



**TDC Meeting Minutes**  
March 11, 2021

Commissioner Brian Hamman, chair, called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

**Council members in attendance**

Commissioner Brian Hamman, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Brian Kramer, Tony Lapi, Jon McLain, Bill Waichulis and Robert Wells III.

Rexann Hosafros and Fran Myers were excused.

Lapi made a motion to approve the Feb. 11, 2021 meeting minutes. McLain seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Public to be heard**

Ralph Santillo, SWFL Military Museum CEO, announced that the museum moved to the Edison Mall in November from its former location in Cape Coral and has placed revolving exhibits in three schools and at various VFW and American Legion locations. A museum bus is also being retrofitted and branded to travel to schools and events.

**Municipalities to be heard**

None to be heard.

**Report of the executive director**

Tamara Pigott, VCB executive director, reported preliminary resort tax collected for January 2021 was \$5,177,355, an 8.8% decrease over January 2020 preliminary collections of \$5,675,357. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$13,619,044, an 8.6% decrease year-over-year, but an 8.5% increase when compared to the same period two years ago.

Pigott also reported that the average hotel occupancy rate in January 2021 was 55.6%, which is down 29.2% from January 2020 (78.5%). The average daily rate for January 2021 was \$145.28, down 16.4% from January 2020 (\$173.86) and RevPAR for January 2021 was \$80.83, down 40.8% from January 2020 (\$136.52).

For vacation rentals, the average occupancy rate in January 2021 was 58%, which is down 13.4% from January 2020 (67%). The average daily rate for January 2021 was \$239, which is up 2.6% from January 2020 (\$233) and RevPAR for January 2021 was \$139, which is down 10.9% from January 2020 (\$155).

During January 2021, 686,563 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport, a decrease of 39.4% compared to January 2020.

Ben Siegel, Lee County Port Authority director, reported that the Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) is ranking #18 in the country for TSA check point volume. In terms of recovery, RSW is also ranking #1 in recovery. Additionally, the number of seats projected for April are higher than the number

of seats in April 2019. Siegel added that the airport expansion will be going to bid this April making it only a one year delay on the three year project.

### **Marketing report**

Brian Ososky, VCB marketing director, presented an overview of winter, spring and summer media strategies, as well as creative examples including a “Back to the Beach” video package with Condé Nast and an 8-page insert with Southern Living. He also previewed a partnership with John Morris and Wheelchair Travel, including a destination accessibility guide and an accessibility workshop for partners in June. Additionally, the VCB marketing team is working on a new consumer website and visitor guide, both of which slated to be completed this fall.

Francesca Donlan, VCB communications director, added that Sanibel Island was featured on the cover of Southern Living as one of “The South’s Best” beaches which was chosen by the editors of the magazine. Additionally, [the magazine mentions over a dozen industry partners](#). The destination will appear in three months (March – May) of the magazine featuring both marketing and communications activities.

### **Sports Development report**

Jeff Mielke, Sports Development director, reported on the 2020 calendar year highlights including 140,521 total room nights sold, with a direct visitor spend of \$59,696,126 through a total of 91 hosted events. While September and October set historical monthly records for Sports Development, the full year room night total was a decline of 13.3%.

### **TDC member items**

McLain thanked county staff for their work at the vaccination site. Assistant county manager, Glen Salyer added that there will be 12,000 people vaccinated this week.

DePasquale gave a legislative update on two bills that propose changes to the use of tourist development tax ([HB1429/SB2008](#)) and will keep the council informed on important updates.

Kramer added that FRLA has a hospitality staffing luncheon planned for 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. April 21 at Holiday Inn Fort Myers Airport with guest speaker, Cathleen Curtis, the new director of the FGCU hospitality program.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:14 a.m.

### **Next TDC meeting**

The next TDC meeting is scheduled for at **2 p.m., Thursday, April 8, 2021** at the Lee County Administration East Building, 2201 Second St., Room 118, Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, visit [www.LeeVCB.com](http://www.LeeVCB.com). Contact: Tamara Pigott, [TPigott@leegov.com](mailto:TPigott@leegov.com), Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.