

**Tourist Development Council
Pinellas County
December 15, 2021 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 9:08 AM in the Magnolia Room at the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, Florida.

Present

Dave Eggers, Chair, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chair
Russ Kimball, Vice-Chair, Sheraton Sand Key Resort
Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises
Frank Hibbard, City of Clearwater Mayor
Rick Kriseman, City of St. Petersburg Mayor
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.
Melinda Pletcher, City of St. Pete Beach Commissioner
Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

Not Present

Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry
Clyde Smith, Bilmar Beach Resort

Others Present

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

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE/ROLL CALL

Chair Eggers called the meeting to order at 9:08 AM. At his request, Mr. Kimball led the Pledge of Allegiance.

CHAIR COMMENTS

On behalf of himself and the BCC, Chair Eggers thanked the members for their service on the Council and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and safe New Year.

APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES AND ELITE EVENT FUNDING PROGRAM WORKSHOP MINUTES – NOVEMBER 17, 2021

Mayor Hibbard made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Prather, that the minutes of the regular meeting and the Elite Event Funding Program workshop held on November 17 be approved; whereupon, Mr. Hayes noted that there is a grammatical error on page three of the workshop minutes, where ‘involvement’ should be replaced with ‘involved’. Mayor Hibbard indicated that he would make that part of his motion, and Mr. Prather concurred. Upon call for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No one responded to the Chair’s call for public comment.

ELITE EVENT GUIDELINES REVIEW

Mr. Hayes related that the agenda packet includes a copy of the program guidelines with proposed redline changes prepared by staff following the Elite Event program workshop; and that staff is seeking additional feedback before the guidelines are finalized and presented to the Council for a vote at the January meeting.

Attorney Zas provided an overview of the changes to the guidelines, indicating that the goal of the modifications is to increase efficiencies and streamline the application process while maintaining the transparency and criteria that had been previously developed; that some language adjustments were made that do not affect the process; and that the most significant changes include removing ‘cultural heritage event’ wording from the description of Category IV and eliminating the Elite Event Subcommittee review from the process; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding the following topics, with Mr. Hayes and Attorney Zas providing input:

- Broadcasting requirements of Category I
- Verifying room nights and revenue generated by an event
- Adding flexibility within existing Category I and II requirements
- Accommodating larger events
- Category funding amounts
- Marketing plan point value of the rating criteria

During discussion, Mayor Hibbard made a motion that Category I require that an applicant meet either the specified number of room nights or number of attendees, and to increase the funding eligibility to a range of \$125,000 to \$200,000, and Mayor Kriseman seconded the motion.

In response to queries by the members, Mr. Hayes clarified that staff will take into consideration the feedback provided by the members and look into whether room nights and attendance requirements need to be adjusted to be more feasible; that an updated version of the guidelines will be presented at the Council's January meeting for a vote, given there are no more substantive changes; and that other noteworthy proposed changes to the guidelines include adding a category for new events and incorporating an economic impact on the local economy factor to the event rating criteria. No vote was taken on the motion.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Strategic Planning Update*, HCP Associates Vice President Robert Allen provided an overview of the strategic plan's purpose and discussed information regarding how data is being collected, feedback from stakeholders, and the challenges involved in planning and formulating the final plan. He indicated that the formal plan document will be presented to the TDC in February or March; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding improving assets across the County, the correlation between tourism promotion and economic development, and potential collaborations between VSPC, Pinellas County Economic Development, and the St. Petersburg Area Economic Development Corporation.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Beach Renourishment Reserves

In reference to documents received by the members, Mr. Abernathy, with input from Mr. Hayes, responded to queries by the members and elaborated on the following topics:

- The budget process of adjusting the Tourist Development Tax fund allocation for beach renourishment
- Availability of capital reserves for beach renourishment
- Utilization of federal grant funding
- Requirement of obtaining easements from individual owners of beach property

Department Reports – None

VSPC PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

Destination Metrics

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Destination Metrics*, Mr. Hayes reviewed October 2021 statistical data regarding Tourist Development Tax collections, including hotel and vacation rental occupancy, average daily rates, and visitor profile metrics. He noted that collections have increased 60% over 2020 and 40% over 2019, which was a record-breaking year. He related that the members have a new metric in their agenda packets from Zartico, which provides a new way to view the movement of visitors once they arrive to the market; and that he will share additional information regarding it at the Council's January meeting.

General Comments

Mr. Hayes indicated that VSPC recently published a newsletter with information on a variety of topics, including international tourism; and that agreements were recently finalized with Rooster Creative for markets in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Scandinavia, and Kaus Media Services for markets in Germany and Western Europe.

In response to a query by Mr. Kimball regarding a potential tour of Tampa International Airport for the members, Attorney Zas noted that a tour would need to comply with Sunshine Law requirements; and that he will look into alternatives; whereupon, Ms. Moore thanked VSPC for providing COVID-related resources for international visitors.

OUTGOING MEMBER RECOGNITION

Chair Eggers remarked that he appreciates Mayor Kriseman making time to attend the TDC meetings; whereupon, he thanked the Mayor for his service to the City of St. Petersburg and Pinellas County and presented him with a plaque expressing the gratitude of the TDC members and VSPC staff.

Mr. Kimball thanked the outgoing Chair for his guidance from uncertainty a year ago through an unprecedented economic recovery, and presented him with a plaque expressing the gratitude of the TDC and VSPC for his service; whereupon, Chair Eggers thanked the members and staff for their dedication.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSION

Ms. Moore elaborated on an encounter she had with an individual who researched locations to live in the United States and chose Pinellas County, noting that it is a great accolade to Pinellas County Economic Development.

The members offered comments and thanked Mayor Kriseman and Chair Eggers for their service on the TDC.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:56 AM.