



TDC Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2026

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass called the Lee County Tourist Development Council meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Commissioner Pendergrass welcomed Amanda Condomina, Assistant County Manager, to her first meeting.

Council members in attendance

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Robert Wells III, Jay Johnson, Bill Steinke, John Lai, Pam Cronin, Nigel Fullick, Holly Smith, Lori Fayhee, Scott Safford, Bill Waichulis and Tony Lapi.

Liston Bochette and Brian Kramer were excused.

Commissioner Pendergrass welcomed the new TDC member, Scott Safford, vice mayor of Fort Myers Beach, to the board.

Approval of previous meeting minutes

Bill Waichulis made a motion to approve the Jan. 8, TDC meeting minutes. Jay Johnson seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

Carol Robinson, representing the community, announced the creation of a new professional orchestra to fill the void left by the Southwest Florida Symphony's closure on June 30, 2025. The new ensemble will feature all professional musicians and will perform at Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall. The orchestra will also conduct outreach performances throughout the community as part of its mission to bring professional music to the region. A press release is expected to be issued within two weeks, which will include details about performance dates and programming.

Municipalities to be heard

Erika Ballard, Economic Development, City of Cape Coral, shared some upcoming events and visitor data. Ballard reported the following visitor impact from events held in January: 32,900 visitors for the 41st Annual Cape Coral Art Festival; 6,000 visitors for the Tour de Cape; and 4,700 visitors for the Sunshine State Nationals BMX + UCI World Qualifiers. The PPA Tour (Professional Pickleball Association) hosted 1,360 players at The Courts for the Cape Coral Open, Feb. 9-15. Upcoming events include the Model T Car Show, Feb. 12 from 5 to 7p.m., Cape Bike Night, Feb. 14 from 5 to 10 p.m., and the 24th Annual Burrowing Owl Festival, Feb. 28 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Rotary Park Environmental Center. The Tourism Spotlight featured Arts in the Cape, a local arts organization that offers guided art lesson instruction, private lessons, parties and custom projects. They are open Monday, Wednesday - Saturday from noon to 5 p.m.



Report of the executive director

Tamara Pigott, VCB executive director, reported the preliminary resort tax collected for December 2025 was \$4,278,079, an 18.8% increase over December 2024 preliminary collections of \$3,602,161. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$10,496,171, an increase of 20.1% year-over-year.

Pigott also reported that the average hotel occupancy rate for December 2025 was 61.2%, which is down 5.4% from December 2024. The average daily rate for December 2025 was \$157.15, a decrease of 0.5% from December 2024 and RevPAR for December 2025 was \$96.13, down 5.9% from December 2024.

For vacation rentals, the average occupancy rate for December 2025 was 31.3%, which is up 4.2% from December 2024. The average daily rate for December 2025 was \$311.50, up 6.1% from December 2024 and RevPAR for December 2025 was \$97.61, up 10.5% from December 2024.

During December 2025, 1,102,456 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport, a decrease of 1.7% compared to December 2024. The airport finished 2025 with a record breaking 11,154,458 passengers, which was a 1.1% increase compared to 2024.

October – December 2025 research report

Joseph St. Germain, DSG, presented a broad overview of the October-December 2025 visitor research. Lee County welcomed 913,200 visitors during this time, an increase of 5.3% compared to 2024, resulting in direct visitor spending exceeding \$791 million. Over 10% of all visitor's originated from international markets with Canada remaining the top international market at 5.1%. Additionally, 64% of visitors recalled promotions that influenced their decision to visit Lee County and nearly 82% of visitors were repeat visitors.

Sports update

Jeff Mielke, Sports Development executive director, reported 62,934 room nights sold October - December 2025 with direct visitor spending of more than \$25.8 million. For CY25, 181,213 room nights sold with direct visitor spending of more than \$76.9 million. Mielke reported that Lee County hosted 165 events and the Red Sox and Twins finished third and fourth, respectively, in total attendance for the 2025 Spring Training season. Additionally, the Fort Myers Tip-Off resulted in over 7 million viewers for the NCAA men's basketball games and 674,000 viewers for the NCAA women's basketball games on Thanksgiving Day.

New business

Tony Lapi made a motion to approve the Q1 FY26 Budget Report. Pamela Cronin seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

TDC member items

- Tony Lapi shared that he's a lacrosse fan, and if you are looking for a good game to watch on Friday night, Syracuse plays Maryland at 6 p.m. on SEC network.



- Rob Wells had no comment.
- Lori Fayhee had no comment.
- Nigel Fullick had no comment.
- John Lai shared that Tamara Pigott and John Talmage will be speaking about the state of the local economy on Feb. 18 at Sundial Beach Resort & Spa for the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber Luncheon. The Fort Myers Chamber meeting on March 10 will feature guest speaker Frank Bonafilia, executive director of the Edison Awards. On April 8, Bryan Griffin, President & CEO of VISIT FLORIDA, will be the keynote speaker at the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber Annual Meeting held at Marriott Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa. On May 12, the Lee Chapter of the FRLA (Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association), the Greater Fort Myers Chamber and the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber will partner to host Lieutenant Governor of Florida Jeff Kottcamp, who is also president and CEO of Florida TaxWatch, as guest speaker to give a session update at the Marriott Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa.
- Scott Safford shared that he is honored to be a member of the TDC. He announced that the Town of Fort Myers beach raised over \$70,000 for local charities during the 3rd Annual Mrs. Roper's Caftan Crawl event, and about 800 people dressed up as Mrs. Roper. He also shared that the Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival will take place on March 7.
- Holly Smith said that traffic has really picked up on Sanibel Island, which is a good sign for business. She also gave a shout-out to ArtFest Fort Myers for a wonderful event and mentioned that the Saturday Farmers Market in Downtown Fort Myers is a great addition as well. Sanibel's 50th anniversary recently wrapped up with a closing event to seal the time capsule for 25 years. Smith remarked that it was a great year of celebrating the island. She thanked John Lai for his work on a great State of the Islands meeting with about 250 people in attendance.
- Bill Waichulis shared that the Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina's Lloyds of London insurance renewal is coming up in March. He shared that a 30-40% reduction in insurance cost is likely. That's huge savings for hoteliers as it's one of their main expenses.
- Jay Johnson announced that the FRLA Luncheon on April 21 will be hosted at the School District of Lee County's main offices and will feature courses prepared by students in the culinary program.
- Bill Steinke expressed his continued thanks for the support the TDC gives to Cape Coral. He shared that the city council recently approved the establishment of a dedicated fund to short-term rental registration revenues, effective Jan. 1, 2026. The restricted fund will be maintained separately from the general fund and allocated exclusively to the following initiatives: two dedicated code enforcement officers; two dedicated police officers; an advanced technology system to monitor short-term rental advertisements and reservations; and one full-time administrator to oversee the program. The city intends to share data and insights from its short-term rental monitoring technology with the TDC to support coordinated tourism management across the county.
- Pamela Cronin shared that the sale of the Shell Factory property closed a couple weeks ago. She thanked everyone for all of their support throughout their 27 years of business.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:22 a.m.