



TDC Meeting Minutes

Nov. 12, 2020

Commissioner Brian Hamman, chair, called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

Council members in attendance

Commissioner Brian Hamman, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Rexann Hosafros, Tony Lapi, John McLain, Bill Waichulis and Robert Wells III.

Brian Kramer and Fran Myers were excused.

Hosafros made a motion to approve the Oct. 10, 2020 TDC meeting minutes. Cronin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

Lisa Sbuttoni, River District Alliance (RDA) president and CEO, thanked the council and committee for the attractions marketing funds the RDA received. The funds went toward a new website and an events marketing grant for holiday events in downtown Fort Myers.

Municipalities to be heard

None to be heard.

Report of the executive director

Tamara Pigott, VCB executive director, reported the preliminary resort tax collected for September 2020 was \$1,839,289, a 19% increase over September 2019 preliminary collections of \$1,546,207. Additionally, resort tax collections of \$38.3 million for FY2020, a decrease of 10.4% year-over-year.

Pigott also reported that the average occupancy rate in September 2020 was 44.9%, which is down 10.2% from September 2019 (50%). The average daily rate for September 2020 was \$112.52, up 10.6% from September 2019 (\$101.74) and RevPAR for September 2020 was \$50.51, down 0.6% from September 2019 (\$50.84).

During September 2020, 255,926 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport, a decrease of 44.5% compared to September 2019. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is down 42.2% from the same period last year.

Pigott gave the TDC proposed dates for 2021 TDC meetings to vote on in December.

DSG report

Phillip Downs, Downs & St. Germain Research (DSG) senior partner, reported on the July - September 2020 visitor tracking report highlights. The quarterly report found that total visitation during the summer months decreased 31.8% and visitor expenditures decreased 8.8%. Domestic travel accounted for 99% of Lee County's total summer visitation. New York and Miami-Fort Lauderdale were the top feeder markets. Only 1% of visitors arrived from international markets, the largest share coming from the United Kingdom. The report also found that visitors stayed longer this year than last year and are primarily looking for peace and safety while vacationing. [Click here for the full report.](#)

Sports development update

Jeff Mielke, Sports Development director, reported that in the months of July-September 45,770 room nights were sold, with direct visitor spending of more than \$17.5 million. Mielke offered thanks to the hospitality community, county leadership and the Parks and Recreation department for making these sports events possible. Perfect Game baseball was the anchor for July. He said August is always a slow month as it is between seasons. Mielke said this is the county's third year hosting Fort Myers Tip-Off, which will be held Nov. 26-27 at Suncoast Credit Union Arena this year. Featured teams are Auburn, Gonzaga, Kansas and Saint Joseph's which will garner national promotion for the destination. Wells asked about attendance and Mielke said that it's still being confirmed, but the plan is to sell 200 pairs of socially distanced seats. Additionally, The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel will have eight commercial spots during the game to promote the destination.

New business

A motion was made by Waichulis to approve the VCB's FY21 Sales & Marketing Plan that was presented at the virtual [Tourism Outlook](#) on Oct. 29. Cronin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Cronin thanked the VCB for working hard to come up with a creative sales and marketing plan during a particularly difficult year.

A motion was made by Lapi to approve the 4th quarter FY20 budget reports for the VCB and Sports Development. McClain seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The TDC recommended that Parks and Recreation's Sanibel Causeway shoreline stabilization & amenity enhancements funding request in the amount of \$2,417,703 in tourist tax common reserve funds be presented at an upcoming BoCC meeting for approval. This funding, along with state granted funds, will add upland amenities and erosion control structures to the Causeway islands. The final design will be brought to the TDC and the planned completion date is June 30, 2024. There is an \$8.5 million total project cost. The motion was made by Lapi, seconded Cronin, which carried unanimously.

TDC Member Items

- Waichulis announced that the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA) will have its *Love Local* online auction to raise proceeds for high school hospitality and culinary

programs which will close Dec. 3. FRLA is also having its annual holiday party on Dec. 3 at Shangri-La Springs.

- Lapi said that 'Tween Waters is having its annual tree lighting, restricted to guests of the hotel and restaurant on Nov. 27. VISIT FLORIDA is inducting hospitality professionals into its hall of fame.
- Hamman announced there may be a new TDC chair in December. He thanked the council for their hard work and let them know the commission is supportive of the TDC.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

Next TDC Meeting

The next scheduled TDC meeting is at 9 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 14, 2021, in the Admin East Building, Room 118, 2201 Second St., Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, go to LeeVCB.com. Contact: Tamara Pigott, TPigott@leegov.com, Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.