



TDC Meeting Minutes

August 14, 2025

Commissioner Kevin Ruane called the Lee County Tourist Development Council meeting to order at 8:59 a.m.

Council members in attendance

Commissioner Kevin Ruane, Brian Kramer, Robert Wells III, Pamela Cronin, Nigel Fullick, Jay Johnson, Bill Steinke, Lori Fayhee and Tony Lapi.

Liston Bochette, Holly Smith, Bill Waichulis and Dan Allers were excused.

Approval of previous meeting minutes

Rob Wells made a motion to approve the June 12, 2025, TDC meeting minutes. Jay Johnson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

None to be heard.

Municipalities to be heard

Ashley Anderson, Business Recruitment and Retention specialist, City of Cape Coral, shared some upcoming events and visitor data for Cape Coral. Since July 4, Slipaway Food Truck Park & Marina has seen over 50,000 visits by more than 25,000 unique visitors. The Marina features 30 boat slips with a fuel dock and ship store. The Red, White & Boom annual 4th of July event attracted 26,000 attendees, matching last year's turnout. Manatee Man Triathlon will be happening on Aug. 31 at The Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village. Island Hopper Songwriter Fest will be held in Cape Coral on Sept. 22 and 23. The Tourism Spotlight features the Cape Coral Museum of History. It was established in 1987 and is operated by the Cape Coral Historical Society and serves as the official repository of the city's heritage.

Special Presentations

Marty and Joe Harrity, HM Restaurant Group, announced that Bonita Fish Company (formerly Bonita Bills) is set to open mid-October, featuring 200 seats and a renovated dock for 35 slips. They will be open for lunch and dinner daily, and offer brunch on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. HM Restaurant Group operates four Doc Ford's locations, employs just under 500 people and, with the opening of Bonita Fish Company, will offer bayside event space accommodating up to 120 people.

Jacki Liszak, Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce president, presented an update on the chamber's initiatives to promote the area. She highlighted the success of the Roxie Visitor Center, which attracts around 100 visitors daily, and announced plans for a new portable visitor center to enhance outreach. Liszak discussed the "Where's Roxie?" program, which promotes local businesses through community engagement. She emphasized the importance of marketing efforts,



including a new island map and guide, and the weekly newsletter "Chamber Chatter." Liszak also noted the chamber's focus on growing membership and retaining current members to support local businesses and the economy. She reinforced the chamber's commitment to foster community engagement and attract visitors to Fort Myers Beach.

Report of the executive director

Tamara Pigott, VCB executive director, reported the preliminary resort tax collected for June 2025 was \$3,158,976, a 7.64% increase over June 2024 preliminary collections of \$2,934,880. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$39,261,873 an increase of 5.89% year-over-year.

Pigott also reported that the average hotel occupancy rate for June 2025 was 55.8%, which is down 2.5% from June 2024. The average daily rate for June 2025 was \$152.35, an increase of 8.6% from June 2024 and RevPAR for June 2025 was \$85.06, up 5.9% from June 2024.

For vacation rentals, the average occupancy rate for June 2025 was 31.2%, which is up 4.8% from June 2024. The average daily rate for June 2025 was \$269.06, up 5.8% from June 2024 and RevPAR for June 2025 was \$83.81, up 10.9% from June 2024.

During June 2025, 698,573 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport, an increase of 0.2% compared to June 2024. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is down 1.5% from the same period last year.

Sales Report

Pamela Johnson, VCB deputy director, reported that the sales team met or exceeded pace for three of six FY24-25 goals, with strong results in group room nights booked, destination education and community engagement. Charm Evans, global sales manager, shared a key highlight for the quarter was the international trade show IPW, where the team completed 148 one-on-one appointments with tour operators, airlines, OTAs and media, and participated in enrichment and networking events. The team also hosted an international destination FAM experience, May 7-10, showcasing the area to travel trade partners from Germany and Switzerland.

Visitor Services Report

Simone Behr, VCB visitor services director, reported that tourism ambassador volunteers assisted 214,512 visitors and residents during the third quarter of FY25. Additional community support included Tourism Ambassadors helping at FineMark Pro Women's US Tennis, as well as various conferences. Visitor Services celebrated National Seashell Day with our dolphin and manatee mascots and volunteers handing out shell shaped lollipops to the traveling public at RSW. The team looks forward to hosting the 25th annual Elaine McLaughlin Outstanding Hospitality Service Awards on Aug. 22. To RSVP, please visit EAwards.org.



April – June 2025 research report

James Brendle, DSG, presented an overview of April-June visitor research. Lee County welcomed 862,700 visitors during this time, an increase of 6.7% compared to 2024, resulting in direct visitor spending exceeding \$770 million. He reported that the international market accounted for around 9% of visitors during the April through June timeframe, with Canada representing the largest share at 5%.

Sports update

Jeff Mielke, sports development director, reported that 43,533 room nights sold in the months April through June 2025 with direct visitor spending of more than \$18.1 million.

New business

- a. Jay Johnson made a motion to approve the third quarter FY24/25 budget reports. Bill Steinke seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
- b. Pam Cronin made a motion to approve the proposed FY25/26 budget report. Rob Wells seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
- c. Rob Wells made a motion to formalize the recommendations for BoCC approval of FY25/26 Events Marketing funding for 11 events totaling \$200,000. Bill Steinke seconded the motion which passed unanimously.
- d. Jay Johnson made a motion to formalize the recommendations for BoCC approval of FY25/26 Attractions Marketing funding for 35 attractions totaling \$600,000. Bill Steinke seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

TDC member items

- Pamela Cronin had no comment.
- Bill Steinke had no comment.
- Jay Johnson
- Brian Kramer had no comment.
- Nigel Fullick shared that the 4th of July parade in Bonita Springs attracted between 10-12,000 people this year. The City of Bonita Springs recently held a workshop with their Parks & Recreation department that was very well attended by the public. The top two areas that citizens would like their tax dollars spent on is the new aquatic center and the Bonita Estero Rail Trail (BERT) project. Great to hear the public's support of these projects first-hand. To date, the City of Bonita Springs has committed \$17 million dollars for the BERT project, the Village of Estero has committed \$15 million dollars, and Collier County has committed \$1 million dollars, getting the project to about 40% funded.
- Lori Fayhee had no comment.
- Rob Wells had no comment.
- Tony Lapi shared that the beach renourishment project on Captiva should start on September 4 and is expected to last around 60 days.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:16 a.m.