



TDC MEETING MINUTES

Nov. 13, 2017

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Council members in attendance: Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Vice Chairman René Affourtit, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Tony Lapi, Marni Sawicki, Bill Waichulis and Rob Wells.

Fran Myers, Kevin Ruane and Brian Kramer were excused.

Vice Chairman René Affourtit made a motion to approve the Oct. 12, 2017, TDC meeting minutes. Pamela Cronin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

Jackie Lyszak, president of the Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce, gave a report on the upcoming 31st Annual American Sandsculpting Championship & Beach Festival Nov. 17-26. She said that the chamber will be monitoring the crowds and asking them their ZIP code and what country they are from to do better targeting for future events.

Municipalities to be heard

Judie Zimomra, Sanibel city manager, reported that they have been working to get ready for season, 167k cubic feet of debris has been collected. No events had to be canceled, post-hurricane.

Report of the Executive Director, Tamara Pigott

Bed tax collection: The Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau reported record-breaking tax collections of \$39.8 million for FY2017, an increase of 0.2 percent year-over-year. For the month of September 2017, resort tax collected was \$1,653,093, a 5.4 percent increase over September 2016 collections of \$1,568,954. That represents the seventh consecutive year of record-breaking bed tax increases.

STR Report: The September Smith Travel Research (STR) summary showed occupancy up 9.7 percent, ADR up 6.3 percent and Rev/PAR up 16.5 percent.

Airport traffic: During September 2017, 327,466 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). Figures represent a decrease of 16.4 percent compared to September 2016. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 2.1 percent from the same period last year.

Resident Artist Program update, Brian Ososky: Resident artist Katy Galli presented a series of photos that captured the beauty of the destination. Galli is the first female resident artist and her work includes our first underwater images. These assets will be available to industry partners.

Island Hopper Songwriter Fest Recap, Nancy MacPhee: Nancy MacPhee, VCB product development manager, reported that in its fourth year, the 2017 Island Hopper Songwriter Fest included 85 songwriters playing more than 150 shows across 24 venues on Captiva Island, downtown Fort Myers and Fort Myers Beach. Nearly 15,000 people attended this year's festival, a significant increase over the 5,000 attendees in its first year. The number of lodging deals posted on IslandHopperFest.com as well as the number of confirmed room nights booked by festival attendees has also increased. MacPhee noted that the bed tax collections for September have increased by 30 percent since the first year of the festival in 2014. Save the date for next year – Sept. 21-30, 2018.

3rd quarter research report, Bob Domine, DPA: Bob Domine, DPA, reported on the summer season and 2017 calendar year highlights. Visitation among 2017 visitors staying in paid accommodations held steady. Domestic travel showed the greatest increase in visitation, including the Midwest region, which generated the largest share of visitors. One-fifth of paid accommodations visitors arrived from international markets.

Report of the Sports Development Executive Director, Jeff Mielke

Jeff Mielke, director, Lee County Sports Development, reported that 36,536 room nights were sold in the second quarter of 2017 with direct visitor spending of more than \$14 million. During the third quarter of 2017, which is the busiest time for sporting events in Lee County, he reported 41,969 room nights sold, with direct visitor spending of \$18.6 million.

New Business

-4th Quarter Budget Report, Tamara Pigott

René Affourtit made a motion to accept the report, seconded by Colleen DePasquale. The motion passed unanimously.

-Approval of 2017-2020 Strategic Plan and FY 2017-2018 Sales & Marketing Plan

René Affourtit made a motion to accept the report, seconded by Rob Wells. The motion passed unanimously.

For Council Information

-Commissioner Pendergrass thanked Marni Sawicki for her service on the TDC. This was her last meeting.

-René Affourtit asked about that status of the old Red Sox stadium. Jeff Mielke said the county is in year three of a 10-year contract with Florida SouthWestern State College and the men's baseball and women's softball programs use the facility for their fall and spring seasons. Secondary users include international teams that use it for training and Roy Hobbs Baseball.

-Colleen DePasquale said that nominations for the Chrysalis Awards will be taken through the end of the year. The awards will be held in April 2018.

-Bill Waichulis said Conde Nast named Gasparilla Inn and Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina in Top 20 reader's choice list of best resorts.

-Rob Wells noted that the VCB has a rare opportunity to consider doing a one-time spend to clarify that our destination is open for business. It also would introduce us to people who would normally go another destination in the late spring and summer of 2018 that is currently offline due to Hurricane Irma. Commissioner Pendergrass said he would work with staff to explore options.

-Commissioner Pendergrass talked about his recent trip to London to attend the World Travel Market with the VCB, and the need to stress to state leadership the how important it is to keep Florida competitive with other markets. He also noted that his year as TDC Chair was about to expire in December and that he would like to continuing serving if presented the opportunity.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:41 a.m.

Next TDC meeting

The next TDC meeting will be at 2:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14, 2017, at Pinchers at The Marina at Edison Ford, 2360 West First St., Fort Myers.