

TDC MEETING MINUTES

June 14, 2018

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

Council members in attendance: René Affourtit, John Carioscia, Fran Myers, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Holly D. Smith, Tony Lapi and Bill Waichulis.

Rob Wells and Brian Kramer were excused.

Holly D. Smith made a motion to approve the May 10, 2018, TDC meeting minutes. Pamela Cronin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

Jack Carver, Florida RV Trade Association, had a successful show season. Carver announced that the group's 38th annual meeting will be held at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa in September.

Jennifer Jennings, executive director, Greater Pine Island Chamber of Commerce, thanked the TDC for its support of MangoMania. She invited everyone to attend the festival on July 14-15, at the German-American Social Club, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The new Mango Queen is Kayla McGuire, local realtor for Blue Water Realty and Administrative Assistant for Captains for Clean Water. She is a second-generation Florida native, born and raised on Pine Island. Commissioner Pendergrass thanked them for the gifts they brought for the council.

Michelle Westley, operations manager, Gulfshore Opera thanked the TDC for a marketing grant. Gulfshore Opera serves Collier, Lee and Charlotte counties. They were able to partner with Gulfshore Ballet, FGCU, PACE Center for Girls, Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center and Alliance for the Arts. They hope to have future partnerships after attending the Travel Rally, May 1. They used the grant on advertising (ads, TV, print) and updated their website, which has gone up 75% with the help from the VCB. More than 50% of their participants are from outside the region. They thanked the VCB for its assistance.

Municipalities to be heard

None to be heard.

Commissioner Pendergrass thanked René Affourtit for his dedicated service on the TDC board and for being a real asset for 18 years.

New Business

Lucy Maldonado, fiscal manager, presented the FY19 Proposed Budget Report. The TDC voted to accept the proposed Fiscal Year 2018-2019 budget report including allocations of \$19,909,067 for VCB operations, \$1,287,163 for sports development, \$450,000 for attractions marketing, and \$204,603 for beach and shoreline project management.

Fran Myers made a motion to accept the report, seconded by Holly D. Smith. The motion passed unanimously.

Jesse Lavender, Lee County Parks & Rec, presented an overview of Phase I of the Lee County Player Development Complex Expansion Project. Lavender requested an additional \$3.3 million in project funding to create tournament-caliber fields and increase sports tourism. Total funding will be \$9,074,000. Phase I of the project is expected to be completed in 2020.

Fran Myers made a motion to accept the project, seconded by Holly D. Smith. The motion passed unanimously.

Paul Goyette, Lee Tran, presented a funding request of \$430,359 to fund both a third Fort Myers Beach tram and a portion of the operational costs for the 2019 tourist season. This year, the tram carried 1,600 people per day to stops along Fort Myers Beach. This free service provides tourists with direct beach access.

René Affourtit made a motion to accept the request, seconded by Holly D. Smith. The motion passed unanimously.

Damon Grant, Captiva Erosion Prevention District (CEPD), presented the revised FY 18-19 Request for Beach Maintenance Funds to increase by \$185,100 for the upkeep and maintenance of beach facilities on Captiva Island.

Fran Myers made a motion to accept the request seconded by Colleen DePasquale. The motion passed unanimously.

Report of the Executive Director

Tamara Pigott reported that the preliminary resort tax collected for April 2018 was \$3,500,058, a 9.2 percent decrease over April 2017 preliminary collections of \$3,853,903. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$30,846,246, an increase of 8.72 percent year-over-year.

For April 2018, the STR Report shows occupancy up 3.3 percent and ADR up 11.1 percent for a total RevPAR increase of 14.8 percent.

During April 2018, 939,957 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW). Figures represent a decrease of 9.0 percent compared to April 2017. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 5.2 percent from the same period last year.

Pigott announced two new VCB staff members. Joan Barkowski, sales coordinator for the domestic sales team (motorcoach, SMERF, incentive and corporate), holds a bachelor's degree in Resort & Hospitality management from FGCU with five years' experience in the hotel industry. Brittany Bremer, volunteer coordinator for visitor services at the airport, holds a bachelor's degree in Wildlife Conservation & Management from Missouri Western State University and is a certified Florida master naturalist.

Pigott reminded the TDC that National Seashell Day is June 21 and 1,269 people had pre-registered to break the Guinness World Record for the largest human image of a seashell at The Outrigger Beach Resort on Fort Myers Beach. Registration will close at 1,500. Everyone who registered will be given a commemorative T-shirt and matching hat. The VCB is encouraging participants to use the free LeeTran Park & Ride trolleys from either Lover's Key or Summerlin Square, and to bring a reusable water bottle to cut down on plastic bottles on the beach. Currently, Shell Oil Company holds the record with 855 people creating the image of its shell logo.

Bob Domine, DPA, presented 1st quarter research results on visitor statistics and described the past winter as going “gangbusters.” Both visitation and visitor spending is up. Nearly three in five domestic visitors staying in paid accommodations during the winter of 2018 came from the Midwest. Canada continued to deliver the largest share of international visitation in the winter season. Guest satisfaction remains high at 96 percent.

TDC Member Items

- Commissioner Pendergrass had the opportunity to attend the Congressional Senate in Washington, D.C. for monitoring red tide on behalf of Southwest Florida. His focus is attaining funding to assist with restoration of the dike around Lake Okeechobee, and identifying alternate sources to relieve the lake of excess water. Thank you to Sanibel for assisting in the effort for extra lake water monitors.
- Holly D. Smith spoke about how the Lake Okeechobee releases are affecting Sanibel Island. Sanibel is working alongside Commissioners and city attorneys to get lake water monitors funded. Smith looks forward to working with several municipalities on this project, alongside Mayor Ruane who is working with mayors in the area to help with this effort. She said that it has been a pleasure working with René Affourtit in the few short months she has sat on the board.
- Fran Myers reminded everyone of the Hotlist from the airport. She will miss René Affourtit.
- Colleen DePasquale said that she will miss Affourtit.
- René Affourtit thanked everyone for the montage of photos played at the beginning of the meeting, and for being a part of the TDC board for 18 years. John Albion appointed him in 2000. He said that he has had a great time and enjoyed working with the VCB and TDC.
- Tamara Pigott and Commissioner Pendergrass presented Affourtit with a plaque to commemorate his time with the TDC.
- Pamela Cronin announced that The Shell Factory is celebrating 80 years in business by honoring pricing from 80 years ago on Sunday, June 24.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Next TDC meeting

The next TDC meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Thursday, July 12, 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.