

**Tourist Development Council
Pinellas County**
October 20, 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 9:06 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
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.
Melinda Pletcher, City of St. Pete Beach Commissioner
Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn
Clyde Smith, Bilmar Beach Resort
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

Not Present

Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry

Others Present

Steve Hayes, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO
Teri Tuxhorn, VSPC Senior Administrative Manager
Liz McCann, VSPC Executive Administrative Assistant
Michael A. Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney
Jim Abernathy, Sr. Financial Management and Budget Analyst
Katie Poviones, Board Reporter
Other interested individuals

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE/ROLL CALL

Chair Eggers called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM. At his request, Mayor Kriseman led the Pledge of Allegiance, and the members introduced themselves.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Eggers noted that the latter part of the meeting would include a Capital Project Funding Program workshop in preparation for the joint BCC/TDC meeting in November.

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 15, 2021 REGULAR MEETING

Ms. Moore made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Hibbard and carried unanimously, that the minutes of the September 15 meeting be approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

International Update/IPW

Rosemarie Payne, VSPC Director of Leisure Travel, related that VSPC staff and partners recently attended IPW, the largest international trade show in the United States hosted by the U.S. Travel Association; that staff met with clients from top producing markets and discussed topics such as pricing, customer expectations, the prime location, and communication with tour operators; and that the announcement of the U.S. opening international inbound markets starting in November is welcome news and vital to the continued recovery for all segments of the travel industry. She displayed images of the VSPC booth presented at the show, thanked BVK and VSPC staff for creating the backdrop, and indicated that IPW 2022 will take place next June in Orlando.

Andrea Gabel, VSPC Senior Sales Manager, Brazil, elaborated on the discussions between VSPC staff and key clients from Latin America and the collaborative efforts with Visit Florida to promote the St. Petersburg and Clearwater destination; whereupon, she provided an update on the lifting the COVID-related travel restrictions in key Latin markets, noting a great increase in the numbers of requested visas, airline ticket searches, and hotel reservations. In response to queries by Chair Eggers, Ms. Gabel related that the U.S. Consulate in Brazil has a significant backlog in visa requests and renewals as a result of its closure during the pandemic; that due to the backlog, visa-related appointments are being rescheduled for August of 2022 and beyond; and that consequently, the traditional business gained from Brazilian tourists will not be restored until 2022.

Department Reports

Mr. Hayes provided information regarding new and existing airlines starting or resuming their service to the area, takeaways from IPW, and anticipated impacts of the return of international visitors.

VSPC PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

Strategic Plan Update

Mr. Hayes indicated that one-on-one meetings with HCP Associates regarding the strategic plan are nearly complete; that the plan is now in its second phase, which will entail utilizing the observations from the one-on-one meetings to create an online interview database for various stakeholders to obtain their feedback, and a residency telephone survey to evaluate the community's outlook on the value of tourism; that results from the interview and survey are expected to be available in December, shortly before three workshops that will take place in January to gain additional insight from the public; and that following the workshops, a report will be finalized and prepared to be presented to the TDC, the BCC, and the community.

Destination Metrics

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Destination Metrics*, Mr. Hayes reviewed August 2021 statistical data regarding Tourist Development Tax collections, comparing it to August 2019, including hotel and vacation rental occupancy, average daily rates, top origin market arrivals into the area from in- and out of state, and visitor profile comparisons. He pointed out that tourism is strong, in spite of the red tide, a tropical storm, and a COVID Delta variant surge occurring over the summer; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding the slow resurgence of business travel in general, and meetings and conventions segment in particular.

Upcoming Workshops/Meetings

Mr. Hayes provided information regarding the upcoming joint meeting of the BCC and TDC and the Annual Marketing meeting on November 4.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Eggers indicated that at this time, 9:44 AM, the regular meeting of the Council is complete and the Capital Project Funding Program workshop will begin.