

TDC MEETING MINUTES

March 15, 2019

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Council members in attendance: Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Fran Myers, Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Holly D. Smith, Bill Waichulis and Rob Wells. John Carioscia, Brian Kramer and Tony Lapi were excused.

Rob Wells made a motion to approve the Feb. 14, 2019, TDC meeting minutes. Holly D. Smith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

Jon Lemke, Think Simplicity sales executive, spoke about the Think Simplicity PBX phone system and offered a 10% discount for businesses located in Lee County.

Danielle Flood, ECHO PR & communications manager, announced that the 28th annual Food & Farm Festival will be held March 16. Flood thanked the TDC for all that they do.

Municipalities to be heard

Kristen Bean, senior recreation specialist, and Michelle Dean, marketing coordinator, both of Cape Coral Parks & Recreation, thanked the TDC for its event support. Bean announced some upcoming events, including Sound of Jazz and Blues on March 30 and the final bike night on April 13. Dean invited the TDC to attend Sounds of Jazz and Blues and announced a craft beer festival in 2020, a collaboration with The Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village. Dean said the selection advisory committee has begun for a general obligation (GO) bond and the committee will make recommendations on the three companies bidding on the design work for 11 parks. Public input is scheduled this fall.

Gini Smith, president of the Friends of Matanzas Pass Preserve on Fort Myers Beach, shared her concerns regarding the boardwalk. It has been closed for two years due to Hurricane Irma and requested that the TDC review what needs to be done to get it repaired and up and running before next season. Smith said the closure makes them unable to give the three daily guided tours and continue their partnership with schools. One of the trails closed is the Smith Trail, named after former TDC member Roxie Smith.

Special Presentation

Jeff Mulder, executive director of Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW), gave an overview of the airport's modernization and expansion projects. The enhancements aim to improve passenger experience, modernize the check-in process and update airport aesthetics.

Report of the Executive Director

VCB Executive Director Tamara Pigott reported that the preliminary resort tax collected for January 2019 was \$4,498,603, a 0.8 percent decrease over January 2018 preliminary collections of \$4,562,731. Fiscal

year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$12,549,809, a decrease of 5.2 percent year-over-year.

January 2018, the STR Report shows occupancy down -4.0 percent and ADR down -2.6 percent for a total RevPAR decrease of -6.5 percent.

During January 2019, 1,050,093 passengers traveled through RSW. Figures represent an increase of 8.7 percent compared to January 2018.

Brian Ososky, VCB director of marketing, presented a selection of current marketing initiatives, including spring training. He gave a preview of the summer campaign's creative and media plans, and spoke about a shift in primary and secondary media markets.

Pigott spoke about attending ITB in Germany in March and that Stefanie Zinke, VCB international tourism sale manager, and Commissioner Pendergrass were in Berlin with her. Pigott said they had good conversations about the destination with tour operators and media. She noted the exchange rate is still a challenge but bookings are up.

Commissioner Pendergrass said while at ITB he and Pigott also had a meeting with Eurowings about direct flights. He said the VCB staff did a great job of getting out the message about our destination.

New Business

Nancy MacPhee, VCB product manager, announced the Events Marketing funding request cycle for fiscal year 2019-20 opens March 25 with an application webinar for Events and for Attractions on April 12. Marketing program guidelines can be viewed at www.leevcb.com

Pam Cronin made a motion for the TDC to approve FY 2019-20 funding guidelines for the Events Marketing program. Holly D. Smith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Rob Wells made a motion to accept the changes and approve the FY 2019-20 funding guidelines for the Attractions Marketing program. Fran Myers seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Jesse Lavender, director of Lee County Parks & Recreation, presented an out-of-cycle funding request of \$1.1 million to the TDC for the Matanzas Pass Preserve boardwalk, paddle craft landing and pavilion replacement.

Smith made a motion to approve a funding request from Lee County Parks & Recreation for \$1.1 million for the replacement of boardwalks, pavilion and kayak landing at Matanzas Pass Preserve and also made a legislative finding that this project promotes tourism. Pending final approval by the BoCC, this allocation will be made from TDC reserves. Cronin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

TDC Member Items

- Cronin reminded everyone to tell someone you love them and do not forget how important relationships are. Cronin said she loves being on the TDC board and it is her favorite thing to do.
- Smith announced the opening of the Jordan Marsh Water Quality Treatment Park on Sanibel. Smith attended the Southwest Florida Water Management District meeting and said Chauncey Goss of Sanibel was appointed to the board. The executive director will be Drew Bartlett, the current deputy secretary of the Ecosystems Restoration Task Force. Smith said this news is a home run for Florida and it is going to be a great board. She attended the March 14 water

quality meeting that awarded the contract for the C43 reservoir and approved \$524 million. Smith said the House Bill 791 was brought to her attention in regards to Sports Development and its use of TDC funds for facilities. Smith also mentioned that there are several bills in the current state legislature for short-term rental bills and she would be happy to email more information if TDC members are interested.

Commissioner Pendergrass asked TDC Vice Chair Rob Wells to take over the meeting, as he needed to leave for another meeting.

- Fran Myers said that the Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival was very successful and the beach was packed. Myers also said there was some red drift algae at their end of the beach. She said they are having a great season and they have loyal visitors every year.
- Glen Salyer stated that they were closely tracking the 791 House Bill that Holly D. Smith mentioned. The expansion of this bill would prohibit the use of TDC funds for professional sports facilities and the spring training grant program. The County currently benefits from ½ million a year in funds for the Twins facilities. This would be grandfathered, however, going forward to make improvements of the Twins stadium in the future would be impeded or prohibited. Salyer mentioned that the hope is that the more modest Senate bill would be the one they go with.
- Colleen DePasquale announced that there are seven area chambers of commerce that meet monthly on water quality and are called SWFL Alliance of Chambers. She said 55 people from the area went to Tallahassee and that it was a great trip. She also mentioned that the Greater Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce lunch this month will focus on future makers and will be held at Crowne Plaza on March 21. DePasquale said the Chrysalis Awards will be held on June 14 at Sanibel Harbour Marriott Resorts & Spa and there are still tradeshow tables available. She said February's FRLA meeting speaker Carol Dover was amazing and very strong for the tourism industry; no event in March because of Tourism Day in Tallahassee. April 25 is the culinary showcase with four high schools participating in a cook-off.
- Bill Waichulis attended Tourism Day with Jeff Mielke, Pamela Johnson and Tamara Pigott and said they had a good amount of appointments. Waichulis said the topics that they touched on were water quality, full funding for Visit Florida, short-term rentals and human trafficking. Waichulis said that the booking window for January-March was two weeks longer, whereas April has a shorter window for bookings but still looks to be a great April for resorts in Florida.
- Rob Wells asked Myers and Waichulis for an update on the road project on Fort Myers Beach. Myers deferred to Glen Salyer, assistant county manager to respond. Salyer said the board's accelerated funding shortened the timeline from 10 years to six years. Wells said the next TDC meeting is April 11.
- Pigott recommended the council review information provided to them regarding the impact of red tide on Florida. She discussed taking the economic downturn in stride and how effective revenue management can help. She also brought up the annual visitor profile and occupancy analysis from DPA, and the domestic travel market report from US Travel.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Next TDC meeting

The next TDC meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Thursday, April 11, 2019, at the Lee County Administration East building, Room 118, 2201 Second St., Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, go to www.LeeVCB.com. For more information, contact: Tamara Pigott, TPigott@leegov.com, Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.