



TDC MEETING MINUTES

January 9, 2020

Commissioner Brian Hamman, chair, called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

Council Members in Attendance

Commissioner Brian Hamman, Anita Cereceda, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Brian Kramer, John McLain, Fran Myers and Robert Wells. Tony Lapi and Bill Waichulis were excused.

Wells made a motion to approve the Dec. 12, 2019 TDC meeting minutes. Cereceda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be Heard

Sharon McAllister, Fort Myers ArtFest executive director, thanked the TDC and VCB for event marketing funds and marketing guidance for the 2020 Fort Myers ArtFest and showed the video produced with TDC event marketing funds.

Municipalities to be Heard

Michelle Dean, city of Cape Coral marketing coordinator, reported that the city is celebrating its 50 year anniversary and will be having a city jubilee celebration on Jan. 24 at the Cape Coral Yacht Club. The city will also host its 29th annual Tour de Cape Jan. 17-19.

Report of the Executive Director

Tamara Pigott, VCB executive director, reported resort tax collected for November 2019 was \$2,701,208, a 19.1% increase over November 2018 preliminary collections of \$2,267,124. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$4,978,894, an increase of 18.2% year-over-year.

Pigott also reported that the average occupancy rate in November 2019 was 68.2%, which is up 2.3% from November 2018 (66.7%). The average daily rate for November 2019 was \$127.79, up 4.9% from November 2018 (\$121.81) and RevPAR for November 2019 was \$87.17, up 7.3% from November 2018 (\$81.22).

During November 2019, 876,703 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW), an increase of 8.2% compared to November 2018. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 8.7%.

Domestic Sales Report

Jill Vance, VCB director of sales, reported that although some of the first quarter FY2019-20 sales goals are behind pace for goal attainment, they are still ahead of the same time last year. She shared highlights of first-quarter activities for the group sales, travel agent and consumer sales teams, including hosting a successful military meeting planner FAM. She also presented

upcoming sales activities, including The New York Times Travel Show and the Global Pharmaceutical & Medical Meetings Summit.

International Sales Report

Stefanie Zinke, VCB international sales manager, recapped the numerous trade shows attended during the first quarter of FY19-20, as well as the six FAMs hosted in-destination featuring professionals from five countries. Looking ahead, staff will be attending Florida Huddle in Jacksonville, Outdoor Adventure Show in Toronto and ITB (Internationale Tourismus-Börse) Berlin.

Visitor Services Report

Judi Durant, VCB director of visitor services, reported that volunteers at RSW assisted 49,433 visitors in the fourth quarter, bringing the yearly total to 212,061. Volunteer hours for the fourth quarter were 8,031, a value of \$204,228. Total volunteers hours for 2019 totaled 28,230, a value of \$708,089.

Communications Report

Francesca Donlan, VCB director of communications, presented the successful impact of the Hobie 16 World Championships that were held Nov. 1-16 on Captiva, which included 25 million media impressions from both national and international coverage. The public relations team hosted a PR boot camp for partners and completed various media FAMs. Looking ahead, staff will participate in IMM (International Media Marketplace), The New York Times Travel Show and a Beer Marketing & Tourism Conference.

New Business

Judie Zimomra, Sanibel city manager, introduced several city representatives in attendance and the city's out-of-cycle funding request.

James Evans, Sanibel director of natural resources, presented the city's request for \$1.4 million in emergency funding for beach and shoreline erosion along northwestern Sanibel, adjacent to Blind Pass. The erosion is largely due to strong winds from Hurricane Michael in 2018. Evans provided visuals and data in regard to the current condition of the affected area. He also provided details on the intended project. The project is estimated to be completed within 60 days and has a lifespan of 50 years. The goal is to protect the beach from further erosion and to ensure it still looks like a natural beach.

Kevin Ruane, Sanibel mayor, requested the TDC's consideration of this proposed long-term solution. Sanibel's goal is to protect the environment and this project needs to be completed by May 1 to coincide with the beginning of sea turtle season.

Commissioner Hamman then asked for council questions.

Wells, asked how the road is maintained and if the city applied for funding elsewhere. Evans said Sanibel-Captiva Road is a county road maintained through an interlocal agreement and the

city did apply for funds through Florida's Department of Environmental Protection, but was not approved.

McClain asked if there is other funding throughout Lee County or if it all has to come from tourist development tax (TDT) funds. Roger Desjarlais, Lee County manager, noted that all funds outside of TDT that could assist with shoreline/road projects are all allocated for the foreseeable future, however there are adequate TDT reserves. He said emergency projects – like this request – are how the reserves should be used.

DePasquale asked which specific reserve funds would be allocated. Glen Salyer, Lee County assistant manager, clarified that the remaining balance of \$613,000 would come out of unallocated beach and shoreline funds and the remainder would be deducted from the common reserve. Fulfillment of this request will not affect requests already approved and there will be no impact on current spending.

McClain said he supports, but added we have an ongoing problem with rising seas and in the future, the TDC should not be the sole funding source.

Commissioner Hamman added that a bill is going through the state legislature for the Office of Resilience and Coastal Protection on this topic and is a priority for the governor. Pending what the governor decides, there could be funding at the state and federal level in the future.

McClain added that the TDC needs to ensure that guidelines are followed as it is stated that TDT funds can be used to fund 50% of a project. Commissioner Hamman added there is opportunity to waive the additional 50% in emergency situations. Salyer stated this is an urgent request so it can be classified as an out-of-cycle beach and shoreline request. Anything road-specific would not be eligible, however erosion is.

Pigott said the project should be considered out of cycle as it's not just placing emergency sand. It is a permitted project with all the phases you would see in a beach and shoreline request.

Andrea Fraser, deputy county attorney, clarified that the TDC was in agreement that this is an out-of-cycle request, exclusively for beach renourishment and construction of the beach that can be funded by TDT dollars.

A motion was made by Myers to support forwarding this request to the BoCC with recommendation to approve funds requested by the city of Sanibel for this erosion protection project. The motion was seconded by Cronin and passed unanimously.

Commissioner Hamman then requested that the TDC move the March 12 meeting to 2 p.m. as he has a conflicting appointment. A motion was made by Wells that was seconded by Cronin, which passed unanimously.

TDC Member Items

- Commissioner Hamman will make a resolution at the Jan. 21 board meeting to recognize Fort Myers ArtFest.
- Kramer reminded the council about the FRLA (Lee Chapter of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association) mixer 5-7 p.m. Jan. 30 at Shangri-La Springs.
- Myers thanked Ben Siegel, Lee County Port Authority acting executive director, for his hard work at the airport.
- Cereceda said she is looking forward to seeing the December visitor numbers as it was very busy on Fort Myers Beach during the holidays.
- Cronin announced the carousel at the Shell Factory is officially open and has had 3,000 rides already.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:28 a.m.

Next TDC Meeting

The next TDC meeting is at 9 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 13, 2020. The meeting will be held in 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.