



**TDC Meeting Minutes**  
Jan. 14, 2021

Robert Wells III, vice chair, called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

**Council members in attendance**

Colleen DePasquale, Brian Kramer, Tony Lapi, Bill Waichulis and Robert Wells III.

Commissioner Brian Hamman, Pamela Cronin, Rexann Hosafros, John McLain and Fran Myers were excused.

A quorum was not present, so Dec. 10, 2020 meeting minutes could not be voted on.

**Public to be heard**

None to be heard.

**Municipalities to be heard**

Alison Giesen, Village of Fort Myers Beach and Mound House director, updated the council that 30 yards of marine life had been removed from the beach and the red tide situation is being monitored. She said kayak tours are still available at Mound House.

Glen Salyer, assistant county manager, extended condolences to the City of Cape Coral for the passing of Mayor Joe Coviello.

**Report of the executive director**

Tamara Pigott, VCB executive director, reported preliminary resort tax collected for November 2020 was \$2,323,951, a 14% decrease from November 2019 preliminary collections of \$2,701,208. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$4,606,817, a decrease of 7.5% year-over-year.

Pigott also reported that the average occupancy rate in November 2020 was 47.2%, which is down 31.5% from November 2019 (68.9%). The average daily rate for November 2020 was \$119.22, down 6.3% from November 2019 (\$127.19) and RevPAR for November 2020 was \$56.31, down 35.8% from November 2019 (\$87.69).

During November 2020, 500,468 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport, a decrease of 42.9% compared to November 2019. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is down 41.7% from the same period last year.

Pigott added that the new Sun Saver Passport already has over 2,000 downloads and 100 deal redemptions.

**Domestic sales report**

Jill Vance, VCB sales director, reported that her team is ahead of pace to achieve four of the seven sales goals for fiscal year 2020-21. She shared highlights of first-quarter group media and sales activities, travel

trade and weddings markets, including hosting a successful virtual meeting planner FAM for the Southeast region (drive market). Vance also presented upcoming sales activities for February, including several virtual meeting planner appointment shows and a virtual weddings expo. Vance added that in collaboration with the marketing team, the sales team has started placing custom-content articles about taking meetings outdoors in publications like [Skift Event MB](#).

### **International sales report**

Stefanie Zinke, VCB international sales manager, reported that the first quarter focused on two goals for the international markets: 1. Increase total agents trained and 2. Grow followers and engagements on the Germany Facebook page. With more than 4,900 agents trained across all markets, 1,000+ certified users on the online learning academy in the UK, and an above-average engagement ratio on Facebook, the team accomplished all set goals for the UK, Germany and Canada. Zinke said quarterly international sales plans are flexible with the ever-changing pandemic restrictions. Zinke advised that the new requirement to have a negative PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test before entering and leaving destinations is not our biggest hurdle at the moment. International border closures and lockdowns are.

### **Communications report**

Francesca Donlan, VCB communications director, presented first-quarter media coverage. Positive press from visiting journalists and coverage from national and international media generated more than one billion impressions, almost half of the yearly goal. Of note, both PBS's "Samantha Brown's Places to Love" and Southern Living shot on location in November and this week, respectively. Staff will continue to host journalists who are willing to travel and share stories of the destination.

### **ArtFest Fort Myers update**

Sharon McAllister, ArtFest Fort Myers executive director, gave an update on how TDC event marketing funds were used to promote the annual event's COVID-19 safety measures and new hybrid format.

### **New business**

Nancy MacPhee, VCB product development manager, presented an overview and timeline of needs for the FY2021-22 Attractions & Events Marketing Subcommittee. Council members Lapi, DePasquale and Waichulis volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Subcommittee members will be formalized at the February TDC meeting as a quorum was not present.

### **TDC member items**

Lapi announced that Old Captiva House's cioppino won two awards – Taste of the Taste and Best Seafood – in the recent Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife's (CROW) 39<sup>th</sup> Taste of the Islands.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

### **Next TDC meeting**

The next scheduled TDC meeting will be at 9 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 11, 2021, in the Admin East Building, Room 118, 2201 Second St., Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, visit [LeeVCB.com](#). Contact: Tamara Pigott, [TPigott@leegov.com](mailto:TPigott@leegov.com), Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.