



TDC MEETING MINUTES

December 12, 2019

Commissioner Brian Hamman, chair, called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

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

Cereceda made a motion to approve the Nov. 14, 2019 TDC meeting minutes. Wells seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be Heard

Jack Carver, Florida RV Trade Association, reported that the association's Fall Clean Sweep RV Show, Dec. 6-8, at the CenturyLink Lee County Sports Complex was a success. The 35th Annual Fort Myers RV Show, Jan. 23-26, at the Lee Civic Center expects to draw 10,000–15,000 in attendance and is the largest dealer-sponsored show in Florida.

Beth Oliver, Offshore Sailing School director of marketing, informed the TDC about the upcoming Culinary and Hospitality Education Foundation Chef Showdown event Jan. 6 in Naples. This event serves as a scholarship and grant fundraiser for Lee and Collier county students to pursue careers in culinary arts and hospitality.

Municipalities to be Heard

Caroline Vives-Vietri, City of Cape Coral customer service representative, reported that city council approved Crystal Lake and Sands Park in its parks GO Bond plan.

Judi Zimomra, City of Sanibel manager, wished the TDC happy holidays and welcomed Commissioner Hamman as new chair. Zimomra also reminded the TDC to come out and visit Sanibel's Luminary Holiday Stroll and Festival.

Report of the Executive Director

Tamara Pigott, VCB executive director, reported resort tax collected for October 2019 was \$2,086,449, a 19.7% increase over October 2018 preliminary collections of \$1,743,173. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$2,147,309, an increase of 17.96% year-over-year.

Pigott also reported that the average occupancy rate in October 2019 was 61.1%, which is up 4.5% from October 2018 (58.5%). The average daily rate for October 2019 was \$115.19, up 3.6% from October 2018 (\$111.22) and RevPAR for October 2019 was \$70.34, up 8.2% from October 2018 (\$65.01).

During October 2019, 638,922 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport. Figures represent an increase of 12.2% in passenger traffic compared to October 2018. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 8.8% from the same period last year.

Marketing Update

Brian Ososky, VCB marketing director, reviewed high-level marketing strategies, including an overview of integrated packages, social media initiatives and website projects for 2019-2020. He also presented a list of new domestic target markets, a brief media mix breakdown and a video from this year's VISIT FLORIDA Flagler Awards where the VCB earned four prestigious Henry Awards for excellence in tourism marketing. Clayton Reid, MMGY Global, presented an overview of travel trends and insights, as well as opportunities for the upcoming year.

Sports Development Report

Jeff Mielke, Lee County Sports Development executive director, reported that between June and September, 61,158 room nights were sold, with direct visitor spending of more than \$26 million.

Accessible Tourism

Judi Durant and Joshua Lambert, VCB, and Kevin Berry, ADA Advisory Council of Southwest Florida, presented an overview on what accessible tourism is, the importance of training in inclusive spaces and a look at other destinations who are leading the industry on accessibility. It was reported that 1 in 5 U.S. residents have a disability and the market is growing 22% annually. The VCB is looking to the future with accessibility in mind, by building new websites that will better accommodate disabled travelers, provide more resources and including the demographic in the sales and marketing plan.

New Business

Rob Wells nominated Tony Lapi as TDC vice chair for 2020. Anita Cereceda made a motion to close nominations which passed unanimously.

Cereceda made a motion to approve 2020 TDC meeting dates, which was seconded by Lapi and the motion carried unanimously.

Glen Salyer, assistant county manager, thanked the SWFL Community Foundation for its support and administration of the VCB's Attractions and Events Marketing program and announced that the foundation will be stepping away from the program as it no longer fits the foundation's business model. The VCB will bring the grant program in-house. The once-split committee will now serve, Attractions and Events Marketing and will also be a reimbursement program. The TDC nominated Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale and Lapi to serve on the FY 2020-2021 Attractions and Events Marketing subcommittee. The motion was made by Cereceda and seconded by Bill Waichulis, which passed unanimously. Commissioner Hamman then thanked the Community Foundation for its support over the years.

TDC Member Items

- Lapi appreciated the ADA presentation and shared story of a blind guest and his service dog. Blues on the Beach in the Crow's Nest on will be taking place Dec. 13-14. Lapi wished the TDC Happy Holidays and encouraged the TDC to utilize United Way campaigns for staff.
- Cereda informed TDC of Christmas Market at Mound House on Dec. 14 and the Women's Club Tree Festival, Dec. 14-15. She wished the TDC Happy Holidays.
- Cronin welcomed interim director of the Lee County Port Authority, Ben Siegel. Cronin also said that she appreciated the ADA presentation and the importance of being a destination that accommodates travelers having experience with a disabled traveler. She also wished the TDC happy holidays.
- Commissioner Hamman also said he was excited to be back on the TDC and to welcome Siegel as interim director at the Port Authority. He is excited for the air service developments to come in 2020.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Next TDC Meeting

The next TDC meeting is at 9 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 9, 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.