

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

July 15, 2020

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 Magnolia Room, Pinellas County Extension facility, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, Florida, on this date at 10:06 A.M. with the following members present:

Pat Gerard, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chair, Chair

Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor

Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises

Frank Hibbard, City of Clearwater Mayor

Joanne “Cookie” Kennedy, City of Indian Rocks Beach Mayor

Rick Kriseman, City of St. Petersburg Mayor

Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.

Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry

Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites

Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

Not Present

Russ Kimball, Sheraton Sand Key Resort, Vice-Chair

Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn

Others Present

Steve Hayes, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO

Tim Ramsberger, Chief Operating Officer

Katie Bridges, Senior Advertising Manager

Leroy Bridges, Vice-President, Digital & Communications

Suzanne Hackman, Vice-President, Business Development

Liz McCann, Executive Administrative Assistant

Teri Tuxhorn, Administrative Director

James Abernathy, Budget and Financial Management Analyst, Office of Management and Budget

Michael Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney

Other Interested Individuals

Jenny Masinovsky, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Agenda

- I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – Chair Pat Gerard
- II. CHAIR COMMENTS
- III. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES – June 26, 2020 TDC Meeting (not available)

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- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS
- V. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS – Steve Hayes
 - A. Marketing Subcommittee
- VI. DEPARTMENT REPORTS
- VII. VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT
 - A. Tourism Economics Snapshot – May 2020
 - B. Pinellas County Bed Tax – May 2020
- VIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS
- IX. 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 Gerard called the meeting to order at 10:06 A.M.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Gerard welcomed Michael Williams to the Council.

MINUTES OF THE JUNE 26, 2020 MEETING – DEFERRED

Chair Gerard indicated that the June 26, 2020 minutes are not available at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – NONE

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Marketing Subcommittee

Mr. Bridges provided a brief report regarding the subcommittee meeting, discussing current efforts and goals pertaining to developing a campaign for visiting safely and responsibly, noting that the

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Recovery campaign was placed on hold. He welcomed feedback by the members and indicated that documents used during the subcommittee presentation will be provided to them.

In response to query by Mr. Hayes, Mr. Bridges indicated that data shows the travel sentiment further deteriorating since the Council meeting of June 26; that in addition to COVID-19 itself, the consumer is concerned with the safety of destinations across the country; and that the campaign's intent is to ensure compliance with pertinent safety regulations by local businesses.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Mr. Hayes pointed out that meetings and conventions make up a strong component of tourism to the area. At his request, Ms. Hackman provided an update regarding current trends pertaining to business and group travel, indicating that last week the data reflected an extreme decrease in hotel occupancy; that most hotels have reported a loss of all group business through the end of the year, with the exception of a few meetings with less than fifty participants; and that meeting planners are postponing the business until 2021. She noted the importance of providing assurance of the destination's safety in order to motivate business travel and in continuing brand awareness efforts in the marketplace, and Mr. Hayes provided input.

VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT

Elite Event Funding Subcommittee

Messrs. Hayes and Ramsberger provided information regarding the upcoming subcommittee meeting, indicating that it is scheduled for 9:00 A.M. on August 7 in the Magnolia Room of the County Extension facility, and Chair Gerard expressed a desire to hold the meeting virtually; whereupon, Messrs. Henderson and Hibbard related that they will be unable to attend.

Following discussion regarding meeting logistics, subcommittee membership, and the review and approval process, with input by Attorney Zas, Mayor Bujalski volunteered to serve on the subcommittee in place of the aforementioned members.

Tourism Economics Snapshot and Pinellas County Bed Tax – May 2020

Mr. Bridges indicated that Smith Travel Research data reflects the expected regression in tourism due to the COVID-19 case surge, with the week of July 4 showing a fifty-percent occupancy, the

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lowest in six weeks countywide, in spite of the holiday; whereupon, he provided an update regarding the process of evaluating the submitted proposals for VSPC's research services.

Mr. Hayes referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Tourism Economics Snapshot, July 2020 TDC Meeting* and the Tourist Development Tax 2019-2020 comparative report and reviewed the data for the month of May and Fiscal Year 2020, including rooms sold, average daily rate, revenue per available room, market comparison, home share totals, and tax revenues for five-year and year-over-year growth. He indicated that while the numbers are down, the area was doing fairly well in May in relation to the rest of the state; that in contrast with occupancy, room rates are not significantly lower than last year; that bed tax collection was at negative 56.46 percent as compared to May 2019; and that the vacation rental market is doing extremely well; whereupon, Mr. Hayes reiterated the importance of being able to show the destination's safety to those willing to travel at this time.

Responding to query by Mayor Bujalski, Mr. Bridges clarified that the aforementioned data identified on the presentation as "home shares" refers to vacation rental properties, and discussion ensued regarding vacation rentals, including the data, state-ordered shutdown in May, regulatory monitoring, taxation, and related matters.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS

Mr. Satterfield congratulated Mayor Kriseman on the new St. Pete Pier and remarked that it is a spectacular venue and place to visit, and Mayor Kriseman related that the opening week was a success in spite of the visitor restrictions due to COVID-19, and expressed appreciation of the County partnership in rebuilding it.

In response to query by Mayor Bujalski, Chair Gerard indicated that she will update the Council on whether the next meeting will be virtual as soon as possible.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:49 A.M.