



TDC MEETING MINUTES

February 11, 2016

Commissioner Frank Mann called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Council members in attendance: René Affourtit, Fran Myers, Colleen DePasquale, Bill Waichulis, Mike Gibson, Tony Lapi, Rob Wells, Jeff Webb, Pamela Cronin and Anita Cereceda.

René Affourtit made a motion, seconded by Mike Gibson to approve the TDC Meeting Minutes of January 15, 2016. The motion passed unanimously.

Public to be Heard

- Fort Myers Beach residents, Judy Haataja and Becca Natia shared their concerns about additional development in residential areas on the back bay, and advocated for this area to remain a quiet zone and not open to the public. Staff estimates thus far that the TDC has allocated between \$200,000 - \$300,000 for bayside improvements to the Town of Fort Myers Beach. Anita Cereceda, Mayor, Town of Fort Myers Beach, agreed with the residents that the quiet zones should remain undeveloped.
- Kaye Molnar, President and Project PIO, Cella Molnar & Associates, Inc, gave an update of the reFRESH Estero Blvd and reFRESH waterlines projects. In November, all the mainline were in. The connections were made from Downtown Fort Myers Beach to Lovers Lane and will be done by the beginning of March. They are working on putting in nine foot wide sidewalks and restoring the bike lanes from Crescent Street to the Lani Kai.
- Lydia Black, Executive Director, Alliance for the Arts, reported a 20% increase in arts programming across Lee County. ArtFest Fort Myers 2016 was highly successful despite the rain, and thousands of people attended and purchased artwork. The Alliance for the Arts is currently finishing up a cultural data project which will provide better data on workforce and economic impact of the arts in Lee and Collier Counties. Data collected will be reported in 2017. Lydia introduced Renee Pesci with the Florida Repertory Theatre. She was proud to announce that the Florida Rep has been reviewed 8 times by the Wall Street Journal. For a city our size, we should be very proud of this high level exposure.
- Renee Pesci, Development Director, Florida Repertory Theatre invited everyone to come and see the 12 Angry Men opening Friday, February 12th. Frank Mann wished them well and will be attending the show Friday night.
- Jack Carver, Florida RV Trade Association, reported they had their biggest dealer show sponsored in Florida which brought in 12,500 people, 13 dealers, 600 units and 100 vendors. Jack is grateful to our community for their support. The next RV show is in April at the Lee County Sports Complex. RV visitors are here longer (3-4 months) and have a greater impact on the economy. RV sales are up this year with fuel being lower and economy stabilized. Tamara also added that RV visitors pay bed tax.

Municipalities to be Heard

- Judie Zimomra, Manager, City of Sanibel, shared the Sanibel Traffic Communications Strategy. The City of Sanibel is providing robust public communication of beach conditions on web and social platforms, counting vehicle traffic across the causeway, and sharing their video campaign, “Don’t spend your vacation in traffic” to assist in keeping traffic down at peak times. Judie thanked the TDC for their support of the beach re-nourishments on Sanibel.

VCB Executive Director's Report

- Tamara Pigott reported that the bed tax collections for the month of December 2015 were \$3,124,516, an 8.3% increase over December 2014 preliminary collections of \$2,883,737. Fiscal year over year collections increased 11.4%, with a total of \$7,282,135 collected.
- STR Report – Occupancy for December was up 5.4%, ADR increased by 7.8% and RevPAR was up 13.6%.
- RSW Report – Total Passenger count of 835,359 for December 2015, an increase of 9.2% over December 2014. Year to date, passenger traffic was 8,371,801, a 5% from the same period last year.
- Jeff Mielke announced the date for the Governor's Baseball Dinner, which will be held for the first time in our county on February 19th at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point & Spa. He invited all the TDC members to attend.
- Marcia Wood, DPA gave the 4th quarter research report and noted key 2015 calendar year growth. Those gains included more than 3 million guests in paid accommodations, 4.9 million total visitors to Lee County with international visitors representing 26 percent. During the fall of 2015, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel hosted about 1.1 million visitors who spent an estimated \$664 million while visiting – a 5.9 percent increase in spending year-over-year. Visitors staying in paid accommodations spent an estimated \$469.5 million (71 percent of the total). Lee County's lodging industry experienced year-over-year increases in the average occupancy rate of 8.6 percent and a 5 percent increase in the average daily rate for the season, producing significant growth of 14 percent in revenue per available room (RevPAR). She reported key 2015 calendar year growth. Those gains included more than 3 million guests in paid accommodations, 4.9 million total visitors to Lee County with international visitors representing 26 percent.

Special Presentation

- Carter Wilson, STR Analytics Director, presented an overview of the local and national hotel industry. For 2015, Lee County led the competitive set in RevPar increase and year-over-year occupancy growth. The STR report forecast for 2016 represents positive increases locally of 5.9 percent in ADR and 7.2 percent in RevPar. The percent of change nationally is less favorable with 4.4 percent ADR and 5 percent RevPar.

New Business

- Jim Griffith, Chairman and CEO, Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, requested funding to complete the final phase of renovations for Sidney & Berne Davis rooftop sculpture garden. The City of Fort Myers will match TDC funding. René Affourtit made a motion, seconded by Colleen DePasquale to support The Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center rooftop sculpture garden project. Funding source is unknown at this time. The Board of County Commissioners will make the final decision. The motion passed unanimously.
- Alison Giesen, Museum Director, thanked the TDC for their support of the Mound House and requested existing project funding to allocate for native landscaping, interpretive signage, for a parking lot at 216 Connecticut Street. Fran Myers made a motion, seconded by Anita Cereceda to approve a legislative finding to recommend allowing the Town of Fort Myers Beach to use previously awarded beach park maintenance funding for landscaping and interpretive signage at a parking area for the Mound House. The motion passed, for the record, Colleen DePasquale voted against the motion.
- Berta Maldonado, Fiscal Manager, VCB, gave the 1st quarter 2016 budget report. René Affourtit made a motion, seconded by Fran Myers to approve the 1st quarter budget report. The motion passed unanimously.

For Council's Information

- Tamara Pigott informed the TDC that the Board of County Commissioners will be holding a work session on Tuesday, February 16, 2016 at 1:30 p.m. to discuss the BP Deepwater Horizon funds. The work session will be held in the same conference room the TDC Meetings are held in. The work session is open to the public, however, there is no public input taken during the work session. If the public would like to comment, they are able to do so in the morning at the regular meeting of the BoCC by indicating the agenda item they would like provide comment on is the work session.
- Rodger Desjarlais asked Glen Salyer to provide a brief overview of the BP Deepwater Horizon work session. Glen explained that during the work session, the BoCC will consider and discuss the funds that flow from the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The BoCC will talk about three things exclusively: 1. The economic damages settlement that Lee County reached with BP, 2. The direct component funds that come from Clean Water Act penalties under the RESTORE Act, and 3. The state expenditure plan that also consists of Clean Water Act penalties under the RESTORE Act that is governed by the Gulf Consortium. The Gulf Consortium is comprised of the 23 Florida Counties affected by the oil spill.

TDC Member Items

- Pam Cronin wished everyone a Happy Valentine's Day.
- Jeff Webb reminded everyone of the upcoming LCHA meeting on Thursday, February 25th at the Crowne Plaza. The speaker will be Frank Mann, TDC and BOCC chair. Tickets are available on the LCHA website. Jeff said he would also like to discuss further the two issues still on the table: BP settlement funds and TDC reserves. He suggested being more proactive in putting out a digital campaign to combat the negative advertising our area is receiving about the Lake O releases.
- Fran Myers made a motion, seconded by Pamela Cronin to allow staff and BOCC to address immediate action on the negative media surrounding our water quality and make it a positive one. The motion passed unanimously.
- Anita Cereceda thanked the VCB and ArtFest for the VIP tickets to ArtFest. She had a wonderful weekend celebrating the arts. She also updated the TDC that the Mayors from the six municipalities in our area will be meeting once a month to discuss any issues that come up such as the Lake O releases.
- Bill Waichulis thanked Tamara for the great presentation from Carter Wilson with STR.
- Fran Myers thanked Carol Obermeier, Director of Aviation Marketing for the airport service update.
- Rob Wells supports the movement for positive advertising and appreciates the efforts the media chooses to make the outlook better for our area.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m. **There will be no meeting in March.** The next regular meeting of the TDC will be held on **Thursday, April 14, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. at the Lee County Admin East Building, first floor conference room 118, 2201 Second Street, 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.