



**Amended TDC Meeting Minutes**  
May 12, 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, Pamela Cronin, Larry Fiesel, Mike Gibson, Jay Johnson, Tony Lapi, Holly Smith, Gloria Tate, Bill Waichulis and Robert Wells III.

Darla Bonk, Brian Kramer and Fran Myers were excused.

Smith made a motion to approve the April 14, 2022, meeting minutes. Wells seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Public to be heard**

Meghan Dunphy, Luminary Hotel & Co., announced the Caloosa Sound Amphitheater grand opening will take place on May 25 and invited the audience to attend.

**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 March 2022 was \$10,974,040, a 28.8% increase over March 2021 preliminary collections of \$8,522,826. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$39,814,433 an increase of 43.9% year-over-year.

Pigott also reported that the average hotel occupancy rate for March 2022 was 85.0%, which is up 6.1% from March 2021 (80.1%). The average daily rate for March 2022 was \$314.59, up 38.4% from March 2021 (\$227.33) and RevPAR for March 2022 was \$267.52, up 46.8% from March 2021 (\$182.19).

For vacation rentals, the average occupancy rate for March 2022 was 92%, which is up 13.5% from March 2021 (81%). The average daily rate for March 2022 was \$362, up 11.0% from March 2021 (\$326) and RevPAR for March 2022 was \$334, up 26.1% from March 2021 (\$265).

During March 2022, 1,514,046 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport, an increase of 30.3% compared to March 2021. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 44.0% from the same period last year.

Pigott also announced Ray Sarracino was hired as the VCB's new communications director and Katie Varano was hired as the new account supervisor for the VCB's marketing agency, MMGY. Commissioner Pendergrass welcomed Jay Johnson, owner of Bubba's Roadhouse and Saloon to the council.

### **DSG report**

Joseph St. Germain, with Downs & St. Germain Research, offered a tourism snapshot of January through March 2022. When compared to the same period in 2021, visitation increased by 23.3%, room nights increased by 27.8% and direct visitor expenditures increased 40.1% to more than \$1.4 billion. He reported that 92% of visitors came from the U.S. while 4% came from Canada. Visitors spent an average of 8.8 nights while visiting, and 35% reported being first-time visitors. [See the full report here.](#)

### **Sports Development report**

Jeff Mielke, Sports Development director, reported that 31,424 room nights sold in the months of January through March 2022 with direct visitor spending of more than \$13.1 million.

### **New business**

Wells made a motion to approve the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter FY2022-23 budget. Waichulis seconded which passed unanimously.

Lapi made a motion to recommend \$15,769,488 for FY2022-23 Beach & Shoreline projects throughout Lee County. Cronin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. These projects will be considered for final approval by the Board of County Commissioners as part of the FY2022-23 budget.

Smith made a motion to appoint Johnson to the attractions & events marketing review subcommittee. Waichulis seconded which passed unanimously.

### **TDC member items**

Waichulis said there is grant funding for sea turtle safe lighting and has a contact if anyone wants it.

Gibson said Bonita Springs just had a groundbreaking for the food truck park which is slated to open in 10 months.

Lapi thanked the VCB's tourism ambassadors who came out to tour 'Tween Waters Resort & Spa.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

### **Next TDC meeting**

The next TDC meeting is at **9 a.m. Thursday, June 9, 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). Contact: Tamara Pigott, [TPigott@leegov.com](mailto:TPigott@leegov.com), Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.