

TDC MEETING MINUTES

July 12, 2018

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

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

Brian Kramer, John Carioscia and Tony Lapi were excused.

Fran Myers made a motion to approve the June 14, 2018, TDC meeting minutes. Holly D. Smith seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

Elaine McLaughlin, Friends of Cayo Costa State Park, spoke about “Mullet and Mangroves,” a new documentary about the history of the pioneer families that grew up on the island back in the early 1500s. McLaughlin thanked the TDC for the marketing grant that made this documentary possible.

Municipalities to be heard

None to be heard.

Report of the Executive Director

Tamara Pigott reported that the preliminary resort tax collected for May 2018 was \$2,441,883, a 7.4 percent increase over May 2017 preliminary collections of \$2,272,660. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$33,388,127, an increase of 8.5 percent year-over-year.

May 2018, the STR Report shows occupancy up 0.4 percent and ADR up 2.2 percent for a total RevPAR increase of 2.6 percent.

During May 2018, 668,665 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). Figures represent an increase of 6.3 percent compared to May 2017. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 5.4 percent.

Sales update

Jill Vance, director of sales, VCB, reported on sales results for the first three quarters of FY 2017-18. Three of the five goals have been already been achieved for the fiscal year. She reported upcoming sales activities for the fourth quarter and rolled out the VCB’s first meetings video.

Stefanie Zinke, international sales manager, VCB, reported that her team hosted over 100 trade professionals from five countries on familiarization (FAM) tours in the destination. In May, the international team, together with the international contractors, Tamara Pigott and Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, attended IPW in Denver. Conducted over 100 meetings with tour operators, online travel

agents, media and airlines. Looking ahead, Stefanie and two hotel partners will conduct a sales mission in September to Germany and Netherlands.

Visitor Services update

Judi Durant, director of visitor services, VCB, reported 38,385 visitors assisted at Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) for the third quarter fiscal year 2018. The top three information requests for the second quarter were Drury Inn & Suites Fort Myers at Gulf Coast Town Center, J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and canoeing/kayaking. Visitor services volunteer Tourism Ambassadors were also busy promoting the destination at the Lee County Travel Rally, welcoming the Eurowings inaugural flights from Dusseldorf and Munich, providing support to the 2018 First Responder Games and the Team Tourism Summer Lecture Series, featuring Shawna Suckow.

Communications update

Francesca Donlan, director of communications, VCB, presented media coverage highlights that included 1.1 billion impressions in the third quarter of fiscal year 2018. She reported on the VCB hosting the very successful Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) Eastern Chapter Annual Meeting. About 75 travel writers attended the June 4-7 meeting at the Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village. Coverage from hosting four journalist/anglers at the "Ding" Darling & Doc Ford's Tarpon Tournament was also presented. Upcoming PR initiatives include a July 24 Island Hopper preview event in Nashville; Southeastern Outdoor Press Association Conference in Florence, S.C., Oct. 3-6, and the Eurowings media press trip Oct. 23-26. She said, www.fortmyers-sanibel.com and www.levcb.com. the latest updates on water quality are available as resources.

Marketing update

Brian Ososky, director of marketing, VCB, presented highlights from the June 21 National Seashell Day event hosted by the VCB. The VCB broke the Guinness World Records title for largest human image of a seashell with 1,093 participants. The event was held at the Outrigger Beach Resort on Fort Myers Beach and he thanked everyone involved in the execution of the event. Total earned media impressions were 82.6 million. Tied into this event was the Easy Summer Escape sweepstakes that received 93,587 entries. Lee County Day June 3 at Target Field was once again a successful promotion. Total entries were 194,557 for the National Geographic Traveler sweepstakes to win a trip for two to the destination and a photo tour with a NatGeo photographer. Our March-August 2018 marketing program with Beyond the Beach content series with Afar has estimated impressions at more than six million.

New Business

Pamela Cronin made a motion to approve the seven VCB events marketing funding requests totaling \$101,500 for FY18-19. Holly D. Smith seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

TDC Member Items

- Holly D. Smith attended the hurricane training at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and said it was very informative and well attended. Smith recommended that this training go on the road with a condensed version so that the county can better be prepared. Smith also thanked the VCB for a great National Seashell Day event. Smith participated in the event and said it was a fun experience. She congratulated everyone involved on a job well done. Smith also attended the Visit Florida seminar hosted by Ken Lawson, Visit Florida President & CEO and said it was

very informative. Smith thanked Commissioner Pendergrass and BOCC for getting six water quality monitoring stations funded.

- Commissioner Pendergrass reported that the Dept. of Health is fully funded and is frequently testing the water for reporting on bacteria levels.
- Bill Waichulis mentioned that he has been monitoring trends for guests sharing their comments online, and he has seen Google overtake TripAdvisor as the leading platform for guests to post their comments.
- Colleen DePasquale reminded everyone that the Lee County Chapter of the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA) tradeshow is July 19 at the Fort Myers Event Center.
- Fran Myers reminded distributed her RSW “Hotlist” of nonstop service by airline.
- Pamela Cronin shared she continues to be impressed with the VCB staff and their execution of events.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:16 a.m.

Next TDC meeting

The next TDC meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Thursday, Aug 9, 2018, at the Lee County Administration East building, Room 118, 2201 Second St., Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, go to www.LeeVCB.com. Contact: Tamara Pigott, TPigott@leegov.com, Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.