

**Tourist Development Council
Capital Project Funding Program Workshop
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 for a Capital Project Funding Program workshop on this date at 9:45 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

Chair Eggers called the meeting to order at 9:45 AM.

CHAIR COMMENTS – NONE

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

CAPITAL PROJECT FUNDING PROGRAM

Mr. Hayes provided an overview of the workshop's agenda, relating that the Capital Project Funding Program guidelines have not been revised since 2018 and thus, it is important for the Council to review the current guidelines to evaluate whether it wishes to recommend any amendments based on relevant changes in the past three years.

Attorney Zas discussed the history of the program and its guidelines, relating that applicants may come forward and preliminarily present their project outside of the program's open cycle to determine whether the TDC would recommend it to the BCC for funding; that a key aspect of the guidelines is having a rating criteria that gives all applicants an equal opportunity in recognition of some of the significant differences in the program's categories; and that the purpose of today's discussion is to clean up the current language in the guidelines and seek guidance regarding any substantive policy changes, including those based on statutory amendments allowing expanded uses, such as certain infrastructure tied to tourism.

In response to a query by Chair Eggers, Attorney Zas related that there were statutory amendments made shortly before the previous joint TDC/BCC meeting to allow expanded uses of the Tourist Development Tax; that at the time, the TDC and BCC reached a consensus not to amend the plan to include the expanded uses; and that in the future, if the TDC received a funding request related to the expanded uses, the plan could then be amended to include them.

Chair Eggers noted that it would be valuable to create a list of eligible projects for funding under the expanded uses and to compile other ideas for discussion in anticipation of the TDC/BCC joint workshop; whereupon, lengthy discussion ensued on the following and other topics:

- Relating capital projects to the strategic plan
- Capital project categories, types, qualification criteria, and scoring methods
- Guidance by the local delegation regarding statutory changes
- Municipal tourism-related expenditures

Attorney Zas clarified that the statute articulates that transportation- and infrastructure-related facilities are eligible for funding under the stipulation that they may not replace failing resources, but rather, must increase tourist-related business; that there should a study to support that conclusion; and that tourist attractions are not automatically fundable by the statute just because they are related to tourism.

Some of the members expressed reluctance to amend the guidelines, and Attorney Zas confirmed that the ability to amend the plan is always there and requires a majority plus one vote by the BCC. Mr. Kimball suggested that it would be helpful for the Council to receive legislative updates on relevant topics, and Mr. Hayes indicated that based on the recent update from the Florida Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus, there is no legislation being introduced at this time.

Referring to a document titled *Capital Projects Funding Program Guidelines*, Attorney Zas reviewed the proposed changes to the current guidelines, including policy direction sought on certain items. He and the members discussed the following matters, with input provided by staff:

- Funding procedures flexibility
- Staff discretion regarding documentation required for project evaluation for Category D projects
- Use of the 6th percent bed tax
- Timeline of project completion requirement
- Funding standards
- Rating criteria
- Beach nourishment funding

Mayor Bujalski moved, seconded by Ms. Pletcher, to accept the proposed changes to the guidelines, and discussion ensued. Mayor Hibbard opined that there is a need for further discussion regarding rating criteria, and Chair Eggers agreed that information on the basis of scoring would be useful; whereupon, responding to a query by Mr. Hayes, Attorney Zas confirmed that there is no certain date by which the guidelines need to be approved.

Responding to a query by Chair Eggers, Mr. Hayes indicated that staff will provide an update regarding the Capital Project Funding Program at the upcoming joint TDC/BCC workshop. Mayor Bujalski withdrew her motion; whereupon, responding to a query by Attorney Zas, Chair Eggers indicated that the redline changes are accepted and requested that Attorney Zas provide a clean copy for discussion at the next Council meeting. No objections were noted, and discussion continued with members requesting that in addition to rating criteria, discussion topics at the next meeting also include the guidelines definitions and beach nourishment.

Mr. Abernathy referred to a document titled *Tourist Development Tax Fund – Capital Funding Program, FY22-FY30*, which has been made a part of the record, and provided information regarding the program, including current commitments and completed projects, estimated ending fund balance, and related matters. He noted that the revenue projections are based on an assumed annual growth of 3% and do not include potential commitments.

Chair Eggers and Ms. Pletcher left the meeting and Vice-Chair Kimball assumed the gavel at 11:38 AM.

Mr. Hayes provided an overview of the timeline for the program following the Council's endorsement of the guidelines, relating that the recommended guidelines would then go to the BCC for its approval; that pending the BCC's decision, an informational meeting would be held for anyone who may be interested in the program; and that a Request for Proposal was issued for a consulting firm to assist in evaluating the applications for funding with regard to the projects' economic impacts.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Mayor Hibbard thanked the Council for being a part of the Big Clean Up event at Clearwater Beach, noting that 1,500 volunteers contributed in picking up trash across the entire city. Mr. Hayes noted that it was great to participate and make the community better for visitors and residents alike.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:47 AM.