

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

November 18, 2020

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 9:04 A.M. with the following members present:

Pat Gerard, Chair, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chair
Russ Kimball, Vice-Chair, Sheraton Sand Key Resort
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
Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

Not Present

Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor
Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises
Frank Hibbard, City of Clearwater Mayor
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry

Others Present

Steve Hayes, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO
Tim Ramsberger, Chief Operating Officer
Liz McCann, Executive Administrative Assistant
Michael Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney
Other Interested Individuals
Chris Bartlett, Senior Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Agenda

- I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – Chair Pat Gerard
- II. CHAIR COMMENTS – Chair Pat Gerard
- III. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES – October 21, 2020
- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

V. DEPARTMENT UPDATES

- a) Research/Digital & Communications: Leroy Bridges, VP Digital & Communications
- b) Advertising: Katie Bridges, Sr. Advertising Manager
- c) Film: Tony Armer, Film Commissioner
- d) Sales: Suzanne Hackman and Rosemarie Payne
- e) Department Reports

VI. VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT – Steve Hayes

- a) Tourism Economics Snapshot
- b) Pinellas County Bed Tax

VII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSION

VIII. 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 Gerard called the meeting to order at 9:04 A.M.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Gerard welcomed new member Melinda Pletcher to the Council and congratulated Mr. Williams and Mayors Bujalski, Hibbard, and Kriseman on their reappointments.

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 21, 2020 REGULAR MEETING – APPROVED

Upon motion by Ms. Moore, seconded by Mayor Kriseman and carried unanimously, the minutes of the October 21 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Research/Digital and Communications

Vice-President, Digital and Communications, Leroy Bridges referred to a PowerPoint presentation and provided updates from the department, starting with the weekly tracking survey on traveler sentiment, noting that travelers' health concerns relating to the spread of COVID-19 have decreased excitement for traveling in the coming months of cold weather; that many travelers shared that they would feel guilty if traveling right now; and that cancellations or postponements in leisure travel are approaching 50 percent. He indicated that, on the positive side, the majority of travelers believe that providers are offering discounts on travel, which has increased their interest in traveling sometime in the next three months.

Mr. Bridges discussed Fiscal Year 2020-2021 objectives for recovery this winter, noting that existing partnerships with social media, managed services, and online travel agency partners will continue to provide awareness of the destination, help engage users with content, and successfully convert interest into actual visits. He stated that Digital is targeting out-of-state markets at 75 percent and in-state non-local markets at 25 percent, and discussion ensued regarding the flexibility of the programs and timing of the campaigns.

Referring to the current Media Plan, Mr. Bridges related that VSPC is working with Basis to collectively target several Connected TV providers, and directly with Hulu, the biggest player in the space; and that on Hulu, VSPC is pairing its 15- and 30-second spots with a "sponsored by Visit/St. Pete Clearwater" 7-second premium slate at the beginning of an episode; whereupon, he played video examples of the created advertisements and discussed additional efforts in rich media and other digital spaces.

Mr. Bridges provided information regarding the VISA Economic Impact Measurement program and stated that it is a new product from Miles Partnership and VISA that shares aggregated data on the spending habits of travelers when using a VISA-branded credit card for payments; that it is specific to those who are exposed to VSPC advertising and their arrival in the market; and that a first look at the data should be available in three to four months.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Bridges provided updated information from the Travelzoo campaign and recent vacation rental statistics from KeyData. He related that data from TravelClick will be available soon, noting that it is a new hotel performance data tool, and provided information regarding VSPC's virtual tour of the St. Pete Pier for independent hoteliers to be held in December.

Upon introduction by Mr. Bridges, Digital Producer Eddie Kirsch briefly discussed his background in media production, noting that he has worked in Sarasota County and most recently in California; and that he and his wife are excited to be back in Florida.

Advertising

Senior Advertising Manager Katie Bridges introduced BVK Vice President, Account Director Carmen Boyce and stated that she has been instrumental in helping to develop VSPC's media and recovery plan, and Ms. Boyce provided input.

Ms. Bridges discussed brand positioning and indicated that research suggests that people are seeking pleasure-rich experiences in recreation and travel; that St. Pete/Clearwater is the perfect environment that both calms and invigorates the senses; and that a new creative extension is being developed that takes on the core human value of vibrancy; whereupon, she played several radio and television spots and showed pictures of outdoor billboards used in the recovery campaign while providing information on the campaign's winter schedule and ad placement.

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Bridges provided information regarding the following media segments and advertising campaign types:

- In- and out-of-state markets
- Gulf to Bay magazine
- Co-op advertising
- Rise to Shine

Ms. Bridges indicated that the media kit for the 2021 Gulf to Bay magazine has been completed; that in partnership with the Tampa Bay Times, the magazine is planned for a release in May 2021 with an initial printing of 500,000 copies; and that an enhanced digital guide is also being developed.

In response to queries by the members and with input by Mr. Bridges, Ms. Bridges indicated that certain media spots on Travelzoo advertise discounts up to 55 percent relating to 13 properties; and that 25 percent of those who view the Travelzoo campaign also visit VSPC's website, which helps to drive bookings to others outside of the partnership, and discussion ensued.

Film

Film Commissioner Tony Armer related that it is common to seek out and offer filmmakers incentives to bring outside projects to the Tampa Bay area, helping to promote the destination. He noted that two films were recently broadcast on the Hallmark Channel.

Referring to a document titled *Enhanced Incentive Project Summary*, Mr. Armer stated that he is working to create a Hallmark-style film as a type of 90-minute commercial promoting the entire area; that a local production company will receive \$500,000 worth of incentives to produce the film; and that VSPC would receive 12.5 percent of the net profits of all sales of the film, which could then be used to incentivize future projects.

Responding to queries by the members, Mr. Armer stated that the film would be marketed to Hallmark, Lifetime, and other video services; that filming would begin early next year; and that filming locations have not been finalized at this time.

Sales

Business Development Vice-President Suzanne Hackman referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Meetings and Conventions* and stated that in-person meetings within the industry have started to occur again and include protocols for social distancing; and that staff has attended recent meetings in Colorado Springs and Orlando and will be heading to Scottsdale and Miami in December.

Ms. Hackman noted that meeting planners continue to be affected by travel mandates and are reportedly waiting on a coronavirus vaccine before returning to a normal schedule. She indicated that as a result, all planned meetings at this time are scheduled locally to avoid air travel and often include no more than 100 participants. She reported that local hotels continue to see cancellations and rebookings for early 2021; that they have expressed concerns regarding bookings for the Super Bowl and Spring Break; and that an increase in hosted weddings has been encouraging; whereupon, she responded to queries by the members regarding planned meetings and the turnout expected for the Super Bowl in February and other events throughout the year.

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Leisure Travel Director Rosemarie Payne reported that staff recently attended the first Brand USA Global Marketplace virtual event; that the event featured more than 750 participants across Europe and the United States with 154 buyers from 18 countries. She noted that operators are not selling January through March 2021 and are focusing on dates in April and beyond; whereupon, she discussed how the virtual event was structured.

In response to query by Mr. Kimball, Ms. Payne stated that it cost \$4,000 to be included in all six of the Brand USA events and provided information on other shows planned for 2021.

Department Reports

Mr. Hayes indicated that all VSPC department reports are available online at partners.visitstpeteclearwater.com.

VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORTS

Tourist Economics Snapshot and Pinellas County Bed Tax

Mr. Hayes referred to the *Tourism Economics Snapshot* and stated that year-to-date hotel occupancy is down 22 percent when compared to the previous year, with vacation rentals down 6.3 percent; and that Tourist Development Tax revenue will end the fiscal year down 23.2 percent. He noted that replacing AirDNA with KeyData will enable comparisons of local data to other markets; that the final quarter visitor profile report should be available next month along with Strategic Planning and other reports; and that staff is working well together on several projects.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSION

Mr. Kimball commented that having presentations to the Board as opposed to only receiving documents is beneficial and something he hopes to see at future meetings; and that a deeper understanding of event-related metrics would help members appreciate the success of an event when presented to the Board, and brief discussion ensued.

Referring to Gulf to Bay magazine, Ms. Moore noted that publications from other destinations include a list of accommodations; and that a similar list in Gulf to Bay would add value for the advertiser.

Responding to queries by Mr. Prather, Office of Management and Budget Analyst Jim Abernathy discussed the next fiscal year budget, noting that it is based on projected tax revenue of \$38 million; whereupon, at the request of Mr. Satterfield, he agreed to provide a report and presentation at the next meeting.

November 18, 2020

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:32 A.M.