

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

January 17, 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:

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
Charlie Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Councilman
Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises
Joanne "Cookie" Kennedy, City of Indian Rocks Beach Vice-Mayor
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry
Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites
Eric Waltz, Sandpearl Resort

Others Present

David Downing, Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO
Tim Ramsberger, Chief Operating Officer
Teri Tuxhorn, Administrative Director
Leroy Bridges, Media and Interactive Director
Katie Bridges, Senior Advertising Manager
Liz McCann, Executive Administrative Assistant
Michael Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney
Other Interested Individuals
Lynn M. Abbott, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Agenda

- I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – TDC Chair Kenneth T. Welch
- II. CHAIR COMMENTS
- III. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES – Meeting of December 20, 2017
- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- V. COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORT
- VI. VSPC CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER REPORT – Tim Ramsberger
 - A. Elite Event Funding
 - i. Program Timeline
 - ii. Committee Appointments
- VII. VSPC DEPARTMENT REPORTS
 - A. Media and Interactive – Leroy Bridges
 - i. Update on Research/Methodology
 - ii. Gray Lawry from Miles Partnership
 - iii. Erin Francis-Cummings from Destination Analysts
 - B. Advertising and Promotions – Katie Bridges
 - i. Winter Campaigns – International and Domestic
 - ii. Mary DeLong/BVK

*All other department reports on file at pinellascvb.com
- VIII. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS REPORTS
 - A. St. Petersburg/Clearwater International Airport and Allegiant Air
 - i. Tom Jewsbury from PIE
 - ii. Thayne Klingler from Allegiant Air
 - B. Tampa International Airport – Report on file at pinellascvb.com
- IX. VICE PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT – David Downing
- 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 9:00 A.M.; whereupon, he wished everyone a Happy New Year. At his request, those at the dais introduced themselves.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Welch indicated that this is his third opportunity to chair the TDC and remarked on the consistent professionalism of staff, the incredible partnerships, and the dedication of the Board; whereupon, he thanked everyone for the tremendous work they do for the county, the community, and the destination.

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 20, 2017 MEETING – APPROVED

Councilman Gerdes moved, seconded by Mr. Bogott and carried unanimously, that the minutes of the meeting of December 20, 2017 be approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORT – NONE

VSPC CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER REPORT – ELITE EVENT FUNDING

Program Timeline

Referring to the document titled *Elite Event Funding Program Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Timeline*, Mr. Ramsberger reviewed the program schedule and discussed changes to the timeline. He related that in response to the applicants' desire for the application process to begin earlier in the year, it will now commence in March; and that the applications are anticipated to be reviewed and approved by the BCC in May. In response to query by Ms. Carlisle, he indicated that the revised timeline has been moved forward by 30 days or less from the original.

Committee Appointments

Chair Welch discussed the number and types of committee appointments that the rules allow the Chair to appoint, and asked if there are four members from the tourism sector and two others who are interested in serving on the *Elite Event Funding Program Review Committee*. Discussion ensued, and Chair Welch related that he will make his selections and provide notification by email.

VSPC DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Mr. Downing referred to the previous Smith Travel tourism methodology and discussed the Business Intelligence Initiative, relating that it is an evolutionary research tool; that it utilizes new metrics and data sources to help determine the impacts of and possibly predict Pinellas County tourism; and that it will be presented as a dashboard application.

Media and Interactive

Mr. Bridges introduced Erin Francis-Cummings, Destination Analysts President and CEO, and Gray Lawry, Miles Partnership, Vice-President of Strategy and Insights, and briefly discussed their work to collect and process Pinellas County tourism data for the TDC.

UPDATE ON RESEARCH/METHODOLOGY

Ms. Francis-Cummings conducted a PowerPoint presentation titled *Destination Analysts, An Introduction*, and provided background information regarding Destination Analysts, noting that it is a progressive, full-service travel industry research company that serves its clients by providing comprehensive insights regarding its market, returns on investment, economic impacts, and travel behavior and trends to help the client to measure its marketing effectiveness and better understand its returns on investment. Referring to a photograph, she introduced the research team that she will lead and discussed the company's mission, areas of expertise, public industry work, and research projects, noting that it conducts a quarterly study called *State of the American Traveler*; whereupon, Mr. Downing commented that it is the benchmark for tourism metrics.

Ms. Francis-Cummings discussed the company's creative approach to research and described the research conducted as follows:

- Surveying different forecasting methodologies, factors impacting economic forecasts, and marketing assets
- Conducting webinars, conferences, vlogs, and blogs
- Tracking sentiments and destination brand performance

Ms. Francis-Cummings reported that the findings from the most recent study indicated that Pinellas County's destination aspiration is up, familiarity has increased, and brand appeal is healthy. She thanked the Board for its support and related that she is looking forward to the opportunity to conduct research and provide strategic insights to increase tourism; whereupon, Mr. Bridges referred to an email requesting that the members allow two VSPC staff to conduct onsite surveys of hotel guests, discussed the manner and importance of obtaining such information, and commented that sunscreen is a good incentive for participation.

In response to queries by the members, Mr. Ramsberger related that digital devices allow data to be captured more quickly. He discussed the growing number of data sources, the challenges of collecting, deciphering, and incorporating the numerous visitor profiles, marketing, and destination information in one place, noting that his goal, in partnership with Gray Lawry, is to

January 17, 2018

develop a new business information tool to help measure its marketing effectiveness and better understand its return on investment.

Referring to a presentation titled *Business Intelligence Initiative Update, Miles Partnership*, Mr. Lawry discussed the current time-consuming process of gathering information from various data sources, the difficulty in analyzing the information, and dashboard snapshot reporting, noting that information is presented in individual reports; that the information cannot be combined, measured or evaluated; and that the dashboard represents activity for a single month; whereupon, he defined key terms and introduced the concept of being able to link data sources by using a business intelligence tool (BIT) to collect and strategically integrate data, and view the customized information in a centralized location.

Mr. Lawry explained the process to extract normalized data from the various sources, onboard the information onto a platform, use an interactive tool to change dates and metrics, build queries, and create unique keys, and display the complex information on a centrally located visualization tool, allowing the client to frequently integrate and pull data to gauge interaction, determine destination performance, forecast trends, and build marketing programs to improve destination tourism.

In response to queries and concerns by the members, Mr. Lawry confirmed that the BIT is a browser-based cloud platform; that Southwest Airlines does not engage in transactions with travel industry service providers; that Tampa International Airport provides pertinent data reports for non-participants in the global distribution system; and that specific ads handle specific visitors, noting that one-to-one relationships with data sources are important.

Following discussion, Mr. Lawry provided information regarding user and application programming interfaces, costs related to software development and database storage, reporting frequency, software features, and a concept-to-launch timeframe, noting that he has no plan to present the BIT information to industry vendors; and that they are in the building stage, and Mr. Downing related that, in planning discussions with the Chair, a comprehensive quarterly report will be generated and sent industry-wide; that monthly reports will be limited; and that the challenges to moving forward include deciding what information to use and how best to use it, and discussion ensued.

Responding to queries by the members, Messrs. Bridges, Downing, and Ramsberger presented historical and financial information regarding the contractual relationship between the TDC and Miles Partnership, advertising trends over the last decade, current campaign placements, proof of concept potential criteria for a random sample data set, data tracking applications, quarterly goals and a project timetable, and cloud-based server information ownership rights; whereupon,

January 17, 2018

Attorney Zas indicated that he will research the issue regarding public information content, noting that different cities and states have diverse laws pertaining to access.

Referring to the business intelligence tool research, Mr. Bridges discussed the partnership with Travelzoo and explained how the digital application of metrics and integrated data sets may help to close the fall season sales gap, noting that digital media makes bookings easier to track; and that the campaign features incentivized deals running through the end of the month. Mr. Downing discussed the importance of direct bookings, relating that fall is a traditionally slower time for travel.

Mr. Bridges, referring to the Travelzoo website, provided information regarding the Orlando marketing campaign and discussed the various strategies involved, including participants, ad placement and traffic diversion, pixelation, direct platform booking, and cross-reference tracking, noting that the travel and data source partners handle data differently; and that the campaign is ongoing; whereupon, he discussed dashboard results through January 8 for indirect and direct hotel booking revenue and estimated returns on costs, and various booking and marketing metrics, relating that product and airline data can be obtained as well.

Throughout the presentation, Messrs. Bridges, Downing, and Ramsberger answered queries by the members and discussed the following topics:

- Layered marketing strategy
- Pixelation
- Benefits of a logged-in environment
- Multiple device advertising format changes
- Billboards and beacon technology
- Promotional tracking
- Post-campaign surveys
- Value of Destination Analysts contract
- Improving data sharing deficits
- Adoption of universal metrics for funding applicants

Noting that the Elite Event application process was accelerated due to website pixelation, Mr. Ramsberger discussed the benefits of running a digital advertising campaign.

Advertising and Promotions

Ms. Bridges reported that even though Mary DeLong, BVK Advertising, is not in attendance due to illness, she is watching the meeting on television.

WINTER CAMPAIGNS – INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC

Referring to a presentation titled *Winter 2018, Florida*, Ms. Bridges provided a recap of Visit St. Pete/Clearwater's fall activities, discussed the upcoming winter campaigns, and responded to queries by the members, highlighting the following:

- Presented statistical research confirming Orlando as St. Pete/Clearwater's No. 1 year-round market and reported on the January 1 launch of the *Live it, Feel it, Love it* campaign at the Orlando International Airport, noting the marketing strategy and media placement
- Indicated that the annual program of ten-second television broadcast spots has been continued
- Discussed the WNBC Fall Initiative, noting that the campaign ended earlier this month; played a broadcast commercial featuring an in-destination segment
- Provided information regarding the WNBC Winter OOH Initiative, noting the beginning and ending dates and marketing strategy for the double decker buses, urban panels, commuter rail cars, subway branded trains, and the Chelsea Market campaigns
- Announced that the sixth edition of the Gulf to Bay Magazine will be unveiled February 1 at VSPC's Best of Awards show
- Reported that the newest Gulf to Bay magazine will be inserted into The New York Times in 13 different cities throughout the country, beginning February 4
- Noted plans for the insertion of large- and digest-size editions of the newest Gulf to Bay magazine into various national newspaper markets later in the month
- Discussed the co-op advertising program launched at the Annual Marketing Meeting, noting the submissions, available opportunities, and advertising results

During discussion and in response to queries by the members, Messrs. Bridges, Downing, and Lawry described the billboard advertising process, beacon technology and billboard applications, the practice of targeting consumers based on their physical proximity to the billboards, network data manipulation and download strategies, beacon-based activation triggers, and management of notification and access settings, and discussed how source markets are researched to determine visitation volume, noting the importance of data source collection; whereupon, Chair Welch indicated that bringing forward a couple of department reports at each meeting will ensure a more in-depth conversation; and that all of the other department reports are on file on the website.

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS REPORTS

St. Petersburg/Clearwater International Airport

Referring to a presentation titled *Tampa Bay The Easy Way*, St. Pete-Clearwater International (PIE) Airport Director Thomas Jewsbury related that the small hub commercial service airport serves the greater Tampa Bay area, operates as a self-sustaining enterprise deriving no operating revenues from the county, state or federal government, and offers the lowest airline rates and charges in the State of Florida. He provided an overview of the airport's initiatives and achievements over the last year and discussed the following topics:

- Air Service
- Non-stop Destinations
- Annual Passenger Traffic
- Regional Economic Impact
- Capital Improvement Program
- State and National Recognition

Allegiant Air

Referring to a presentation titled *Visit St. Pete/Clearwater TDC Meeting*, Thayne Klingler, Director of Airport Affairs for Allegiant Air, thanked the Board and community for their support, introduced Eric Fletcher, Director of Government Affairs, Allegiant Air, and discussed the company's successful operations at PIE. He provided information regarding the number of destination cities served through PIE and total passengers for 2017, the transition to Airbus aircraft, peak and non-peak days of travel, the growth outlook, and fare and passenger traffic comparisons between PIE and Tampa International Airport, noting that Allegiant represents nearly 12 percent of all Tampa Bay area passenger traffic.

Mr. Klingler presented information pertaining to Allegiant's relationship with hotels, which allows travelers to book a complete package through allegiant.com, and reviewed statistics for 2017 and early 2018; whereupon, Chair Welch expressed thanks for his leadership and the team's incredible partnership with VSPC.

In response to queries by Chair Welch, Mr. Jewsbury provided an update on the airport's parking project, noting that parking stalls have doubled in the past year and a half; that concerns were raised regarding exceeding the parking capacity; that a media campaign over the Christmas holiday encouraged passenger drop-offs; and that the initial design work to build a parking garage is underway to gather cost estimates and identify funding opportunities. Mr. Klingler related that

the airport is experiencing growing pains; and that the construction projects will result in a much better passenger experience and allow for future growth; whereupon, he expressed appreciation for the County's partnership and presented the members with an aviation fidget spinner commemorating the airport's milestone of serving 2 million passengers.

In response to a request by Mayor Cretkos, Mr. Jewsbury provided a breakdown of aircraft operations, noting that general aviation represents approximately 80 percent, the commercial air carriers, 10 percent; and the United States Coast Guard, 10 percent; whereupon, he related that the Coast Guard has been a partner for about three decades, helped contribute to airfield improvements, and is a good community partner that sits on the Noise Abatement Task Force and looks for ways to minimize its noise impact on the community, and Mayor Cretkos reminded members that it is the largest U.S. Coast Guard air station in the country.

Mr. Downing thanked the presenters and indicated that he is going to meet Messrs. Klingler, Fletcher, and Jewsbury, and PIE Business Development Manager Jeff Clauss after the meeting to discuss how to move forward; whereupon, he discussed VSPC's partnership with Allegiant and, stating that Allegiant is the only air service provider included in its annual budget, related the importance of maintaining the relationships with the airline and the airport, noting that he expects to grow the digital footprint at the airport and with Allegiant through mobile devices.

Tampa International Airport – Report on file at: pinellascvb.com

VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT

Mr. Downing referred to the Tourist Development Tax 2017-2018 comparative data sheet and reported that the numbers for November 2017 are up almost 13 percent for the year; that the first two months of 2018 registered at 11.14 percent; and that a digital copy will be provided next month.

Referring to the *Tourism Economics Snapshot, January TDC Meeting*, Mr. Downing reviewed the data for rooms sold, average daily rate, and revenue per available room, noting that the numbers are up; that each category has a different metric; and that changes in inventory affect the occupancy rate and tax revenue collected, and discussed cautionary use of the market comparison.

Mr. Bridges commented on the performance of the Tourist Development Tax, relating that it showed strong growth; that there were 74 of 75 months of year-over-year growth; and that November reflected 51 straight months of growth, and, in response to a request by Mr. Downing, discussed the year-over-year ADR and occupancy activity for New Year's Eve, noting that there

is a 30- to 40-percent increase across the board over last year; whereupon, Mr. Downing pointed out that it was not previously possible to break information down into granular bits for comparison purposes, and discussion ensued regarding the evolution of Smith Travel Research, Inc. to include reporting by large independent hotels and mom-and-pop operations, holiday weekends tending to show strong numbers, pre- and post-meeting document posting, and the current Pinellas County room count, how the total is calculated, and what factors are included.

Mr. Downing thanked the members and staff for their hard work over the last year, indicating that he is looking forward to 2018; whereupon, he invited everyone to attend the upcoming Best of Awards show and magazine launch on February 1 at the Mahaffey Theatre.

Mr. Downing announced that next week he and others will travel to Reykjavik, Iceland, for the Icelandair Mid-Atlantic Tradeshow and presented information about the annual travel industry convention, noting the various attendees, program events, direct flight service from Tampa to Iceland, and European and Scandinavian markets served. He reported that Visit Tampa, Tampa International Airport, and Visit St. Pete/Clearwater are participating sponsors, noting that he has attended the show four or five times in a row.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Satterfield

- Commented on his experience attending Florida Huddle 2018 , noting that Visit Florida's weak performance is a direct reflection of the continued scrutiny it faces; and that prospective international and domestic buyers were subjected to a speaker-less, stale luncheon; whereupon, several members agreed with Mr. Satterfield's comments and shared their concerns.

Mr. Kimball

- Expressed thanks to Messrs. Bridges and Downing and staff for their forward planning, relating that he is inspired with plans for the coming year and the new partners; whereupon, the members concurred with Mr. Kimball's sentiments, welcomed the 2018 Chair, and thanked the presenters.
- Remarked on the time-invested partnerships with Miles Media and Allegiant.
- Requested clarification regarding an invitation; whereupon, Mayor Cretokos clarified that the invitation was for the opening of a new terminal at TIA.

January 17, 2018

- Later in the meeting, related that any tourism damage by the legislature would take many years to repair, noting that it took seven years to build Visit Florida into what it is today.

Mayor Bevis

- Announced that VSPC has partnered with the New York Red Bulls to bring Major League Soccer to Pinellas County, noting that the Red Bulls will hold spring training in Oldsmar on January 22; and that he is looking forward to a long relationship and building the MLS brand in Pinellas County.

Ms. Carlisle

- Expressed pride regarding the TDC's treatment of potential clients and visitors and advocacy of fiscal responsibility, noting that it showcases the best of the destination.

Mr. Waltz

- Related that he understands the importance of conducting surveys and collecting feedback.

Mayor Cretekos

- Echoed Mayor Bevis' comments regarding soccer, noting that Clearwater welcomes back the D.C. United and Philadelphia Union for preseason training; that the Rowdies will play against the Montreal Impact in St. Petersburg; and that he is looking forward to soccer's growth and expansion into other communities.
- Related that a City of Clearwater City Council meeting is scheduled for February 1, and apologized that he will not be able to attend the Best of Awards.

Mr. Henderson

- Expressed concern regarding Senator Brandes' bill to make changes to the statewide tourism plan; whereupon, Chair Welch discussed the BCC's platform, noting that it opposes any changes in the use of the bed tax; and that it wants to emphasize local control to maintain the 60/40 Tourist Development Tax split, if change is inevitable.

Ms. Rodriguez

- Indicated that she is encouraged by the information presented today; that it will help the community at large; and that local citizens request her insight regarding tourism matters.

Vice-Mayor Kennedy

- Noted that she, Chair Welch, and Mayor Bevis serve together on Forward Pinellas.
- Discussed a post involving a concerned family who contacted the Clearwater Marine Aquarium to save the life of an injured dolphin, whom they had rescued a very long time ago and lost track of, noting that the Aquarium thanked the family and provided an update on Baby Face's progress.

Mr. Bogott

- Commented on the positive changes made regarding data collection and use.
- Expressed concerns that the Legislature likely swayed the TDC to make changes to the Elite Event Funding Program; and asked that members keep an open mind and communicate their position, noting that valuable events may be influenced to go away.
- Related that tourism is the number one industry in Pinellas County, benefits every resident of the State of Florida, and is at risk of being damaged.

Councilman Gerdes

- Agreed with Mr. Bogott's comments regarding tourism.

Mr. Downing remarked that a majority of Florida Huddle attendees expressed similar concerns, noting that he will articulate the feedback directly to Ken Lawson, President and CEO of Visit Florida; whereupon, he discussed his vacation experience in Egypt over the holidays, noting that the country is experiencing an 80-percent decrease in tourism, which is affecting its economics and level of service.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 A.M.