

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

February 17, 2021

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 Pinellas County Cooperative Extension Magnolia Room, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, Florida, on this date at 9:05 A.M. with the following members present:

Dave Eggers, 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  
Rick Kriseman, City of St. Petersburg Mayor  
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.  
Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn  
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry  
Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites

Not Present

Melinda Pletcher, City of St. Pete Beach Commissioner  
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

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  
Maria Hargrett, Accounting Manager  
Liz McCann, Executive Administrative Assistant  
James Abernathy, Budget and Financial Management Analyst, Office of Management and Budget  
Michael Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney  
Other Interested Individuals  
Teresa Ribble, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Agenda

- I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE/ROLL CALL – Chair Dave Eggers
- II. CHAIR COMMENTS – Chair Dave Eggers
- III. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES – January 20, 2021

- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS
- V. TOURISM INDUSTRY UPDATES
  - a) Tampa International Airport – Joe Lopano, CEO and Chris Minner, Executive Vice President
  - b) Research Update – Erin Francis-Cummings, President/CEO of Destination Analysts
- VI. FINANCE UPDATES
  - a) Latest Financial Report (Revenue & Expense) – Steve Hayes
  - b) FY 2022 Budget Timeline – Steve Hayes
  - c) FY 22 Revenue Projections – Jim Abernathy, OMB
- VII. DEPARTMENT UPDATES
  - a) Spring Safety Campaign – Leroy Bridges, VP of Digital/Communications
  - b) Preliminary Super Bowl LV Recap – Leroy Bridges, VP of Digital/Communications
  - c) FY 2022 Elite Events Process & Guidelines – Tim Ramsberger, COO
  - d) Department Reports
- VIII. VSPC PRESIDENT & CEO Report – Steve Hayes
  - a) TDC By-laws – Michael Zas, County Attorney
  - b) 2021 Legislative Session
  - c) General Comments
- IX. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS
- 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 Eggers called the meeting to order at 9:05 A.M. and requested that Mr. Satterfield lead the Pledge of Allegiance; whereupon, at the Chair’s request, the members introduced themselves.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Eggers reported that he had visited the COVID-19 vaccination facility located on East Bay Drive and noted the efforts of the people operating the site.

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 20, 2021 REGULAR MEETING – APPROVED

Upon motion by Mayor Kriseman, seconded by Mayor Hibbard and carried unanimously, the minutes of the January 20 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

TOURISM INDUSTRY UPDATES

Tampa International Airport

Airport Chief Executive Officer Joe Lopano conducted a PowerPoint presentation and provided updates and statistical data regarding Tampa International Airport (TPA) operations, including an annual regional economic impact of \$14.4 billion. He noted the significance of the partnership with Pinellas County and that 60 percent of fly-in visitors to Pinellas arrive via TPA.

Mr. Lopano discussed the impact of COVID-19 regarding decreased passenger traffic and availability of airline flights, indicating that prediction analyses by The Brookings Institution and Chmura Economics and Analytics show the Tampa/St. Petersburg/Clearwater areas to be Florida's most resilient major market. Referring to a route map and flight chart, he demonstrated service route resumptions, additions, and suspensions and related that the TPA's route network is returning rapidly.

He detailed *#TPAReady*, a COVID-19 safety initiative which includes acrylic barriers, face masks for staff, social distancing signage, hand sanitizer stations, and increased cleaning, and reported that TPA is the only airport in the United States to offer arriving and departing passengers COVID-19 testing.

Mr. Lopano concluded his presentation with an update regarding current progress for Phase 2 of the master plan and related that it adds an office building, increased curbside capacity, a central utility plant, and roadway expansions; whereupon, he indicated that Phase 3 is deferred due to impacts of COVID-19.

Following comments and queries by the members, Mr. Lopano provided the following information:

- TPA will not approach an airline serving St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport.
- A hotel will be constructed following completion of the aforementioned office building.
- There is a European market that requires COVID-19 testing before a flight and again upon landing. This is the only one of which he is aware.
- TPA is an Origin and Destination airport, but is deemed a large hub by the Federal Aviation Administration due to the number of passengers served.

## Research Update

Destination Analysts CEO and President Erin Francis-Cummings conducted a PowerPoint presentation containing various charts and graphs and provided information regarding the current state of American travel sentiment, a 2020 recap of tourism for Pinellas County, and a look at the future of tourism for the area.

She related that a recent survey indicated that while consumers remain concerned regarding pandemic-related health and safety issues, optimism is increasing; that most believe vaccines to be the path back to normalcy; that consumers are further warming to travel advertising and are becoming more amenable to travel marketing; and that a return to pre-pandemic travel and trip behaviors will not be a quick process.

Regarding visits to the area and the related economic impact, Ms. Francis-Cummings noted that of 12.5 million travelers to Pinellas County between January and December 2020, the largest segment was comprised of regional day visitors; and that this is a 26 percent increase from 2019. She indicated that of the \$3.6 billion in direct spending, \$1.6 billion was related to hotel lodging and emphasized the detrimental economic impact of the decrease in overnight visitors.

Ms. Francis-Cummings summarized data regarding traveler composition and demographics, trip planning, modes of transportation, activities, spending patterns, and visitor satisfaction; whereupon, she provided the following projections:

- Hotel occupancy will be at or above 2020 levels beginning March 2021
- Visitor volume will reach 13.7 million in 2021
- Total visitor economic impact will be above 2020 levels beginning April 2021
- Economic impact of tourism will total \$6.4 billion
- Total tax collections will reach \$236 million

Following queries by Mr. Satterfield and Mayors Hibbard and Bujalski, Ms. Francis-Cummings, with input by Mr. Bridges, indicated that consumers are continuing to show an avoidance to air travel; that travelers research pandemic-related information when considering places to visit; that the hotel occupancy forecasts were based upon Smith Travel Research (STR) data, noting the reliability of its data; that the aforementioned total of 12.5 million visitors reflects overnight stays in paid accommodations; and that visitor utilization of a personal car has not decreased from 2019.

Mr. Hayes indicated that Ms. Francis-Cummings will provide visitor and economic impact data on a quarterly basis going forward.

Mr. Bridges referred to the Tourism Economic Snapshot Report included in the agenda packet and indicated that in addition to the monthly hotel performance data regularly provided, the following reporting will be added:

- City comparison data for average daily rate (ADR), revenue per available room, and hotel occupancy
- Room night demand and supply trends
- Forecasting reports from STR and TravelClick data
- Mobile phone movement data provided by Arrivalist

In response to requests by Mayors Bujalski and Hibbard, Mr. Bridges indicated that additional data can be added to the city comparison chart to include an overall snapshot; that he will research the ability to provide the same data for vacation rentals; and that regular reporting can be supplied for bed tax generated by municipality and for inventory of hotel rooms and vacation rentals.

## FINANCE UPDATES

### Latest Financial Report

Mr. Hayes referred to various budget documents in the agenda packet and discussed revenues and expenses for January 2021, highlighting the following items:

- December Tourist Development Tax collections were down by 23.9 percent when compared to the previous year and 20.6 percent year-to-date.
- Revenue budgeted for the Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB) Revenue Cooperative Sales is anticipated to be unmet due to hotel partners' financial inability to participate in events.
- Expenses such as Personal Services are lower due to staff positions being left unfilled and lack of a Capital Program, and Operating Expenses are under budget due in part to limited office equipment usage and decreased travel expenses.
- Advertising and Marketing and Digital Marketing expenses are paid upon receipt of proper billing back-up documents provided by the vendors; this may be two to three months following provision of services.
- Four Elite Events have been cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns.

Responding to comments and queries by Mr. Satterfield, Ms. Hargrett provided clarification regarding expenses appearing on the monthly financial statement even though services may have been rendered during a different month. She indicated that the report is generated through a system which does not allow an expense to appear on the statement until proper back-up materials are received and payment is made; and that there are additional spreadsheets maintained which track the date of service to its associated expense.

Discussion ensued, with Mr. Abernathy providing input regarding revenue and expense reporting, including the ability to see an expense tied to an event or promotion, unpaid expenses for a previous fiscal year, accrual versus cash accounting, and a true matching of revenues and expenses; whereupon, Chair Eggers requested that the Council be provided a presentation explaining the accounting methodology utilized in VSPC's financial reporting.

#### Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Timeline

Referring to the *CVB Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Timeline*, Mr. Hayes stated that a budgetary review meeting is scheduled with the County Administrator for April 12; and that the budgets will be presented to the Council on April 21; whereupon, Mayor Bujalski suggested that the Council have an opportunity to provide input before budgets are developed. Mr. Hayes related that he will work with his team to return to the Council with a report regarding goals and focus areas which were used to develop the budgets.

#### Fiscal Year 2022 Revenue Projections

Mr. Abernathy provided an explanation regarding how revenue projections are formulated based on Florida Statutes requiring the budget to be created at 95 percent of anticipated revenues and stated that the Fiscal Year 2022 projection is a 5.4 percent increase from Fiscal Year 2021.

Responding to queries by Mr. Henderson and Mr. Prather, Mr. Abernathy indicated that the negative impact of COVID-19 was excluded from Fiscal Year 2021 projections, but that a COVID-19 discount was added to the budget.

## DEPARTMENT UPDATES

### Spring Safely Campaign

Ms. Bridges referred to a PowerPoint presentation pertaining to goals for the upcoming spring season and highlighted the following:

- *Ultimate Beach Day Getaway* promotion is running January through April 30, incorporating a *Rise to Shine* pledge for COVID-safe behaviors.
- *Visit Responsibly* bar remains on the VSPC website and is updated regularly.
- *Do Right Get Rewarded* promotion will be running late February through mid-April. Sunshine Steward Street Teams will reward residents and visitors with in-destination gift cards for demonstrating COVID safety.
- Local industry Spring into Safety webinar is scheduled for February 18.
- Free *Rise to Shine* materials are still available to local businesses.

Responding to queries and comments by Mr. Kimball, Ms. Bridges related that Mr. Hayes has met with City Managers to work towards a coordinated effort regarding safe behavior messaging; and that Sheriff Gualtieri will be present for tomorrow's webinar to further reiterate expectations for the spring break season.

Mayor Bujalski voiced the need for beach law enforcement during spring break; whereupon, Chair Eggers related that Sheriff Gualtieri attends the weekly emergency planning meetings.

### Preliminary Super Bowl LV Recap

Mr. Bridges referred to a PowerPoint presentation and provided information regarding the following topics:

- Hotel and vacation rental occupancy and ADR
- Media coverage and broadcast exposure
- Consumer survey results and mobile phone movement data

He presented a video which highlighted events and activities throughout the region and noted that Super Bowl weekend ADR was one of the two highest since the pandemic began; and that vacation rentals saw the highest full week occupancy since early March 2020.

Fiscal Year 2022 Elite Events Process and Guidelines

Mr. Ramsberger provided information regarding the Elite Funding program, including a timeline, application period, review committee appointment, and review and approval process.

The members discussed being provided return-on-investment data from previous events, actual funding compared to approved funding by event, and the need for a review of the funding categories in light of the current economic climate.

Chair Eggers asked that members inform Mr. Hayes of their interest in serving on the review committee.

Mr. Hayes summarized the direction of the Council and indicated that a report will be provided at next month's meeting containing event data for 2019 and 2020 Elite Events, including actual funding, return on investment, and recommendations for revisions to the funding categories.

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Mr. Satterfield left the meeting at 11:57 A.M.

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Department Reports – None

VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT

TDC Bylaws

Attorney Zas indicated that based upon a review, he is unable to confirm that a series of bylaws developed by the Council received the required BCC approval; that the bylaws contain inconsistencies regarding the appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair positions; and that clarification is needed concerning Council term expiration dates when a person is appointed to another member's seat; whereupon, Chair Eggers requested a roster of members and term dates. Attorney Zas indicated that he will present revised bylaws for consideration at the next TDC meeting.



2021 Legislative Session

Mr. Hayes related that March 2 begins the next State legislative session and discussed proposed House and Senate Bills related to Visit Florida, and legislation regarding short term vacation rentals; whereupon, Mr. Kimball suggested that Intergovernmental Liaison Brian Lowack be scheduled to provide a legislative update to the Council, and Chair Eggers requested that Mr. Hayes schedule Mr. Lowack to attend an upcoming meeting.

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Mayor Kriseman left the meeting at 12:15 P.M.

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BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSION

Ms. Rodriguez noted that Visit Florida's Huddle 2021 was held virtually and was a great success.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:19 P.M.