

## **TDC MEETING MINUTES**

March 12, 2015

Commissioner Brian Hamman called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Council members in attendance: Bill Waichulis, Jeff Webb, René Affourtit, Colleen DePasquale, Tony Lapi, Councilman Forrest Banks, Mayor Kevin Ruane, Rob Wells, Pamela Cronin and Fran Myers.

Mayor Kevin Ruane made a motion, seconded by Pamela Cronin to approve the TDC Meeting Minutes of February 12, 2015. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Public to be Heard**

- Jack Carver, Florida RV Trade Association, reported a busy season. Attendance for events this year has been in excess of 17,000 people. RV sales are up and there is still one more event being held at the Sports Complex.
- Carol Obermeier, RSW announced that Sun Country will launch nonstop service to San Juan, Puerto Rico on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, and will be flying twice weekly. Representatives from RSW will be holding a press conference in Puerto Rico next week. The airport continues to be very busy with press and TV spots, including commercials airing on NBC before the Today Show and during CBS Sunday Morning. Carol also noted that the number of Canadians flying into RSW continues to increase. As a response, both Air Canada and WestJet are going to double their service into RSW this summer.

### **Municipalities to be Heard**

- Anita Cereceda, Mayor, Town of Fort Myers Beach, announced that Fort Myers Beach is having its best tourist season ever. The social event of the season, the Shrimp Festival, will be held this weekend. She suggested arriving early to take part in the parade and the day of festivities.
- Judi Zimomra, City Manager of Sanibel, shared a positive customer service story from Trip Advisor. She informed the council that the City of Sanibel tracks customer comments on Trip Advisor in the “Excellent” and “Terrible/Poor” categories. They use the visitor comments to direct and guide them on how to continue to enhance the services and facilities on the island.

### **VCB Executive Director’s Report**

- Tamara Pigott reported that the preliminary bed tax collections for the month of January 2015 were \$4,329,585, a 36.9% increase over the preliminary collections in January 2014.
- STR Report – Occupancy for January was up 12.9%, ADR increased by 11.9% and RevPAR was up 26.3%. Lee County experienced a 27.6 % increase in Room Revenue while Available Rooms increased by 1% and Rooms Sold were up by 14%.
- RSW Report – Total Passenger count of 854,953 for January 2015, an increase of 9.9 % over January 2014.
- Tamara Pigott introduced new VCB staff member, Jason Glasscock. Jason will be joining the Visitor Services team located at the airport as a visitor services coordinator. He will coordinate the recruitment, training, and supervision of more than 125 volunteers who work the visitor information booths at the Southwest Florida International Airport. Other responsibilities include interacting with tourists to provide information and assistance, along with organizing special projects and events.

- Laura Chmielewski, VCB, reported that this spring, the VCB will be partnering with Pinchers restaurants to do a New York City media promotion which will offer seafood dishes to more than 1,000 editors and publishers at Hearst and Time Inc. The VCB will collaborate with Brand USA for promotions during the 2015 World Expo. Katie Meckley, VCB, announced that during April and May the VCB will launch a new Instagram influencer campaign.

### **Special Presentations**

- Rachel Ketterman, Marketing Director with Florida Tracks & Trails, introduced the new attraction, located in Charlotte County. The 1,000 acre park provides miles of trails for off-road riding, a motocross facility, paintball fields and a fresh water beach. It will have a soft opening April 24-26 for their inaugural music festival, Country Life. The park will officially open its doors in May 2015.

### **Old Business**

- None to be heard.

### **New Business**

- Councilman Forrest Banks made a motion, seconded by René Affourtit to approve an emergency funding request of up to \$25,000 from the City of Sanibel to stabilize the shoreline of the southeast area of Blind Pass due to rapid erosion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **TDC Member Items**

- Pamela Cronin wished everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day.
- Councilman Forrest Banks mentioned that the new bus facility is open and hopes that the tourists will use it.
- Mayor Kevin Ruane gave an update of the Blind Pass erosion and thanked everyone for their help.
- Jeff Webb reminded everyone of the LCHA monthly meeting that will be held on March 26<sup>th</sup> at noon at Hilton Garden Inn FGCU. Human Trafficking will be the topic for the guest speaker.
- Fran Myers provided an update from the airport and invited everyone out to the Shrimp Festival this weekend.
- Commissioner Brian Hamman said that we are starting to reap the fruits of our labor and he is not surprised that our destination is doing so well.
- Colleen DePasquale announced that Chrysalis will take place on April 16th at Harborside Event Center and there are still a few tradeshow booths available. Registration is now open and the winners have been determined.
- Tony Lapi reported that the United Way will be announcing and celebrating the goal of this year's campaign at Six Bends. He thanked everyone on behalf of the United Way for their contributions and looks forward to expanding the campaign next year.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m. The next regular meeting of the TDC is scheduled for **Friday, April 10, 2015 at 9 a.m. at Lee County Admin East, Conference Room #118, 2201 Second Street, Fort Myers, 33901. All reports are included with Minutes on file at the VCB and available at [www.leevcb.com](http://www.leevcb.com).**