

Clearwater, Florida, June 21, 2017

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
JUNE 21, 2017

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

Janet C. Long, Board of County Commissioners Chairman, Chair
Doug Bevis, City of Oldsmar Mayor
George Cretekos, City of Clearwater Mayor
Charlie Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Councilman
Joanne “Cookie” Kennedy, City of Indian Rocks Beach Vice-Mayor
Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites

Not Present:

Russ Kimball, Sheraton Sand Key Resort, Vice-Chair
Timothy Bogott, TradeWinds Island Resorts
Jen Carlisle, Clearwater Marine Aquarium
Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry
Eric Waltz, Sandpearl Resort

Others Present

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

Agenda

- I. CALL TO ORDER/CHAIR COMMENTS** – TDC Chair Janet C. Long
- II. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES** – Meeting of April 19, 2017
- III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**
- IV. COUNTY ATTORNEY**
- V. APPROVAL OF CVB BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2018**
- VI. ELITE EVENT FUNDING**
- VII. PRESENTATIONS**
 - A. Beach Re-Nourishment – John Bishop/Andy Squires
 - B. Beach Cottages Video
- VIII. CONSULTANT REPORT**
 - A. Research Data Services – David Downing
April Visitor Profile – Report on file
- IX. PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT** – David Downing, President and CEO, VSPC
 - A. Financial Statements (Pinellas County Bed Tax)
 - B. Miscellaneous
- X. DEPARTMENT UPDATES** – April 2017, no presentations, all reports on file
 - A. Leisure Travel/Canada
 - B. Advertising, BVK Advertising
 - C. Central Europe and United Kingdom
 - D. Community and Partnerships
 - E. Film Commission
 - F. Latin America
 - G. Media and Interactive
 - H. Meetings and Conventions
 - I. Sports and Events
- XI. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS REPORTS** – April 2017
 - A. St. Petersburg/Clearwater International Airport – Report on file
 - B. Tampa International Airport – Report on file
- XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**
- XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

All documents referred to in the minutes have been made a part of the record.

CALL TO ORDER/CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Long called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. She reported that due to the lack of a quorum, no votes would be taken today; and that some agenda items will be presented out of sequence.

MINUTES OF THE APRIL 19, 2017 MEETING – TEMPORARILY DEFERRED

Due to the lack of a quorum, no vote could be taken on approval of the minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

COUNTY ATTORNEY – NO ITEMS

ELITE EVENT FUNDING

Mr. Ramsberger provided an overview of the TDC Elite Event Committee Review Meeting which took place on June 14. Referring to a document titled *Visit St. Pete Clearwater Elite Event Funding Summary FY 2017/2018*, he discussed the Category One and Category Two applicants who had been selected to move forward in the funding process, relating that if the requests are completely underwritten, the total would be approximately \$1.497 million, which is less than the \$1.525 million budget established at a recent workshop.

In response to queries by Chair Long, Mr. Ramsberger reported that during the August/September timeframe, his office will present new Elite Event Funding guidelines for review by the members, and noted the potential benefits associated with the changes. He provided information regarding *up to* funding amounts and how his office has been given more autonomy in the negotiating process, and responding to queries by Mayor Bevis, discussed funding related to current and former applicants, and Chair Long provided input.

Councilman Gerdes related that he is supportive of the subcommittee recommendations, and thanked the participants for their hard work. In response to his queries regarding whether it is permissible for applicants to obtain feedback regarding their applications, Attorney Zas suggested that those communications take place with staff and not individual TDC members; whereupon, Mr. Ramsberger pointed out that his office conducts a public information meeting each year before the applications are submitted; that questions regarding the mechanics of the application are discussed at that time; and that, in his opinion, staff should not be in a position to answer questions regarding the substance of applications prior to their submission.

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In response to query by Councilman Gerdes regarding whether applicants could contact individual members and obtain feedback concerning future applications, Attorney Zas advised that individual contact should not be made; and that all questions should be asked during the public information meeting; whereupon, following lengthy discussion, Mr. Ramsberger reported that his office plans to address discrepancies found in the applications moving forward.

During continued discussion, Mr. Downing stated that not having a quorum is highly unusual, and apologized to those in the audience who were expecting a vote to be taken. In response to queries by Mr. Satterfield, Attorney Zas advised against trying to expedite the voting process by turning to methods other than a scheduled meeting, and following discussion, Mr. Ramsberger related that waiting until the July meeting to vote would not harm the process.

APPROVAL OF CVB BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2018 – TEMPORARILY DEFERRED

Mr. Downing related that the Budget cannot be approved due to the lack of a quorum and indicated that the discussion will likely take place at the next meeting; whereupon, Chair Long discussed upcoming events for the members to be mindful of as they prepare to discuss the budget, and requested that the usually cancelled August meeting take place due to the high volume of work.

PRESENTATIONS

Beach Nourishment

Mr. Downing introduced the item, relating that a portion of the Tourist Development Tax goes toward beach nourishment; and that promoting the beaches is at the core of his organization's mission; whereupon, Coastal Management Coordinator John Bishop conducted a PowerPoint presentation titled *Tourist Development Council Update*. He provided information regarding three federally authorized beach nourishment projects, Sand Key, Treasure Island, and Upham Beach, and discussed matters relating to project funding, required easements, and overall timeframes.

Mr. Bishop related that the Army Corps of Engineers requires perpetual public access easements when sand is placed on private property; and that because many homeowners along the beach have declined to sign paperwork granting those easements, their private land will not be nourished, nor will the adjacent state land. During discussion and in response to queries by the members, he provided further information regarding the need for the easements, indicating that two public meetings were held to inform local residents of the requirement, and Vice-Mayor Kennedy provided input.

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During discussion and in response to comments and queries by Mayors Cretekos and Bevis, Mr. Bishop discussed the limited options for residents who wish to grant an easement at this point in time, reporting that they will likely have to wait five to seven years for the next opportunity; whereupon, he discussed the minimum footage required to nourish a section of beach, indicating that it affects residents who wish to take advantage of beach nourishment when their neighbors do not, and Commissioner Long indicated that it appears many condominium unit owners have not been informed by their associations of the project, and Mr. Satterfield discussed the importance of the bed tax, indicating that receiving state and federal dollars is dependent on the local match.

Referring to two diagrams, Mr. Bishop discussed the *cross section of an easement* and a *plan view of the erosion control line*; whereupon, he referred to photographs from 1985 and 2017 that demonstrate the value of creating buffer zones, indicating that dunes and vegetation help to reduce storm damage, provide environmental benefits, and protect tourism interests. Following the presentation, Mr. Gerdes requested that each of the members be provided a copy of the PowerPoint document.

In response to comments and queries by Mr. Downing, Mr. Bishop reiterated that receiving state and federal dollars is dependent on the local match; and that the local match is funded by bed tax dollars. In response to queries by Vice-Mayor Kennedy and Mr. Satterfield, Mr. Bishop provided further information regarding the next opportunity for coastal residents to take advantage of beach nourishment, and discussed the importance of four Geotextile T-Groins that were placed on the beach during 2004 and 2005, noting that those structures have helped to reduce the amount of sand needed for nourishment activities and are slated to be replaced with permanent rock groins in July.

Mayor Cretekos indicated that coastal residents can be proactive in protecting their properties by participating in the beach nourishment program; and that he finds it frustrating when people object to the program and then will complain following a disaster, and responding to his comments and queries, Mr. Bishop reported that the Army Corps of Engineers does not like to issue permits for T-Groins and only considers them as a last line of defense; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding the source and type of sand used to nourish the beaches, the timeframe during which the project will likely begin, and similar topics.

Beach Cottages Video

Mr. Downing and Vice-Chairman Kennedy provided background information regarding the video, indicating that it is a short promotional film about three Plein Air Artists on Indian Rocks Beach who are painting images of historic beach cottages.

CONSULTANT REPORT – APRIL 2017 VISITOR PROFILE

Mr. Downing referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *April 2017 Visitor Profile* consisting of information compiled by Research Data Services (RDS), Inc., and provided information regarding *visitation/economic impacts of tourism, visitor origins, and RDS occupancy room rates* for the month of April and the January through April timeframe; whereupon, referring to a chart titled *Smith Travel Occupancy*, he presented statistical information regarding occupancy, average daily rate, and revenue per available room, and discussed several factors that have been affecting domestic and international travel.

In response to comments and queries by the members, Mr. Downing discussed the potential effect of world events on international travel, and provided information regarding efforts that are being employed to counteract market softness in the Midwestern United States; whereupon, with input by Mary DeLong, BVK Advertising, he discussed the incredible growth and widespread acceptance of Airbnb, and Mayor Cretkos provided input.

Ms. DeLong presented information regarding an integrated multimedia campaign for summer that will utilize television, radio, and digital media to market the destination as *Beaches of Orlando*, played two promotional videos targeted to the residents of the Cities of Orlando and Jacksonville, and provided information relating to iHeartMedia; whereupon, Mr. Bridges discussed the Go Gulf Coasting website and played a video regarding the Airstream Basecamp promotion. He discussed the strategies related to remarketing and retargeting efforts, and Mr. Downing provided input.

Mr. Downing updated the members regarding Visit Florida, relating that he will provide further information at a future meeting; whereupon, he reported that the Tampa Bay Business Journal recognized VSPC with a *Business of Pride Award*; and that his organization will have a float in the upcoming St. Pete Pride Parade.

PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT – NOT ADDRESSED

DEPARTMENT UPDATES – NO PRESENTATIONS; ALL REPORTS ON FILE

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT REPORTS – NO PRESENTATIONS; ALL REPORTS ON FILE

MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Satterfield

- Congratulated VSPC staff on their involvement with the recent International Pow Wow (IPW), noting the importance of America's largest tourism trade show.

Councilman Gerdes

- Stated that Naples and Fort Myers have very good *average daily rate* and *revenue per available room* numbers, and in response to his queries, Ms. DeLong reported that information is available online for review.
- Discussed capital project funding, governor vetoes, and state dollars, and in response to his queries, Mr. Downing indicated that applicants who were relying on state funding were not affected; whereupon, RDS Director Walter Klages presented additional information regarding market softness in the Midwest.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:01 A.M.