

**Tourist Development Council
Pinellas County
February 16, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

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 on this date at 9:00 AM in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building, 333 Chestnut Street, Clearwater, Florida.

Present

Charlie Justice, Chairman, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chairman
Russ Kimball, Vice-Chairman, Sheraton Sand Key Resort
Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor
Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises
Frank Hibbard, City of Clearwater Mayor
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.
Melinda Pletcher, City of St. Pete Beach Commissioner (late arrival)
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry
Clyde Smith, Bilmar Beach Resort
Kenneth T. Welch, City of St. Petersburg Mayor
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

Not Present

Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn

Others Present

Steve Hayes, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO
Michael A. Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney
Katie Poviones, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk
Other interested individuals

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chairman Justice called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM; whereupon, at his request, the members introduced themselves.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Justice greeted Mayor Welch as a new member of the TDC and welcomed the members to their new meeting location.

CHAIRMAN COMMENTS – NONE

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 20, 2022 REGULAR MEETING

Ms. Rodriguez made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Hibbard and carried unanimously, that the minutes of the January 20 meeting be approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No one responded to the Chairman's call for public comment.

Ms. Pletcher arrived at 9:07 AM.

INDUSTRY PRESENTATIONS

Woodson African American Museum of Florida

Following opening comments by Mr. Hayes, the Executive Director of the Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum, Terri Lipsey Scott, referred to a PowerPoint presentation and discussed the history of the museum. She related that she hopes to intrigue interest among the members to help create the first ever African-American museum in Florida to be designed and built from the ground up; that the renderings of the proposed 30,500-square-foot museum include multifunctional purposes such as a justice center, galleries, event space, and a healing garden, among other areas; and that work is being done through the state legislature to secure an opportunity to receive a \$5 million appropriation.

Pinellas Community Foundation CEO Duggan Cooley indicated that the Pinellas Community Foundation is working with the museum staff to assist with their capital campaign; that the total campaign budget of \$26.5 million includes the design and construction of the building, an endowment for programming and staff, and funds for the first three years of operational costs at the museum to allow for internal growth as needed; and that an active campaign committee has raised approximately \$2.8 million in private fundraising.

Mr. Cooley noted that a partnership with the City of St. Petersburg provided the campaign with five-and-a-half acres of land for the museum, as well as a million dollar fund to begin; and that the sources of unanticipated funds are estimated to be \$9 million from governments of various types, \$9 million from corporations around the country, \$5.5 million from individuals, and \$3 million from foundations; whereupon, Ms. Scott related

that design architect Mario Gooden will partner with local architect Jason Jenson from Walker Warner Architects for the design and construction of the museum.

Mayor Welch remarked that the campaign is a priority for the City of St. Petersburg; and that he hopes that the TDC will choose to support the effort going forward.

In response to a query by Mayor Bujalski, Mr. Hayes explained that some adjustments in the language of the capital program guidelines were made following dialogue at a previous Board meeting; that there will be discussion at the next TDC meeting regarding the guidelines and suggestions for improvement; and that the capital program may resume accepting applications for funding as early as summer of 2022 following the BCC's approval of the program guidelines, and Ms. Scott and Mr. Cooley provided input.

Destination Analysts Research Update

Destination Analysts (DA) Founder and Managing Director Dave Bratton conducted a PowerPoint presentation and provided updates and statistical data regarding current traveler sentiment, St. Pete-Clearwater's annual visitor profile and economic impact study, a website user and conversion study, and a brand perception study. He highlighted the following information:

- The percentage of travelers who feel confident or very confident that they can travel safely at this time is at 52%.
- People are more excited and willing to travel than they have been since the beginning of the pandemic, and they feel safer doing so.
- The most desired destination types for travelers are beach locations and resorts, and the most desired domestic destination is Florida.
- Pinellas County welcomed almost 15 million visitors, who collectively spent \$5.5 million during their trips in 2021, supporting over 91,000 jobs and \$2.9 billion in visitor industry payroll.
- Of the visitors surveyed, 99.6% of them expressed that they were satisfied with their experience and 60.8% reported residing outside of Florida.
- Based on more than 1.4 million website users to the VPSC website, 27,502 trips to the area were generated, resulting in over \$60 million in visitor spending and 225,270 room nights. In total, each website user was valued at \$46.97 resulting in a total over \$65 million in total economic impact produced by the website.

- 77% of those surveyed found St. Pete/Clearwater to be an appealing destination and it is most commonly selected as the best location for great value, beaches, outdoor recreation, museums, mature travelers, and scenic beauty.
- Overall, travelers valued COVID-19 health and safety protocols as an important destination attribute but rated St. Pete/Clearwater's protective procedures as poor or not as good.

In response to queries by the members, Mr. Bratton related that while the survey found 20% to 30% of travelers felt that inflation is keeping them from traveling, many people are doing very well financially; that he speculates that St. Pete/Clearwater's association with Florida may have influenced travelers to rate the destination's COVID-19 protocols poorly; that his team tried their best to survey a representative sample that reflects the overall population; and that the data can be reweighted if it does not represent what it should.

Responding to queries by the members, Mr. Hayes conveyed that the findings of the studies are being used by VSPC's strategic planning group and marketing partners; that VSPC's European marketing partners and Visit Florida might have data to substantiate traveler sentiment in the international market; that DA may have a database that can infiltrate international markets to ask the same questions as those posed in the domestic studies; and that information regarding the meetings and conventions market could be obtained from partners like DA or Norstar.

During discussion, Mr. Hayes noted that the studies will be repeated each year to gain valuable information regarding how St. Pete/Clearwater is perceived; that the studies will serve as a baseline to evaluate the market impacts of changes made by VSPC; and that the results will assist in developing priorities within the budget by identifying what markets and tools need to be emphasized.

Ms. Moore left the meeting at 10:26 AM.

ELITE EVENT GUIDELINES APPROVAL

Mr. Hayes indicated that the members should have received documents detailing the changes to the Elite Event guidelines as discussed in previous meetings; and that one additional proposed change is an adjustment of the maximum funding level for Category Four events from \$25,000 to \$20,000.

Responding to queries by Mayor Welch, Mr. Hayes clarified that the decrease in potential funding for Category Four events is to facilitate a \$5,000 step between each Category of

funding; whereupon, Mr. Williams made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Welch and carried unanimously, that the guidelines be approved.

VSPC PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

Destination Metrics

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Pinellas County Tourist Development Council Meeting*, Mr. Hayes reviewed statistical data regarding tourist development tax collection and average daily rate (ADR), noting that St. Petersburg/Clearwater was third in the top 25 markets in occupancy and third in the top markets in the United States in ADR.

Ms. Moore returned at 10:41 AM.

General Comments

Responding to queries by Mayor Welch, Mr. Hayes, with input from Mayors Bujalski and Hibbard, remarked that there have been no comments made to him regarding whether spring training will start on time or be delayed; that Visit Florida may receive \$50 million in funding from the Florida legislature; and that Visit Florida's sunset language may be changed to five years versus the current one- to two-year basis.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES – NONE

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS – NONE

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 AM.