

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

April 18, 2018

The Pinellas County Tourist Development Council (TDC), as created under Pinellas County Ordinance 78-20 pursuant to Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, met in regular session in the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Assembly Room, 315 Court Street, Fifth Floor, Clearwater, Florida, on this date at 9:00 A.M. with the following members present:

Kenneth T. Welch, BCC Chairman, Chair
Russ Kimball, Sheraton Sand Key Resort, Vice-Chair
Doug Bevis, City of Oldsmar Mayor
Timothy Bogott, TradeWinds Island Resorts
Jen Carlisle, Clearwater Marine Aquarium
George Cretekos, City of Clearwater Mayor
Joanne “Cookie” Kennedy, City of Indian Rocks Beach Mayor
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry
Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites
Eric Waltz, Sandpearl Resort

Not Present

Charlie Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember
Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises

Others Present

David Downing, Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO
Tim Ramsberger, Chief Operating Officer
Leroy Bridges, Media and Interactive Director
Liz McCann, Executive Administrative Assistant
Amanda Coffey, Managing Assistant County Attorney
Other Interested Individuals
Amanda M. Napier, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Agenda

- I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – Chair Kenneth T. Welch
- II. CHAIR COMMENTS
- III. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES – Meeting of March 21, 2018
- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS
- V. COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORT

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- VI. VSPC CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER REPORT – Tim Ramsberger
 - A. Elite Event Funding
- VII. PRESENTATION
 - A. Creative Pinellas – Barbara St. Clair
- VIII. STAFF REPORTS
 - A. Sports and Events – Sarah Kirchberg and Craig Campbell
 - *All VSPC department reports on file at pinellascvb.com
- IX. VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT – David Downing
 - A. Tourism Economics Snapshot (Pinellas County Bed Tax)
 - i. February 2018
 - B. Advertising/Digital Media Updates
- X. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS
- XI. ADJOURNMENT

All documents and presentations provided to the Clerk’s Office have been made a part of the record.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chair Welch called the meeting to order at 9:01 A.M. At his request, those at the dais introduced themselves.

CHAIR COMMENTS – NONE

Chair Welch noted that he will save his comments for the Elite Event Funding discussion and thanked Mr. Downing and his staff for facilitating the Elite Event Committee workshop.

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 21, 2018 MEETING – APPROVED

Upon motion by Mayor Bevis, seconded by Mayor Cretkos and carried unanimously, the minutes of the March 21, 2018 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORT – NONE

VSPC CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER REPORT

Elite Event Funding

Mr. Ramsberger discussed the Elite Event Funding program, noting that the Board has been provided with the scoring for the 15 applicants; and that three of the applicants did not get the requisite 700 scoring; whereupon, Mr. Downing read a letter from Councilman Gerdes requesting that the Board reconsider the Pier Fest and Ribfest applications under the Category 3 room night criteria, as opposed to the Category 2 room night criteria, and move the events forward to the County Commission for consideration.

Chair Welch requested a motion to approve the 12 events recommended for funding by the Committee; whereupon, Mr. Bogott moved, seconded by Mr. Kimball, that the events be funded at the up-to amounts, with staff authorized to negotiate the overall funding and benefits package.

Responding to query by Attorney Coffey regarding the ESPN Gasparilla Bowl, Mr. Downing explained that due to restrictions imposed by ESPN, the applicant did not agree to implement a pixel on its website to allow Visit St. Pete/Clearwater to anonymously track visitors, a requirement of the application, and it therefore is not eligible for funding. Discussion ensued, and Chair Welch noted that the matter relates to emerging issues of privacy, which will be addressed at an upcoming workshop. Attorney Coffey provided input, indicating that the Board does have the discretion to grant a one-time waiver to allow an exception, cautioning the members that doing so could spur similar requests by other applicants, and Mayor Cretokos expressed concern with respect to providing public funds to a for-profit organization.

Mr. Bogott amended his motion to allow the exception, and noting that waiving the pixeling requirement would result in a loss of value compared to the other applicants, suggested that staff negotiate a discount or reduction in the funding amount, and the seconder concurred. Following brief discussion, the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Welch discussed room night criteria and noted that the MLK Dream Big Parade had withdrawn from consideration due to not meeting the 5,000 room night requirement; and that some events have not met the threshold, but still obtained funding because they projected that they would; whereupon, he inquired as to whether there are any ramifications for not meeting the requirement. Lengthy discussion ensued pertaining to scoring criteria and metrics, and Mr. Ramsberger suggested that a policy discussion be held at the workshop.

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Noting the cultural significance of the MLK Dream Big Parade, Mr. Downing related that he would like to find some level of support for the event, and Chair Welch concurred, suggesting that staff work with the organizers of the event directly, and then try to refine the process for next year. Mayor Cretelos expressed his support for Mr. Downing's request, and hearing no objection, Chair Welch directed staff to proceed accordingly.

Ms. Carlisle referred to the tremendous amount of time invested by the various parties with regard to Elite Event funding, and requested that the entire process be discussed at the June workshop, and Chair Welch confirmed that the item will be included on the agenda.

Chair Welch referenced Councilman Gerdes' letter and called representatives from Pier Fest and Ribfest to the podium to speak. Pier Fest representative Ferdian Jap requested that the event be reconsidered for funding and noted that because it is new, organizers had to rely on metrics from past events. Responding to queries by Chair Welch, Mr. Jap related that the organizers did not apply for Category 3 funding because they believe the festivities and promotion of the event will draw enough visitors to qualify for Category 2. He described the marketing plan, noting that it will promote the downtown destination. Chair Welch stated that he would have been more comfortable if the event had applied under Category 3; whereupon, Ms. Carlisle stated that she wishes to respect the process and suggested the event seek support outside of the Elite Event program.

Northeast Exchange Club representative John Ullrich provided background information pertaining to the Ribfest event and answered queries by Chair Welch regarding attendance.

Following brief discussion, Mayor Cretelos moved that the Council not reconsider the applications, and the motion died for lack of a second.

Thereupon, Mr. Bogott moved that staff be directed to work with the three disqualified events to determine and optimize their value, and encourage them to come back in the future through the Elite Event program. Mayor Cretelos expressed concern that the motion may encourage others who had been denied to seek alternative VSPC funding, and following discussion, Mr. Bogott amended his motion, seconded by Ms. Carlisle, to state that the events would not be considered under Category 3 as part of the current Elite Event process. Upon call for a vote, the motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION

Creative Pinellas – Barbara St. Clair

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. St. Clair provided an overview of Creative Pinellas and the organization's efforts to promote Pinellas County as a cultural and arts destination, as follows:

- Arts Business Incubator located in the former Gulf Coast Museum of Art
- Exhibitions, workshops, professional networking events
- Artist grants
- Business development training program
- Web-based initiatives
- Arts summit and dialogue meetings, which led to an in-depth Community Plan

Ms. St. Clair cited examples of how the efforts of Creative Pinellas tie into tourism, and explained a new web-based concierge service, Navigator Hub, which will provide users with personalized attraction recommendations based on their interests. Noting that the organization will hold an Open House event on April 27, she invited the members to attend; whereupon, at the Chair's request, she introduced her staff members in the audience.

Mr. Satterfield indicated that he has recently joined the Creative Pinellas Board of Directors as a non-voting member, and commended the organization for its community outreach in establishing the Community Plan.

Mr. Downing stated that Tony Armor will be working with Creative Pinellas as an Arts Liaison and provided information on marketing initiatives, focusing on the importance of cultural tourism.

STAFF REPORTS

Sports and Events – Sarah Kirchberg and Craig Campbell

Mr. Ramsberger related that the Sports Commission was reorganized and rebranded as a sports and events entity approximately one year ago in keeping with a national trend; and that the program is comprised of two areas: Business Development, and Activations and Promotions.

Senior Business Development Manager Sarah Kirchberg referred to a PowerPoint presentation and provided an overview of the department including staff responsibilities and focus areas, and related

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that they are in the process of hiring an additional Development Manager. Noting that the mission is to retain, grow, and recruit events that drive room nights in the destination, she discussed the various types of sporting events held in Pinellas County; the reliance on partnerships with facility owners, other sports commissions, the Florida Sports Foundation, and other organizations; and the value of participation in trade shows and industry events; whereupon, she reviewed recent programming statistics and highlighted upcoming events. Responding to query by Mr. Downing, she confirmed that approximately 75 percent of the incentive budget used to support events is reinvested back into the community.

Mr. Kimball referred to a previous survey of available sports facilities in the county and suggested that the municipalities conduct a review to identify opportunities to upgrade or build new facilities to add to the sporting venue, and Mr. Downing indicated that staff is working on a presentation related to the issue for the upcoming budget workshop.

Responding to query by Mr. Bogott, Ms. Kirchberg related that last year's goal was to generate 120,000 to 130,000 room nights through sporting events; and that her department is estimating approximately 170,000 for last fiscal year and just under 60,000 for the first quarter of the current fiscal year.

Senior Event Productions Manager Craig Campbell referred to a PowerPoint presentation and provided an overview of the Activations Program. He reviewed the program's mission statement and staff responsibilities, and provided statistics and information regarding outreach efforts at various events throughout the county and in other Florida and out-of-state destinations; whereupon, he described the Brand Ambassador and Consumer Engagement programs, and brief discussion ensued.

VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT

Tourism Economics Snapshot (Pinellas County Bed Tax) – February 2018

Referring to the *Tourism Economics Snapshot* presentation, Mr. Downing reviewed the data for rooms sold, average daily rate, and revenue per available room. He indicated that the Tourist Development Tax for February was up 14.09 percent over last year, noting that outside of March, February 2018 was the busiest month the destination has ever experienced.

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Advertising/Digital Media Updates

Mr. Bridges described the partnership with TravelZoo intended to increase visitors in the fall. He noted that Bed Tax dollars are used to pay the commission for advertisements, which will extend across different platforms, including a presence in their stand-alone emails; and that hotels create their own deals to be marketed to TravelZoo customers.

Referring to a slide titled Campaign Performance, Mr. Bridges noted that the ad campaign had a 5-to-1 return on investment; and that pixeling allowed revenue to be tracked, whether the consumer booked on Travelzoo.com or made the booking via another website. Mr. Downing provided input, noting that the campaign provides additional value from a marketing standpoint and could influence future bookings; whereupon, he thanked Mr. Bridges for his work.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Downing wished everyone a happy Tourism Week and announced that the Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce Tourism Expo will be held on May 11 from 11:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. at the TradeWinds Resort.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 A.M.