



TDC Meeting Minutes

Jan. 13, 2022

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

Council members in attendance

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Darla Bonk, Colleen DePasquale, Brian Kramer, Tony Lapi and Robert Wells III.

Pamela Cronin, Fran Myers, Holly Smith and Bill Waichulis were excused.

Lapi made a motion to approve the Dec. 8, 2021 meeting minutes. Bonk seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

None to be heard.

Municipalities to be heard

Dana Souza, Sanibel City Manager, introduced himself as the new city manager and is looking forward to working with the TDC. He added that the city is grateful for the TDC funding it receives every year.

Gloria Raso Tate, Cape Coral city councilwoman, said the city council has decided to be more present at TDC meetings. She previously served on the TDC for 9.5 years and looks forward to getting back involved. She also thanked the TDC for all it has done for Cape Coral.

Special presentation

Jeannine Joy, United Way President & CEO, and Tony Lapi, Sanibel Captiva Beach Resorts President & CEO, gave a special presentation to the TDC. Joy shared a few ways that United Way is assisting the community including its Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program and its 2-1-1 helpline for referral to health and social services. Lapi added he has been a United Way board member for 25 years and said that it is important for the hospitality industry to consider employee campaigns to give back to the community. United Way of Lee, Hendry, Glades, and Okeechobee has a 100% transparency rating which less than 3% of all United Way affiliates receive.

Report of the executive director

Pamela Johnson, VCB deputy director, reported the preliminary resort tax collected for November 2021 was \$3,999,301, a 72.1% increase over November 2020 preliminary collections of \$2,323,951. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$7,431,391, an increase of 61.3% year-over-year.

Johnson also reported that the average hotel occupancy rate for November 2021 was 71.8%, which is up 53.9% from November 2020 (46.7%). The average daily rate for November 2021 was \$151.11, up 26.2%

from November 2020 (\$119.73) and RevPAR for November 2021 was \$108.51, up 94.2% from November 2020 (\$55.88).

For vacation rentals, the average occupancy rate for November 2021 was 49%, which is up 36.1% from November 2020 (36%). The average daily rate for November 2021 was \$194, up 9.0% from November 2020 (\$179) and RevPAR for November 2021 was \$95, up 48.4% from November 2020 (\$65).

During November 2021, 986,908 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport, an increase of 97.2% compared to November 2020. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 73.3% from the same period last year.

Sales report

Jill Vance, VCB sales director, reported that the team is ahead of pace on four of the seven sales goals for FY21-22. She shared highlights of successful first quarter group media and sales activities. The team executed a successful bridal interstitial ad with Aki Weddings and attended a variety of in-person meeting planner trade shows including IMEX America that was attended by over 3,400 meeting planners. Vance also presented upcoming sales activities for January through March, comprised of in-person meeting planner appointments, consumer and travel advisor trade shows, along with trade shows for the motor coach and SMERF markets. Vance also gave an international sales update, adding that VCB Executive Director Tamara Pigott had 38 appointments at Brand USA Travel Week in the UK with top tour operators. International restrictions have changed again and Vance gave an update on what is needed for visitors to travel to the US.

Visitor Services report

Simone Behr, VCB visitor services director, reported that our tourism ambassador volunteers assisted 61,605 visitors during the first quarter of FY21-22. Highlights during the fall months included tourism ambassadors assisting at Roy Hobbs World Series, Fort Myers Tip-Off and greeting United Airlines' inaugural flights from San Francisco and Los Angeles, as well as attending 12 destination education training sessions. Visitor services looks forward to hosting the 32nd Annual Volunteer Tourism Ambassador Appreciation Luncheon on April 6.

PR/Communications report

Jackie Parker, VCB communications manager, presented an overview of the PR team's first quarter activities, including overall impressions, top-tier and local coverage. Top projects included Midwest Travel Journalists Association's fall conference, Gift from the Sea Writer's Retreat & Community Celebration and hosting two international journalists. Also of note, the team's Shellcast podcast was honored with a Silver Flagler Award at Governor's Conference on Tourism last September. She also reported on upcoming activities, including press trips with writers for LA Travel Magazine and OC Travel Magazine, Feb. 14-18, and spring training. The team will be also attending Travel & Adventure Shows in Boston, Los Angeles, New York and Atlanta.

TDC member items

Kramer asked Jeff Mielke, Sports Development executive director, for a spring training update. The MLB and players are slated to meet today regarding their bargaining agreement and as of now Sports Development is moving forward as if it is happening on schedule. It was added that Red Sox tickets go on sale tomorrow.

DePasquale said Tamara Pigott, VCB executive director, is speaking Jan. 27 at the Greater Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce's monthly luncheon. Additionally, the chamber is hosting a workforce event on Feb. 4 at the Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre with Henry Mack, Florida Department of Education chancellor and John Talmage, Economic Development executive director, as speakers.

Kramer said the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa had 3 million in cancellations for the business market with the rise of the new variant. He added that the transient travel market is holding strong. Staffing is still an issue and the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association is hosting a virtual meeting on Feb. 17 with Cheney Brothers to discuss supply chain issues. He also said he is serving as chair of FGCU's Resort & Hospitality Management (RHM) school and the Wanderlust event is back and will take place on April 22 at the Ritz Carlton, Naples to fundraise for RHM students.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 a.m.

Next TDC meeting

The next TDC meeting is at **9 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 10, 2022** at the Lee County Admin East Building, Room 118, 2201 Second St., Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, go to www.LeeVCB.com. Contact: Tamara Pigott, TPigott@leegov.com, Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.