



## **TDC Meeting Minutes**

April 14, 2022

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

### **Council members in attendance**

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Jim Atterholt, Darla Bonk, Pamela Cronin, Larry Fiesel, Mike Gibson, Tony Lapi, Holly Smith, Gloria Tate, Bill Waichulis and Robert Wells III.

Colleen DePasquale, Brian Kramer and Fran Myers were excused.

Smith made a motion to approve the March 17, 2022 meeting minutes. Bonk seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **Public to be heard**

None to be heard.

### **Municipalities to be heard**

None to be heard.

### **Report of the executive director**

Tamara Pigott, Lee County Visitor & Convention Bureau executive director, reported the preliminary resort tax collected for February 2022 was \$8,074,002, an 44.6% increase over February 2021 preliminary collections of \$5,582,292. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$29,337,869, a 49.71% increase year-over-year.

Pigott also reported that the average hotel occupancy rate for February 2022 was 88.1%, which is up 29.4% from February 2021 (68.1%). The average daily rate for February 2022 was \$277.53, up 45.6% from February 2021 (\$190.64) and RevPAR for February 2022 was \$244.41, up 88.4% from February 2021 (\$129.74).

For vacation rentals, the average occupancy rate for February 2022 was 90%, which is up 15.4% from February 2021 (78%). The average daily rate for February 2022 was \$318, up 10.4% from February 2021 (\$288) and RevPAR for February 2022 was \$285, up 27.2% from February 2021 (\$224).

During February 2022, 1,149,618 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport, an increase of 58.4% compared to February 2021. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 55.4% from the same period last year.

### **Sales report**

Jill Vance, VCB sales director, reported that the team is ahead of pace on five of the seven sales goals for FY21-22. She shared highlights of successful second quarter group media and sales activities. The team executed a successful brand update to the destination education course with Northstar's Travel Agent Academy and rolled out a new chapter featuring destination weddings. The sales team attended a variety of

in-person meeting planner and consumer/travel trade shows including four Travel and Adventure shows in key feeder cities. Vance also presented upcoming sales activities for April through June, comprised of in-person meeting planner appointment shows, travel agency sales missions, and trade shows for the SMERF markets.

### **Visitor Services report**

Simone Behr, VCB Visitor Services director, reported that our Tourism Ambassador volunteers assisted 121,829 visitors during the second quarter of FY21/22. Additional community support included Tourism Ambassadors helping at the World Pickleball Tournament and staffing the VCB baseball booths at all spring training games, as well as greeting arriving passengers on the Eurowings Discover inaugural flight from Frankfurt, Germany. VCB Tourism Ambassador Steve Tutko reached a milestone of 8,000 hours dedicated to the VCB and RSW. Visitor Services looks forward to hosting the 2022 Travel Rally & Community Celebration on May 3.

### **Communications report**

Jackie Parker, VCB communications manager, presented an overview of the communications team's second-quarter activities, including overall impressions, top-tier and local coverage. In March, more than 1 billion impressions were garnered in earned media. Top projects include hosting domestic and international press visits focusing on sustainability and green lodging. Individual team members attended Travel & Adventure Shows in Boston, Los Angeles and New York. Also of note, the PR team was honored with a Gold Adrian Award from HSMIAI (Hospitality Sales and Marketing International for coverage in the April 2021 issue of Southern Living magazine.

### **Beach & Shoreline update**

Nancy MacPhee, VCB product development manager, provided an update on previously funded beach & shoreline projects. She also shared the documentation needed for the TDC to complete their review of fiscal year 2022-23 project funding. There are 22 eligible requests totaling \$14,153,623.58. The TDC will conduct the annual Beach & Shoreline workshop at 2 p.m. on April 20. To view requests and documentation related to the review workshop click [here](#).

### **TDC member items**

Wells said that the STR numbers look great and February's occupancy surpassed everyone else in the state, including Monroe county. Waichulis added that the summer is looking great as far as bookings.

Fiesel said that traffic in Estero appears to be busier than normal, so the STR numbers are measuring up to the traffic.

Tate thanked the council for the opportunity to have a seat at the table. Cape Coral has had very successful events (bike nights and beer festival) and is busy with the various park renovations.

Atterholt thanked Waichulis for questions on Fort Myers Beach's renourishment and hopes to work with the VCB to make that process go smoothly. He also thanked those who attended the Estero Blvd. ribbon cutting.

Gibson said that Bonita Springs has many new businesses moving in and inquired about adding these businesses to the VCB's new Discovery Challenge.

Waichulis said that the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association will have a luncheon at the Lee County School District Administration building with lunch prepared by the school district's culinary students on April 27. There will also be an FRLA golf tournament fundraiser at the Dunes on Sanibel May 11.

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.

**Next TDC meeting**

The next TDC meeting is at **9 a.m. Thursday, May 12, 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](http://www.LeeVCB.com).  
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