



## **TDC MEETING MINUTES**

July 20, 2017

Vice Chairman René Affourtit called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

**Council members in attendance:** Vice Chairman René Affourtit, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Rana Erbrick, Tony Lapi, Fran Myers and Kevin Ruane. Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Brian Kramer, Rob Wells and Bill Waichulis were excused.

Colleen DePasquale made a motion to approve, seconded by Fran Myers to approve the June 8, 2017, TDC meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Public to be heard**

Jim Griffith, executive director of Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, and Devon Parker, assistant director, thanked the TDC for the arts and attractions grant and special events grant, specifically for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Smoke on the Water Barbecue Competition and Music Festival April 28-29, 2017. There were 30,000 guests to the downtown Fort Myers event and barbecue competitors said this is the best barbecue festival in the state. They cite the downtown Fort Myers location as a tremendous benefit. Parker said according to the most recent Arts and Economic Prosperity Study, the audience spent \$945,000, outside the cost of admission. She also noted that the art center received 115,000 visitors this season with a total spending of \$3.63 million in the area.

### **Welcome new TDC members**

Vice Chairman Affourtit welcomed two newly appointed TDC members, Sanibel Mayor Kevin Ruane and Cape Coral Council Member Rana Erbrick.

### **Report of the Executive Director**

**Communications report:** Media coverage highlights for the third quarter of the fiscal year included exceeding 1 billion impressions in online media and Executive Director Tamara Pigott presented a roundup of destination coverage in print and online publications. Recent initiatives include media marketplaces, regional media missions, NYC “Islandology” immersions, National Seashell Day and a Chinese celebrity visit to the destination. A culinary press trip is planned for fall.

**Domestic and International Sales report:** Jill Vance, director of sales, reported that group leads sent fiscal year-to-date up by 6 percent year over year, potential room nights from these leads are up 30 percent, and booked room nights by our hotels are also up 6 percent. The booked group room nights broken down by market segments reflect Corporate down by 25 percent, Association up by 25 percent, and SMERF up by 56 percent. This pattern is typical for an election year, however, there is still work to do in the Corporate market. In addition to all the trade shows and sales calls the domestic sales team conducted last quarter, the Northeast Planner FAM in June was successful in generating 9 RFP's (written and verbal) and one is close to going to contract. For Q4, the domestic sales team will be conducting Travel Agent sales calls in 11 states, one consumer show and 11 meeting planner events.

Stefanie Zinke, international sales manager, gave a recap of conferences attended in April, June and July. These included the World Travel Market, Active America China and Air Canada Visit Florida Road Show. FAMs included hosting a mega-FAM of 150 travel agents from TUI Germany, one of Europe's largest tour operators. We also welcomed a new German contract team member Marcel Arens. Our sales mission to Denmark, Sweden, Ireland and England included a live radio show in Dublin and a mixology event with 40 travel agents in London. They created "Islandology"-inspired cocktails, including a "Shell-a-colada" and "Long Island Mana-tea." The travel agents appreciated a different approach to teaching about the destination. Coverage of the destination has reached consumer and trade publications in France, Brazil, Germany and Argentina. In July, the VCB partnered with Edison & Ford Winter Estates and presented a replica of Mina Edison's Moonlight Garden at the Royal Horticulture Society Hampton Court Palace Flower Show 2017 in London. There were only three U.S. cities – Fort Myers, Charleston, South Carolina and Portland, Oregon – represented at England's second-largest flower show. Lisa Sbuttoni, vice president of community & visitor relations at Edison Ford, thanked the VCB for partnering and making the commitment to heritage and cultural tourism. Sbuttoni and Debbie Hughes, senior horticulturalist at Edison Ford, attended the flower show that attracted more than 146,000 visitors and noted that the recreation of Moonlight Garden won a bronze medal.

**-New VCB staff members** Lucy Maldonado, fiscal manager, and Megan Harris, marketing intern, were introduced.

**Visitor Services report:** Executive Director Tamara Pigott said second-quarter calendar year report showed 48,918 visitors assisted at RSW, bringing the year-to-date total to 138,888. The most requested information by visitors was for Holiday Inn Fort Myers Airport at Town Center, J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge and parks.

### **New Business**

#### **-FY18 Proposed Budget Report**

The council voted to approve the \$21 million FY 2017-18 proposed budget. It will be presented to the Lee County BoCC for final approval.

Council Member Ruane questioned having 60 percent of operating expenses in reserves. The VCB budget of \$39.7 million includes \$19 million for VCB operations and \$1.2 for sports development, and funding for beach and shoreline, other projects and debt service, leaving the reserves balance projected at more than \$23 million. Affourtit said the goal is to keep 20 percent in reserves. Ruane and Pamela Cronin asked how the money could be spent. Affourtit asked Pigott to add an agenda item to the August meeting to discuss ideas.

*Pamela Cronin made a motion to approve, seconded by Fran Myers. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **-Formalization of FY17-18 Events Marketing Funding Requests**

The council approved the recommendation of the events marketing subcommittee to provide \$149,359 in funding to nine organizations hosting events in FY 2017-18. BoCC will have final approval. It is possible the remaining \$50,641 of the \$200,000 budget will be used for a culinary/agritourism event. An update on the use of balance of funds will be provided at the Aug. 10 TDC meeting.

The nine approved projects include:

- **2017 Cape Coral Coconut Festival**, Nov. 9-12, 2017, City of Cape Coral, \$5,000 (funding request/TDC recommendation)
- **Smoke on the Water Barbecue Competition and Music Festival**, April 27-28, 2018, Florida Arts Inc., \$16,609
- **Fort Myers Beach Film Festival**, April 25-29, 2018, Fort Myers Beach Friends of the Arts, \$15,000
- **12<sup>th</sup> Annual FMB Pirate Festival**, Oct. 6-9, 2017, Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce, \$15,000
- **31<sup>st</sup> American Sandsculpting Championships**, Nov. 17-26, 2017, Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce, \$25,000
- **MangoMania Tropical Fruit Festival 2018**, July 14-15, 2018, Greater Pine Island Chamber of Commerce, \$7,750
- **2017 River District Holidays**, Dec. 1, 2017-Jan. 2, 2018, River District Alliance, \$25,000
- **33<sup>rd</sup> Cape Coral Festival of the Arts**, Jan. 13-14, 2018, Rotary Foundation of Cape Coral, \$25,000
- **Sanibel Island Writers Conference**, Nov. 2-5, 2017, Florida Gulf Coast University, \$15,000

*Kevin Ruane made a motion to approve, seconded by Pamela Cronin. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **TDC Member Items**

Vice Chairman René Affourtit – He encouraged everyone to attend the Governor’s Conference on Tourism Aug. 28-30 at The Diplomat Beach Resort, Hollywood, Florida. Also, council and individual photos will be taken at the Aug. 10 TDC meeting.

Pamela Cronin – She asked for healing thoughts for the family of Judi Durant, VCB visitor services director.

**Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 9:59 a.m.

**Next TDC meeting**

The next TDC meeting will be at 9 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 10, 2017, at the Lee County Admin East building, first floor conference room 118, 2201 Second Street, Fort Myers.

To view a complete tax collections report, go to [www.LeeVCB.com](http://www.LeeVCB.com). Contact: Tamara Pigott, [TPigott@leegov.com](mailto:TPigott@leegov.com), Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.