

TDC MEETING MINUTES

April 11, 2019

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Council members in attendance: John Carioscia, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Brian Kramer, Tony Lapi, Fran Myers, Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Holly D. Smith, Bill Waichulis and Rob Wells.

Dr. Nicole King-Smith, VCB training and development manager, awarded certificates to the newest certified guest service professionals, (CGSPs) bringing the total to 763 CGSP graduates.

Fran Myers made a motion to approve the March 15, 2019, TDC meeting minutes. Holly D. Smith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

None to be heard.

Municipalities to be heard

Michelle Dean, city of Cape Coral Parks & Recreation, announced that Sun Splash reopened for the season in mid-March. The park will be open daily May 31 through Aug. 9, 2019. City council approved alcohol sales there for a one-year trial period. Sales will include beer, wine and wine slushies at a maximum of two drinks per person in a controlled environment. Overall sales for the park are up since the inclusion of alcohol sales and it also allows for more events to happen on park grounds. The final Cape Coral Bike Night of the year is from 5 to 10 p.m. April 13, on 47th Terrace.

Report of the Executive Director

Tamara Pigott reported the preliminary tourist development tax collected for February 2019 was \$5,394,964, breaking the record for the highest bed tax collected during February. Figures represent a 1.3 percent increase over February 2018 preliminary collections of \$5,323,507. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$18,443,742, a decrease of 3.4 percent year-over-year.

During February 2019, 1,117,409 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). Figures represent an increase of 6 percent compared to February 2018. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 7.3 percent from the same period last year.

Pigott presented two new TV spots and the first of two in-state newspaper inserts, featuring the VCB's humorous 2019 summer campaign, "You can't choose your family, but you can choose your family vacation." Out-of-state TV runs from April 8 to May 12, while in-state TV is scheduled from May 13 to June 16. In-state radio will run June 3-24. Overall, our summer marketing campaign will yield more than 100 million impressions.

Sales update

Jill Vance, VCB director of sales, reported that the majority of the FY2018-19 sales goals are ahead of pace for attainment. She also presented highlights of second-quarter activities for the domestic group, travel agent and consumer sales, including ConferenceDirect APM and the *Boston Globe* Travel Show.

Vance also presented upcoming sales activities for third quarter including Connect NYC and the West Coast Florida Travel Agent Sales Mission.

Stefanie Zinke, VCB international tourism sales manager, said January through March had a strong focus on consumer activations in core international markets. The largest consumer activation occurred in Toronto, in partnership with Visit Florida, and gained 25.5 million impressions. Our presence at ITB in Berlin, the largest tourism and travel show in Europe, included radio interviews, TV programs and live broadcasts. Commissioner and TDC Chairman Cecil Pendergrass participated in many of these interviews. Sales initiated a new partnership with West Coast Florida DMO partners to target the Latin American market. The first road show, completed at the end of March, included meetings with 720 trade professionals in three cities. The May lineup includes a Canada road show in Toronto and Montréal. In June, the VCB will be at IPW in Anaheim, California, with five hotel partners and international contractors participating in over 100 appointments.

Visitor Services update

Judi Durant, VCB director of visitor services, reported that the volunteer Tourism Ambassadors assisted 88,274 visitors, a 3.9 percent increase over 2018. Additional community support examples volunteers participated in included staffing the VCB baseball booths at all spring training games and assisting United Airlines with greeting a passenger celebrating her 100th birthday. Lee County Travel Rally will be held May 1 at Lakes Park, in support of National Travel and Tourism Week and the U.S. Travel Association.

Communications update

Francesca Donlan, VCB director of communications, presented successful, post-red tide strategies, including a satellite media tour and national press release. The PR team hosted 36 domestic and international journalists this quarter, attended media events and fostered a relationship with Vineyard Vines resulting in a production shoot on Captiva that has been included in several of the brand's email marketing campaigns.

Beach & Shoreline update

Nancy MacPhee, VCB product development manager, shared an update on Beach & Shoreline projects funded during the last two years. \$133.9 million in tourist development tax funding has been allocated through this program since FY2000. Looking ahead to FY2019-20, 23 funding requests in the amount of \$10.2 million are currently being reviewed by the TDC in preparation for the annual Beach & Shoreline workshop at 2 p.m. April 25, 2019.

Special Presentation

Emmy Hise, STR consulting & analytics, presented a hotel industry overview. Hise shared performance measures for the total U.S. market, Florida, as well as Lee County. She also reported on new properties in the pipeline, and provided a custom Lee County forecast for 2019.

New Business

The TDC approved the city of Cape Coral's request to move the location of an observation boardwalk previously funded in FY2016. The proposed boardwalk will move from the east side to the west side of the park and provide shoreline protection and wildlife viewing opportunities along the spreader canal.

Fran Myers made a motion to approve to shift the May TDC meeting date to Friday, May 10, 2019. Holly D. Smith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

TDC Member Items

- Holly D. Smith gave an update of the status of a few bills in the Florida Legislature. Senate Bill 824, a vacation rental bill was postponed. House Bill 987, which preempts all local regulations of vacation rentals, is in its third year and did see its way through all committees. Three amendments were included, however, it didn't include maintaining their grandfathered status for zoning requirements. It did include an amendment for condos and homeowners. Smith said, "Keep it at the local level for us to control what happens."
- Fran Myers announced that offshore powerboat racing is making a return to Fort Myers Beach this October.
- Tamara Pigott sent FADMO updates to TDC about Visit FLORIDA. She encouraged everyone to express themselves to their representatives.
- Commissioner Pendergrass mentioned that Dave & Busters is now open. He will be attending a Town Hall meeting this evening from 4-6 p.m. with fellow Commissioner John Manning as well as staff from the city of Fort Myers and RSW. Pendergrass attended ITB Berlin last month with VCB Staff, and complimented the VCB on their hard work at promoting our destination at this large travel trade show.
- Colleen DePasquale thanked everyone who submitted nominations for the upcoming Chrysalis Awards, and announced that judging has begun. There is still time to register for the June 14 event that will be held at Sanibel Harbour Marriott Resort & Spa.
- Brian Kramer announced that the upcoming FRLA Lee Chapter educational luncheon will showcase Lee County high school hospitality students, who will be preparing lunch for the event. The luncheon will be held at the Lee County Public Education Center on April 25.
- Tony Lapi announced a May 15 soft opening of the new kitchen for the Crow's Nest and Old Captiva House restaurants at Tween Waters Inn. He thanked Tamara Pigott for attending a recent Captiva Island Historical Society meeting and giving a presentation on the history of lodging.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Next TDC meeting

The next TDC meeting will be held at 9 a.m. **Friday, May 10, 2019**, at the Lee County Admin East building, Conference Room 118, 2201 Second St., Fort Myers, FL 33901. To view a complete tax collections report, go to www.LeeVCB.com. Contact: Tamara Pigott, TPigott@leegov.com, Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.