



TDC MEETING MINUTES

Aug. 10, 2017

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

Council members in attendance: Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Vice Chairman René Affourtit, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Rana Erbrick, Kevin Ruane and Rob Wells.

Brian Kramer, Tony Lapi, Fran Myers and Bill Waichulis were excused.

Vice Chairman René Affourtit made a motion to approve the July 20, 2017, TDC meeting minutes. Kevin Ruane seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

Ilene Safron, owner, Main Sail Video Productions, announced that “Fort Myers: City of Palms – A Contemporary Portrait,” text by Amy Bennett Williams and photography by Safron, will be on sale at Edison & Ford Winter Estates. The book is a publication of the office of Fort Myers Mayor Randall P. Henderson Jr.

Lisa Sbuttoni, vice president of community and visitor relations, Edison & Ford, said that there will be book signings with Henderson, Safron and Williams, Aug. 24 and Sept. 12 at Edison & Ford. Sbuttoni also took the opportunity to thank the TDC in advance of grant approval of \$50,000 for Edison & Ford from the 2017-18 FY Attraction Marketing funding.

Comment from Chairman

Commissioner Pendergrass thanked Vice Chairman Affourtit for chairing the July TDC meeting. He commented on the reserves discussion at the July 20 TDC meeting, noting that there will be an upcoming Board of County Commissioners workshop covering TDC reserves.

Special presentation: Arts & Economic Prosperity Study update

Lydia Black, executive director, Alliance for the Arts, gave a special presentation on the positive economic impact of arts and culture in Lee County. She noted the arts and culture industry generates more than \$140 million annually and supports 3,875 full-time equivalent jobs.

Report of the Executive Director

Bed tax collection: The preliminary resort tax collected for June 2017 was \$2,638,772, a 3.2 percent increase over June 2016 preliminary collections of \$2,557,534. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$33,480,460, a decrease of 0.2 percent year-over-year.

STR Report: The June Smith Travel Research (STR) summary showed occupancy up .5 percent, ADR up 1.3 percent and Rev/PAR up 1.8 percent.

Airport traffic: During June 2017, 528,383 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). Figures represent an increase of 7.3 percent compared to June 2016. Year-to date, passenger traffic is up 2 percent from the same period last year.

2nd quarter research report, Nicole Devine, DPA: During spring 2017, Lee County hosted approximately 1.3 million visitors, with 853,000 visitors staying in paid accommodations and an additional 476,000 staying with friends or relatives. Spring 2017 visitation among paid accommodations was up 4.1 percent from 2016, while visitation among those staying with friends or relatives was down 2.3 percent YOY. As a result, total visitation increased 1.7 percent YOY.

Spring 2017 visitors spent an estimated \$728 million during their stay in Lee County – a 3.3 percent increase from last spring (\$704.5 million).

Paid accommodations guests spent \$500 million (69 percent of the total) – a 7 percent increase from last spring (\$467.4 million). However, spending among visitors staying with friends or relatives decreased 3.9 percent from last year, contributing \$227.9 million to the total.

Eight in 10 spring 2017 visitors staying in paid accommodations reside within the U.S. (79 percent). Canada and Germany represented the largest share of international paid accommodation guests (7 percent each).

Almost half of domestic paid accommodations visitors came from the Midwest (46 percent). The Northeast and South contributed one-quarter each (25 percent), and the remaining 4 percent came from the West.

The top domestic feeder markets for the Lee County lodging industry during spring 2017 were Chicago (8 percent), Boston (7 percent) and New York (5 percent).

According to reports from Lee County property managers, reservations for the upcoming summer season (July, August and September) suggest business might not be as strong as last summer. One in four responding managers reported that their total reservations for the next three months are up over the same period last year (23 percent vs. 30 percent in 2016), and one-third said reservations are the same (33 percent vs. 35 percent in 2016). The remaining claimed that their reservations are down (36 percent) compared to last summer (28 percent responded similarly in 2016.)

New Business

-Formalize FY2017-18 Attractions Marketing Funding Requests

Nancy MacPhee, VCB product development manager, presented the recommendations for FY 2017-18 Attraction Marketing funding. The total budgeted for next fiscal year is \$400,000. Two agencies have requested this funding. First, Southwest Florida Community Foundation, who administers the Attraction Marketing program for the TDC, is requesting \$350,000 to be allocated to requesting agencies. Forty-two organizations requested funding totaling \$849,013. The Attractions committee is reviewing requests and will finalize recommendations Aug. 15. Committee chair Pamela Cronin said that the recently implemented program change is good, praising the high number of requests and the benefit of insight from VCB staff.

Second, Edison & Ford Winter Estates is requesting \$50,000 for website design, print and digital advertising.

Rob Wells made a motion to approve, seconded by Kevin Ruane. The motion passed unanimously.

-3rd Quarter Budget Report, Lucy Maldonado, VCB fiscal manager

Vice Chairman René Affourtit made a motion to accept the report, seconded by Kevin Ruane. The motion passed unanimously.

For Council Information

The VCB will host the Superior Small Lodging (SSL) Annual Conference and Industry Trade Show, Oct. 15-16 at Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina, Fort Myers Beach. The keynote speaker will be Ken Lawson, VISIT FLORIDA CEO.

TDC Member Items

Vice Chairman René Affourtit – He complimented the addition of new monitors in the meeting room. He encouraged everyone to attend the Governor’s Conference on Tourism Aug. 28-30 at The Diplomat Beach Resort, Hollywood, Florida.

Colleen DePasquale – Lee County Hoteliers Association (LCHA) luncheon will be Aug. 24 at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa. The speaker will be Dan Murphy, vice president of membership and corporate relations, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA).

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Next TDC meeting

There is no scheduled TDC meeting for September. The next TDC meeting will be at 9 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 12, 2017, at the Lee County Admin East building, first floor conference room 118, 2201 Second Street, Fort Myers.