

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

September 16, 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 using the Zoom virtual meeting platform at 10:02 A.M. on this date with the following members present:

Pat Gerard, Chair, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chair
Russ Kimball, Vice-Chair, Sheraton Sand Key Resort
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
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.
Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry
Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

Not Present

Rick Kriseman, City of St. Petersburg Mayor

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
Rosemarie Payne, Leisure Travel Director
Teri Tuxhorn, Administrative Director
Michael Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney
Other Interested Individuals
Chris Bartlett, Senior Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Agenda

- I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – Chair Pat Gerard
- II. CHAIR COMMENTS – Chair Pat Gerard
- III. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES – June 26, 2020 (CVB Budget Workshop), July 15, 2020 (TDC Meeting), and August 7, 2020 (Elite Event Funding Program Application Review)

September 16, 2020

- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS
- V. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT – MARKETING SUBCOMMITTEE – Steve Hayes
- VI. MARKETING/SALES UPDATE
 - A. Rise to Shine Update – Leroy Bridges and Katie Bridges
 - B. Sales Update
 - i. Meetings
 - ii. Leisure
- VII. DEPARTMENT REPORTS
- VIII. VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT – Steve Hayes
 - A. Tourism Economics Snapshot – July 2020
 - B. Pinellas County Bed Tax – July 2020
 - C. TDC Openings
- IX. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS
- X. 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 10:02 A.M.

CHAIR COMMENTS – NONE

MINUTES OF THE JUNE 26, 2020 BUDGET WORKSHOP, JULY 15, 2020 REGULAR MEETING, AND AUGUST 7, 2020 ELITE EVENT APPLICATION REVIEW – APPROVED

Upon motion by Mayor Kennedy, seconded by Mayor Hibbard and carried unanimously, the minutes of the June 26, July 15, and August 7 meetings were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT – MARKETING

Mr. Hayes stated that he would like to move directly to the Marketing/Sales Update reports, and the Chair concurred.

MARKETING/SALES UPDATE

Rise to Shine Update

Mr. Bridges referred to a PowerPoint presentation and provided background information regarding the Rise to Shine marketing campaign, noting that it was created in response to consumer research; that travelers want to know that they can travel and visit responsibly; and that attractions and hotels are doing the right things to ensure everyone's safety. He noted that collaboration with local Chambers and business communities was unprecedented; and that businesses desired materials that could explicitly communicate social-distancing expectations to visitors; whereupon, he played radio and television advertising promotions associated with the Rise to Shine campaign for the members.

Mr. Bridges further discussed an increase in digital marketing, providing information on the following campaigns and programs:

- Beaches: through Conversant, Sojern, and YouTube/search engine marketing (SEM)
- Outdoors: through Conversant, Sojern, and YouTube/SEM
- St. Pete Pier: through Conversant, Sojern, and SEM
- Custom programs with TripAdvisor, Travel + Leisure, AFAR, and Visit Florida
- Expedia Destination Relief Program
- Travel Zoo program

Ms. Bridges indicated that a new inspirational forward-thinking campaign is in development for launch in November; and that it will include traditional and digital media across a variety of in-state and out-of-state markets.

Sales Update – Meetings

Ms. Hackman conducted a PowerPoint presentation titled *Meetings and Conventions* and provided year-to-date statistics and other information. She related that room nights are down compared to the previous year; that due to the current pandemic, cancellations since March 1 total nearly

September 16, 2020

37,000; and that revenue decreased over \$6 million, with a total economic impact of \$15.5 million lost.

Ms. Hackman related that two virtual familiarization trips were created to communicate the message that area businesses are open and safe for visitors; that monthly surveys are sent to meeting planners, which show the majority of them are planning upcoming meetings in the range of 101 to 500 expected participants; and that rebookings continue to be a primary focus, while new bookings are starting to rise after reaching a low point in July; whereupon, she discussed the strategic partnership with HelmsBriscoe and several events designed to benefit its associates.

Sales Update – Leisure

Ms. Payne referred to a PowerPoint presentation and provided an overview of the various webinars, virtual training, and travel initiatives of the Leisure Travel Department. She related that VSPC will be a part of several virtual tradeshow in September and October, and will participate with other Florida Destination Marketing Organizations in the training of over 250 travel advisors working with AAA Northeast and 400 member representatives of AAA Auto Club.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Mr. Hayes indicated that all VSPC department reports are available online at partners.visitstpeteclearwater.com.

VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORTS

Tourist Economics Snapshot – July 2020 and Pinellas County Bed Tax – July 2020

Mr. Hayes referred to the *Tourism Economics Snapshot* and stated that year to date, hotel occupancy is down on average 22 percent when compared to the previous year; and that the average daily rate is down 8.4 percent. He displayed a chart depicting a comparison of average occupancy rates between March and July of 2019 and 2020, noting that the largest decrease occurred in April 2020; and that occupancy rates continue to show improvement in subsequent months.

Mr. Hayes indicated that vacation rentals are doing better than hotels; that the occupancy rate is down 7.1 percent, room nights sold is basically flat, and average daily rate is up 1.9 percent; and

September 16, 2020

that Tourist Development Tax revenue remains down approximately 25 percent, holding consistent to recent months after bottoming out in April; whereupon, he discussed working with the Office of Management and Budget in setting realistic projections.

TDC Openings

Mr. Hayes noted that the Council has seven openings to fill as certain members' terms are about to expire. He related that all current members wishing to serve for another term have resubmitted their applications; and that new applicants have been invited to submit their applications by 4:00 P.M. today.

Miscellaneous

Mr. Hayes reported that VSPC's United Kingdom representative provided notice effective September 30; and that a search for a new representative will likely occur early next year. He noted that the members are invited to a reception to be held September 24 to say goodbye and thank the United Kingdom team for their twelve years of service and dedication.

Mr. Hayes indicated that an update regarding a plan for the upcoming Super Bowl in February is planned for the next TDC meeting; and that a presentation by Destination Analysts, VSPC's official research company, will be conducted for the members at a future meeting in the fall.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – NONE

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 A.M.