasquale. Mayor Kevin Ruane, Tony Lapi and Commissioner Larry Kiker were excused.

Councilman Forrest Banks made a motion, seconded by Rob Wells to approve the TDC Meeting Minutes of March 13, 2014. The motion passed unanimously.

Public to be Heard

- Lisa Sbuttoni, Marketing Manager for the Edison Ford Winter Estates reminded the TDC that they are invited to a reception for them immediately following today's TDC Meeting at the new Pinchers at Edison Ford Marina. She shared several upcoming events at the estates including a Mustang Car Show on April 19th, a Moonlight Garden walk on May 17th, and a Master Naturalist certification program that begins on May 1st.
- Jack Carver, Florida RV Trade Association, gave an update of the RV events in our area and reported that thus far 19,000 people have attended the RV shows. The last show of the season is scheduled for May 2nd-4th at the Lee County Sports Complex.
- Judie Zimomra, Sanibel City Manager gave an update on Mayor Kevin Ruane's recent travel on behalf of the community. He has been in Washington, DC meeting with the House Appropriations Committee and in Tallahassee for meetings regarding water quality.

Municipalities to be Heard

- None to be heard.

VCB Executive Director's Report

- Tamara Pigott reported the preliminary bed tax collections for the month of February 2014 at \$4,097,842, an impressive 16.9% increase over February 2013 and a record-setting collection for the month of February. The fiscal YTD collections totaled \$13,876,746, an increase of 17.7% over the same period in 2013.
- STR Report – Occupancy was up 9%. ADR increased by 5.3% and RevPAR was up 14.8%. Lee County experienced a 14.4% increase in Room Revenue with Available Rooms decreased by 0.3% and Rooms Sold up 8.6%.
- RSW Report – Total Passenger for February 2014 was 832,899, an increase of 4.3% over February 2013.
- Key indicators were up including page views, accommodations referrals and distribution of guide books.
- Tamara Pigott reported that the VCB will be recognized as an honoree at the 18th Annual Webby Awards for its video "Awaken" in the category of Best Travel & Adventure Online Film & Video. Hailed as the "Internet's Highest Honor" by *The New York Times*, The Webby Awards, presented by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences (IADAS), is the leading international award honoring excellence on the Internet.

- Tamara Pigott and the VCB congratulated Andrea Locke from the Westin Cape Coral at Marina Village for winning the Top Group Sales Manager of the Year Award from Starwood.
- Pamela Johnson, Deputy Director, reported the sales leads for the market and showed the unique print advertising campaign. There were 45 leads for the quarter with an average group size of 117 and over 15,500 room nights. Pamela congratulated Air Berlin on their 20 year partnership with Southwest Florida International Airport, adding that Germany continues to be our number one international market.
- Judi Durant, Director of Visitor Services, reported that 145,000 visitors were assisted by the volunteers who donated 6,800 service hours in the first quarter. There were also nine cases that needed special visitor assistance. 234 people attended Guest First during the first quarter. Upcoming events include the Travel Rally on May 6th at Lakes Park and the Chrysalis Awards and Tradeshow on May 15th at the Harborside Event Center.
- On behalf of Lee County Sports Development, Tamara Pigott reported that Spring Training attendance rose during the 2014 season. Out of 211 Spring Training games that took place in Lee County this year, the average attendance per game was 6,882 fans, a 4 percent increase from 2013, according to the Florida Sports Foundation, which tracks spring training attendance. This year's turnout threatened the record of 6,965 per game, set in 2012, but rainouts for key games, including the March 6 matchup between the Minnesota Twins and St. Louis Cardinals, put a slight damper on the numbers. The Red Sox drew an average of 9,845 fans per game, and the Twins drew an average of 7,700 per game.

Special Presentations

- Kraig Feighery, PGA Professional, introduced Alico Family Golf to the TDC. They have a 30 acre golf course which includes a 18 hole mini golf course, 9 hole snag course (rated 2nd in the country), one of the largest driving ranges and also provide golf lessons. They are open to the public with no membership needed. They have a 20 year agreement with First Tee of Lee County, whose mission is to impact the lives of young people by providing educational programs that build character, instill life-enhancing values and promote healthy choices through the game of golf. They also have a annual partnership with FGCU. They are open 7 days a week from 8am-10pm.
- Roland Ottolini gave an update on the Captiva Erosion Beach Re-nourishment project. This issue will be coming before the BoCC for an additional allocation of \$1 million due to the Federal Government not participating in the project. The total cost of the County's portion of the project will be \$7.1 million.
- Damon Grant gave an update on Manatee Park Canal project. Although they'd hope to be able to utilize emergency funds, they do not have a permit in place at this time so they are going to move forward with the northern half for which funding was previously approved. They will submit a funding request for the southern half for next year when permits are expected to be in place.

Old Business

- None to be heard.

New Business

- None to be heard.

TDC Member Items

- Councilman Forrest Banks congratulated Jeff Mielke and Doug Meurer for all the sports events coming into our area. He also encouraged them to reach out to Edison State College as they bring their sports teams back.

- Jeff Webb reminded everyone of the next LCHA meeting on April 24th at the City Pier Building (formerly Art of the Olympians). Roger Desjarlais, County Manager for Lee County will be the guest speaker. May's meeting will be a late afternoon mixer at the Alliance of the Arts with Lydia Black as the speaker. Richard Michaels will be the speaker for the June meeting and will be held at the Hyatt Resort Bonita Springs.
- Colleen DePasquale reminded everyone that the Chrysalis Awards and Tradeshow will be held on May 15th at Harborside Event Center. She announced that on August 28th there will be a Business Symposium with all the chambers with 9 breakouts and 3 tracks to follow.
- Fran Myers shared that on April 19th there will be an Easter egg hunt at Fort Myers Beach and they are expecting 300-400 kids.
- Joe Murgalo shared that Forbes magazine named Bonita Springs in the "25 Great Places to Follow Your Passions in Retirement" and is described as a "Boating and water recreation paradise along Florida Gulf Coast near 50 golf courses."
- Rob Wells wished everyone a Happy Easter and hopes everyone's numbers stay up through April.
- René Affourtit reminded everyone of tax day on 4/15.

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m. The next regular meeting of the TDC is scheduled for **THURSDAY, May 8, 2014, 9 a.m.** at 2201 Second Street, First Floor Conference room #118, Fort Myers, FL 33901. *All reports are included with Minutes on file at the VCB and available at www.leevcb.com.*