

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

July 18, 2018

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 Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Assembly Room, 315 Court Street, Fifth Floor, Clearwater, Florida, on this date at 9:01 A.M. with the following members present:

Members Present

Kenneth T. Welch, BCC Chairman, Chair  
Doug Bevis, City of Oldsmar Mayor  
Timothy Bogott, TradeWinds Island Resorts  
George Cretekos, City of Clearwater Mayor  
Charlie Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember  
Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises  
Joanne “Cookie” Kennedy, City of Indian Rocks Beach Mayor  
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry  
Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites  
Eric Waltz, Sandpearl Resort

Not Present

Russ Kimball, Sheraton Sand Key Resort, Vice-Chair

Others Present

David Downing, Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO  
Tim Ramsberger, Chief Operating Officer  
Teri Tuxhorn, Administrative Director  
Katie Bridges, Senior Advertising Manager  
Leroy Bridges, Digital and Communications Vice-President  
Liz McCann, Executive Administrative Assistant  
Michael Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney  
Dennis Long, Consultant  
Other Interested Individuals  
Lynn M. Abbott, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Agenda

- I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – Chair Kenneth T. Welch
- II. CHAIR COMMENTS
- III. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES – Meeting of May 16, 2018
- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS

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- V. COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORT – Michael A. Zas
- VI. CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER – Tim Ramsberger
- VII. ELITE EVENT FUNDING
  - A. Gasparilla Bowl Application
- VIII. CAPITAL FUNDING GUIDELINE REVISIONS – Dennis Long
- IX. PRESENTATIONS
  - A. Ken Lawson – Visit Florida
  - B. John Tanzella – IGLTA
- X. STAFF REPORTS
  - A. Digital & Communications – Leroy Bridges
  - B. Advertising & Promotions – Katie Bridges
- XI. VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT – David Downing
  - A. Tourism Economics Snapshot (Pinellas County Bed Tax) – May 2018
  - B. Advertising/Digital Media Updates
- XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS
- XIII. 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 Welch called the meeting to order at 9:01 A.M. At his request, those in attendance introduced themselves.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Welch related that Jen Carlisle has joined Visit Florida and has resigned as a TDC Board member; whereupon, he noted that although she cannot attend today’s meeting, she conveys her best wishes to the Board.

Chair Welch related that applications will be accepted in September for Ms. Carlisle’s slot and the two terms set to expire later this year; and that the three appointments will be made at that time. In response to query by Mr. Downing, Attorney Zas verified that term limits would not apply because the guidelines have not yet been adopted by the BCC. Later in the meeting, Mr. Downing indicated that he will send out information regarding the appointment terms and application process.

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Chair Welch reported that the County Administrator's proposed budget was released yesterday; and that one of the three Convention and Visitors Bureau position requests is contingent upon passage of the homestead referendum.

Chair Welch thanked everyone who participated in last month's workshop, noting that the discussions regarding Elite Event funding and expanding the uses of the bed tax were productive; and that there is consensus by the BCC that next month's joint meeting will be unnecessary; whereupon, he suggested that the TDC meeting for August 2018 be cancelled, and no objections were noted.

MINUTES OF THE MAY 16, 2018 MEETING – APPROVED

Upon motion by Mayor Bevis, seconded by Mayor Kennedy and carried unanimously, the minutes of the May 16, 2018 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORT – NONE

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Mr. Ramsberger indicated that the Elite Event Funding guideline revisions discussed at the workshop will be ready for presentation in September.

ELITE EVENT FUNDING – GASPARILLA BOWL

Referring to last month's meeting, Mr. Ramsberger related that the Board has agreed to reconsider the Gasparilla Bowl application; and that Executive Director Brett Dulaney has submitted an amended application and is available to answer questions. He reported that the original Elite Event recommendations were approved by the BCC yesterday.

In response to queries by Chair Welch regarding the original and amended applications, Mr. Ramsberger provided information regarding the Gasparilla Bowl's funding category and eligibility, and projected attendance and room night totals. He related that the event's move from Pinellas County to Tampa required that an amended application be submitted and, referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Batten Down the Hatches*, clarified that the hotel and room nights'

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numbers relate to band members, cheerleaders, media, and game officials, noting that he is unsure of the tourist attendance totals; whereupon, Mr. Dulaney confirmed that attendee information was not included for the Tampa event.

Chair Welch indicated that the information should have been calculated and inserted in the amended request; that the ranking process is important; that the committee considers each event based on the attendance and room night totals; and that he will not support the Gasparilla Bowl application; whereupon, he urged the applicant to reapply next year.

Mayor Bevis moved, seconded by Mayor Kennedy and carried unanimously, that the members recommend that the amended Gasparilla Bowl application be denied.

#### CAPITAL FUNDING GUIDELINE REVISIONS

Mr. Downing indicated that there is a copy of the guideline revisions in the agenda packet.

Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater Consultant Dennis Long provided background information regarding the Capital Project Funding Program Guidelines and related that the BCC adopted revised guidelines in December of 2017; that the TDC conducted an economic impact study; and that the Board decided to update the guidelines to provide an improved return on investment of Tourist Development Tax Funds based upon the results of the study.

Referring to a document titled *Capital Projects Funding Program Guidelines*, Mr. Long presented a summary of the substantive changes, including definitions, economic study eligibility requirements, the evaluation process, and the rating scale, noting that the other changes pertain to statute conformance. Following the presentation, Mayor Cretokos expressed concerns that there are gaps in the score ranges; and that the 50th percentile is not represented; whereupon, he suggested that the scoring percentages be changed to close the gaps.

Messrs. Long and Downing presented information related to the scoring system's use, purpose, methodology, and value, and the rating criteria, scoring process, and percentage gaps. Mr. Ramsberger pointed out that the Elite Events Funding Program uses the same scoring system, and Chair Welch commented that its review and scoring processes are fair, and discussion ensued.

Mr. Satterfield pointed out that there is no correlation between the scores received and the funding awarded; whereupon, the members provided input regarding category thresholds, gap elimination, and suggested changes to the rating scale. Mr. Downing related that the system is designed to determine the intrinsic value of each application.

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Following discussion, Councilmember Gerdes moved that the Capital Projects Funding Program Guidelines rating scale be changed to reflect 0 to 9 percent, unresponsive to the requirements; 10 to 39 percent, does not meet the minimum requirements; 40 to 69 percent, meets the minimum requirements; 70 to 89 percent, exceeds the minimum requirements; and 90 to 100 percent, substantially exceeds all requirements, seconded by Mr. Bogott and carried unanimously.

Referring to a document regarding last year's Capital Projects Funding Program summary, Mr. Satterfield reiterated that there is no direct relationship between the applicant's score, the TDC-approved funding request, and the BCC-approved funding award, noting that lower scores are being funded at the same level as higher-scoring projects; whereupon, he recommended that an application's scores should tie back to its funding request; and that the funding award should reflect the actual scoring percentage received.

Referring to an email, Mr. Long related that he drafted language suggesting that the scores be converted to a percentage; that the recommended funding amounts should not exceed that percentage; and that if the Board would like to move forward with the changes to the funding evaluation system, he could incorporate the language into the revised guidelines, and discussion ensued regarding score conversion, eligibility thresholds, qualitative analysis, and funding recommendations, availability, and distribution.

Councilmember Gerdes moved, seconded by Mayor Bevis and carried unanimously, that the Capital Projects Funding Program Guideline Revisions with the amendment to the rating scale be approved; whereupon, Chair Welch inquired whether the members wish to apply the same percentages to the Elite Event Funding Program Guidelines, and following input by the members, requested that the matter be added to the September meeting agenda.

## PRESENTATIONS

### Visit Florida

Mr. Downing introduced Visit Florida President and CEO Kenneth Lawson. Mr. Lawson thanked the Board, Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater, and Mr. Downing for their support and partnership, and briefly reviewed his employment history and leadership experience.

Referring to a presentation titled *Visit Florida: 2018 and Beyond*, Mr. Lawson discussed tourism's importance to the State of Florida, provided an overview of Visit Florida, and presented information regarding the organization's accomplishments, marketing strategy, domestic and international travel, programs, challenges, improvements, partnerships, technological advancements, investments, and promotions, including international trade shows, advertising opportunities, welcome centers, and a #LoveFL block party.

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Following the presentation, Chair Welch thanked Mr. Lawson for his leadership, passion, and partnership, and the members praised Mr. Lawson for his positive attitude and enthusiasm.

In response to comments and queries by the members, Mr. Lawson discussed the quality of his relationships, level of communication, and work promoting the value of tourism with members of the local delegation; commitment to protecting tourism by engaging politicians, educating the local constituency, and marketing tourism and its impact to the state; and resolution of transparency and accountability issues that clouded Visit Florida's contract with Brand USA, noting the launch of a new international Co-Op Program.

Mr. Downing recognized the differences in funding and statutory responsibilities between the TDC and Visit Florida, relating their plan to work together and commingle funds for the betterment of statewide and local tourism. He thanked Mr. Lawson for his presentation and commended the entire VSPC staff for enriching the relationships between the two organizations.

### IGLTA

International Gay Lesbian Tourism Association (IGLTA) President and CEO John Tanzella thanked the Board and Mr. Downing for the opportunity to discuss lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer (LGBTQ) tourism, noting that his organization is the only global travel association dedicated to the market. Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, he presented information regarding the organization, its vision and mission, local and international office locations, promotions, global growth, LGBTQ market value, and the IGLTA Foundation.

Mr. Tanzella provided information and statistical data regarding the 34th Annual Global Convention held last year in St. Petersburg, relating that it was the largest conference to date; that the three-day event generated approximately \$1 million to the local economy; and that activities included a fundraiser, volunteer community events, and educational activities; whereupon, he presented an overview of the IGLTA Global Partnership Program.

In response to query by Mr. Satterfield, Mr. Downing discussed the TDC's initial work to capture the LGBTQ market, noting that IGLTA was initially used as a marketing arm for the LGBT space before St. Pete Pride was designated as an Elite Event; that the market is difficult to gauge; that opportunities exist for brand growth; and that the TDC plans to continue to operate with the St. Pete Pride director for regional/domestic tourism and the IGLTA for international/global tourism; whereupon, he stressed the importance of brand alignment and related that the organization is careful to align with partners that are authentic in their support of the LGBT space.

## STAFF REPORTS

### Digital & Communications

Mr. Bridges announced the unveiling of *ExperienceCentralAve.com* and related that the business intelligence tool was created to inspire travel to the St. Petersburg/Clearwater area through the presentation of authentic and unique stories that highlight the destination's beaches, communities, and events, and feature local businesses and characters.

In response to queries by Councilmember Gerdes and Chair Welch, Mr. Bridges discussed the cinemagraph's enhanced user experience, content, technological advancements, device compatibility, and design, relating that the platform was designed for mobile use; that 50 percent of the Web traffic comes from mobile devices; and that the tool is live. Mr. Downing thanked Mr. Bridges and his team for their work on the project.

### Advertising & Promotions

Ms. Bridges conducted a presentation highlighting Visit St. Pete/Clearwater's summer activities, as follows, and the members provided input.

- Discussed print advertising promotions in local, regional, and national magazines, newspapers, and brochures and business partnerships
- Presented information regarding the new Number One Beach campaigns promoting the destination's diverse culture, communities, events, activities, and experiences
- Reported on *Gulf to Bay* magazine distribution into local, regional, and national markets, noting that approximately 260,000 copies have been distributed
- Provided information regarding local and national broadcast advertising with radio, television, and cable providers, and public/private business partnerships, and played video and audio clips
- Discussed the HSN partnership and the Hometown Sweepstakes Contest, and played video clips
- Noted upcoming Grouper Week activities
- Discussed sponsorship of the International Pow Wow tradeshow's message center, promotion of the *Number One Beach* campaign, and the purchase of backlit video monitoring equipment, enhanced graphics, and counters, relating that the new technology is completely different in its development, setup, and use and can be repurposed for use in other shows

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- Indicated that last winter's New York City Chelsea market and urban panel campaigns will continue throughout the summer
- Discussed the digital billboard advertising activities with International Plaza and Tampa International Airport
- Presented information pertaining to the new partnership with Live Nation at the Mid Florida Credit Union Amphitheater

### VSPC PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

#### Tourism Economics Snapshot (Pinellas County Bed Tax) – May 2018

Referring to the *Tourist Development Tax 2017-2018 Comparative* data sheet, Mr. Downing reported that the Tourist Development Tax for May was up 3.73 percent; and that it was up just under 10 percent for the year. Mr. Bridges discussed the impacts of media coverage of Tropical Storm Alberto, noting that, although Pinellas County's weather was not affected, Expedia experienced its biggest drop in business for a Memorial Day weekend.

Referring to the *Tourism Economics Snapshot, July TDC Meeting* presentation, Mr. Downing reviewed the data for rooms sold, average daily rate (ADR), and revenue per available room (RevPAR) for May 2018 and year to date.

#### Advertising/Digital Media Updates

Mr. Bridges introduced the new business intelligence tool, indicating that it will allow for data to be compiled, distributed, reviewed, and tracked digitally versus being manually collected through survey intercepts and displayed to the members in a static format; whereupon, he discussed features of the tool and benefits to be realized in terms of processing, understanding, and utilizing data.

In response to queries by the members, Mr. Bridges discussed how data is processed, stored, and visualized, relating that it can be provided to the members in a dashboard format well in advance of a TDC meeting; whereupon, he provided information regarding AirSage, reporting that the firm has the ability to track cell phone movement, which can be used to determine if a cell phone *spent the night* in Pinellas County, and Chair Welch requested that he provide a presentation to the County Commission regarding the business intelligence tool.



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Mr. Bridges discussed how often bed tax collection data is submitted to the County, and provided further information regarding survey intercepts and the business intelligence tool; whereupon, Mr. Bogott requested that information be provided regarding tourism growth and room inventory, and Mr. Downing provided input.

#### Miscellaneous

Mr. Downing related that he was asked to participate in an upcoming Visit Florida workgroup that will focus on the organization's brand along with CEOs from other CVBs across the state.

Mr. Downing indicated that he attended an airlines industry strategy meeting and awards ceremony in London, noting that he just returned last night; that he met with several airlines and discussed the growing international airline industry, the importance of connectivity of flight, continuing the international direct airline service, and formative marketing opportunities; and that there is dedicated line item funding in the budget to support international air service development.

Mr. Downing thanked today's presenters and staff, and expressed gratitude to Messrs. Ramsberger and Long and Attorney Zas and his team for the hard work on the Capital Projects Funding Program guideline revisions, noting that the item is ready for presentation to the BCC.

#### MEMBER COMMENTS

Mayor Cretekos indicated that he attended the Philadelphia Union versus Eintracht Frankfurt soccer game and provided positive commentary on the promotional activities of the Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater team. He thanked VSPC, the Sports Commission, and Senior Business Development Manager Sarah Kirchberg for bringing the Western Hemisphere Water Polo Championship to Clearwater and the City of Clearwater for providing access to the Long Center, noting the benefits of teamwork.

In response to query by Mr. Bogott, Chair Welch confirmed that there would be no TDC meeting in August.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:38 A.M.