



## TDC MEETING MINUTES

August 8, 2019

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

**Council members in attendance:** Anita Cereceda, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Brian Kramer, Tony Lapi, Jon McLain, Fran Myers, Bill Waichulis and Rob Wells.

Pendergrass welcomed Anita Cereceda, Mayor, Fort Myers Beach and Jon McLain, Councilman, Village of Estero to the TDC board.

Lapi made a motion to approve the June 13, 2019, TDC meeting minutes. Cronin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **Public to be heard**

John Gucciardo with TPI gave an update on the Margaritaville Resort. Project is estimated to be completed in two years and will be operational mid-year 2022. For more information, visit Facebook:TPIFMB.

Lisa Wilson, public relations director, Edison and Ford Winter Estates, thanked the TDC for its support. Wilson said the attraction has a new website and marketing materials. She also said the Estates will have a new Tesla and Ford Exhibit coming in October. The Rhythm on the River sunset concert series will include a Jimmy Buffet tribute band next year. She also mentioned that Ford's cottage will be converted into a citrus café.

Lois Croft, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA), said the group's upcoming Aug. 22 meeting at Nervous Nellie's will include a discussion on the proposed legislation for the minimum wage to increase to \$15 an hour.

Jay Johnson, Bubba's Roadhouse and vice president, restaurants, FRLA, read a letter into the record to continue to support VISIT FLORIDA as it is up for renewal June 2020.

Ashley Gibbons, Sanibel Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce, announced a legislative power hour from 4 to 6 p.m. Aug. 29, at Sanibel Harbour Marriott Resort & Spa. Speakers include Dana Young, president and CEO, VISIT FLORIDA, who will give an update on VISIT FLORIDA, and Rae Ann Wessell, natural resource policy director, Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, who will speak about water quality.

### **Municipalities to be heard**

Judith Zimomra, city manager, Sanibel, said Councilman Holly D. Smith (liaison for the Island community) accompanied her and will continue to do so throughout the year, thanked the TDC for its support during the hurricanes: Charley (15-year anniversary) and Irma (two-year anniversary) in her tenure (19 years with the city) and the funding for the restrooms. Zimomra thanked the TDC for the events marketing

grant that helped produce the biking and hiking brochure (printed 155,000 in its first run) and the Sanibel bound app.

Michelle Dean, City of Cape Coral Parks & Recreation, announced the new ADA fresh water kayak launch at Saratoga Park opens end of September. Dean reported that the 1<sup>st</sup> parks Gabon project was for LED lighting at Storm football Field. Dean announced the first Gabon projects are to include: 4 new pavilions, playgrounds, shade structures and athletic field bleacher areas in existing parks. Dean said that new park construction will begin with two new firms that will design and build which include 7 new neighborhood parks and 4 community parks in the coming year throughout Cape Coral.

### **Report of the Executive Director**

Tamara Pigott reported the preliminary tourist development tax collected for June 2019 was \$2,918,447. Figures represent a 1 percent decrease over June 2018 preliminary collections of \$2,948,364. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$36,283,578, a decrease of 0.2 percent year-over-year.

During June 2019, 586,319 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). Figures represent an increase of 7.4 percent compared to June 2018. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 9.3 percent from the same period last year.

Pigott announced a new staff member with the VCB, Annie Banion, communications specialist. Banion is a graduate of FGCU with a degree in communications/pr with a minor in management. She is an Ohio native.

Pigott reported that the VCB is looking for input from residents regarding rebranding and asked that the local residents take the survey.

Pigott also reported that the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Preserve is not moving forward and that \$47,000 will be put back in the budget for future projects.

Jill Vance, VCB director of sales, reported that the majority of the FY2018-19 sales goals are ahead of pace or attained. She presented highlights of third-quarter activities for the domestic group, travel agent and consumer sales. They including Connect NYC, the CCRA Power Solutions Live Trade Show, along with the faith-based meeting planner FAM and the Midwest corporate meeting planner FAM. Vance also presented upcoming sales activities for fourth quarter including IMEX America and the Going on Faith Group Traveler Show.

Stefanie Zinke, VCB international sales manager, reported that the team covered consumer and trade events in five countries. The newest item on the list was the PR and Sales mission with VISIT FLORIDA to four cities across China training more than 340 trade professionals and engaging with influencers and travel writers. Collectively, the international team trained and met with more than 700 professionals and held 162 appointments in three months.

Judi Durant, VCB director of visitor services, reported that 55,067 visitors were assisted at RSW from April to July 2019, and 143,341 visitors since January. The volunteer Tourism Ambassador team of 133 full and part-time volunteers has given more than 16,000 in-kind hours to the county and RSW by working at the Visitor Information Booths, as part of the Customs Concierge team and at events and conferences.

Francesca Donlan, VCB director of communications, went over recent media coverage and visits, including the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual “Ding” Darling & Doc Ford’s Tarpon Tournament in May. Chef and TV host Tyler Florence of The Food Network’s “The Great Food Truck Race” visited the destination <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhkkwpZ-sCw>. Upcoming events in September include media missions to Boston’s Fenway Park and a tap takeover in Philadelphia with industry partners Fort Myers Brewing Co. and Point Ybel Brewery. Shooting wrapped up last week for “Raw Travel,” a half-hour syndicated travel show airing in more than 170 markets. The destination will be featured in the Season 7 premiere, which airs locally on WINK-TV at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 12.

Phillip Downs, DSG, reported both visitation and visitor spending is down year-over-year for the period between April and June. Four out of 10 domestic visitors staying in paid accommodations during the spring of 2019 came from the Midwest. Chicago, New York and Boston were the top domestic feeder markets for Lee County. Germany delivered the largest share of international visitation in the spring season at five percent. Guest satisfaction remains high at 95 percent.

#### **Report of the Sports Development Deputy Director**

Pamela Johnson, deputy director, Sports Development, reported that 16,554 room nights sold in the months of April and May 2019 with direct visitor spending of \$6,480,689 million.

#### **New Business**

Nancy MacPhee, VCB product development manager, requested that the TDC formalize FY19-20 Events Marketing funding which includes seven requests totaling \$111,350. Lapi made a motion to approve the events marketing funding with the seven requests. Waichulis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

MacPhee asked that the TDC formalize FY19-20 Attractions Marketing funding which included requests from 40 organizations. Wells made a motion to approve \$400,000 to be awarded to Southwest Florida Community Foundation to administer 39 funding requests. Cereceda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Myers made a motion to approve \$50,000 to be awarded to Edison and Ford Winter Estates. Waichulis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Pigott presented the third quarter FY19 budget report for VCB and Sports Development. Myers made a motion to approve the third quarter FY19 budget report for VCB and Sports Development. Lapi seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Alison Giesen and Chelsea O’Riley, Town of Fort Myers Beach, requested that the TDC increase Newton Beach restroom project funding to \$127,038 to complete the project. Being that this is the second request for funding for this project, DePasquale commented that the applicants should do their due diligence before bringing requests to the council for funding approval. Giesen responded to DePasquale that due to the historical nature of the cottage and lack of bids for the project, the timeline to submit their request was delayed. Myers made a motion to approve additional funding of \$127,038 for the total estimated project cost of \$212,038. Cereceda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously after discussion.

#### **TDC Member Items**

- Lapi reminded everyone about Florida Governor’s Conference coming up Sept. 4-6, with VISIT FLORIDA and how Dana Young, President & CEO, VISIT FLORIDA, needs our support.

- Waichulis attended the FRLA Summit and will attend the STR conference. He reported some trends for Fort Myers and state tourists. He said that because of the uncertainty in the Caribbean, tourists are coming to Florida, which benefits the destination.
- Kramer announced that the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa was voted the best company to work for in FL the past 3 years in Florida Trends.
- DePasquale gave an update on Visit Florida. She said that two chambers currently support Visit Florida and alliance of seven chambers have requested their boards to approve support. DePasquale said, "We need to have our voice heard to support them going forward." Pendergrass suggested that the TDC Council and BOCC write a letter of support and the message be clear and backed up with data.
- Myers gave the air service update. Carol Obermeier, director of air service development, reported that when new enhancements are done at RSW with the new terminal expansion, the airport will have a business lounge and updated concessions.
- McLain thanked Pigott for spending the time with him to get him up to speed on the TDC council information and he said, "It is an honor to be on this council and is impressed with the agenda and all the amenities our area has to offer. McLain is looking forward to contributing in the future.
- Cereceda is happy to be back on the TDC board and said "this is the best committee to be on." She reported that the Fort Myers beach Council is selecting a new firm to rebrand Times Square to Bayfront Park adding that, " Margaritaville will make the beach fantastic." Cereceda also announced that once her Mayor term is up at the end of March 2020, Rexann Hosafros will take her place on this board.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:47 a.m.

### **Next TDC meeting**

There is no meeting in September. The next TDC meeting will be held at 9 a.m. **Thursday, October 10, 2019**, at the Lee County Admin East building, Conference Room 118, 2201 Second St., Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, go to [www.LeeVCB.com](http://www.LeeVCB.com). Contact: Tamara Pigott, [TPigott@leegov.com](mailto:TPigott@leegov.com), Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.