

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

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 9:02 A.M. with the following members present:

Members Present

Janet C. Long, BCC Chairman, Chair  
Russ Kimball, Sheraton Sand Key Resort, Vice-Chair  
Doug Bevis, City of Oldsmar Mayor (late arrival)  
Jen Carlisle, Clearwater Marine Aquarium  
George Cretekos, City of Clearwater Mayor  
Charlie Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Councilman  
Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises  
Joanne “Cookie” Kennedy, City of Indian Rocks Beach Vice-Mayor  
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry  
Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites

Not Present:

Timothy Bogott, TradeWinds Island Resorts  
Eric Waltz, Sandpearl Resort

Others Present

David Downing, Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO  
Tim Ramsberger, Chief Operating Officer  
Leroy Bridges, Media and Interactive Director  
Liz McCann, Executive Administrative Assistant  
Amanda Coffey, Managing Assistant County Attorney  
Dennis Long, Capital Project Funding Consultant  
Other Interested Individuals  
Jenny Masinovsky, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Agenda

- I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL** – TDC Chair Janet C. Long
- II. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES** – Meeting of August 16, 2017
- III. PUBLIC COMMENTS**
- IV. COUNTY ATTORNEY**

- V. BYLAWS**
- VI. CAPITAL PROJECT FUNDING PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS**
- VII. CONSULTANT REPORT**
  - A. Research Data Services – David Downing
  - July Visitor Profile – Report on file
- VIII. PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT** – David Downing, President & CEO, VSPC
  - A. Financial Statements (Pinellas County Bed Tax)
  - B. Miscellaneous
- IX. CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER REPORT** – Tim Ramsberger, COO, VSPC
  - A. Visit St. Pete/Clearwater – EOC
- X. DEPARTMENT UPDATES** – July 2017 – No presentations, all reports on file
  - A. Leisure Travel/Canada
  - B. Advertising, BVK Advertising
  - C. Central Europe and United Kingdom
  - D. Film Commission
  - E. Latin America
  - F. Media and Interactive
  - G. Meetings and Conventions
  - H. Sports and Events
- XI. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS REPORTS** – July 2017
  - A. St. Petersburg/Clearwater International Airport – Report on file
  - B. Tampa International Airport – Report on file
- XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**
- XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

All documents and presentations provided to the Clerk’s Office have been made part of the record.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chair Long called the meeting to order at 9:02 A.M.; whereupon, at her request, those at the dais introduced themselves.

MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 16, 2017 MEETING – APPROVED

Councilman Gerdes moved, seconded by Vice-Mayor Kennedy, that the minutes of the meeting of August 16, 2017 be approved, and upon call for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

COUNTY ATTORNEY – NO ITEMS

BYLAWS

Responding to queries by Chair Long, Mr. Downing confirmed that the bylaws were approved at the last meeting and indicated that a final copy incorporating one agreed-upon revision is included in the agenda packet for the record. Councilman Gerdes clarified that the revision reflects his request to add a reference to statutory authority; whereupon, Chair Long noted that it is found under Article I; and that the bylaws have been signed and will be forwarded to the Board of County Commissioners for review.

Later in the meeting and responding to query by Mr. Henderson, Attorney Coffey indicated that the bylaws were approved at the last meeting; and that no additional action is required with regard to the update provided today.

CAPITAL PROJECT FUNDING PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Referring to the discussion of proposed revisions to the funding guidelines held at the September 15 workshop, as outlined in a document titled *TDC Capital Project Funding Standards Discussion*, and a memorandum regarding workshop results dated September 18, 2017 and presented today, Chair Long noted that the recommendations were changed from a total of 7 to 12 items, as Item 7 subsections have become independent Items 8 through 12; whereupon, she opined that that the original version was less complex because all Item 7 subsections are related.

During discussion and in response to queries by Chair Long, Consultant Dennis Long indicated that pursuant to the workshop discussion and reviews by the VSPC staff and Managing Assistant County Attorney Michael Zas, the formatting was changed to a numeric continuation for the purpose of clarity and easy review; whereupon, Mr. Ramsberger indicated that it could be changed back.

Ms. Carlisle indicated that the revised version of the proposed recommendations captures everything that was discussed at the workshop, and Vice-Mayor Kennedy opined that it appears

straightforward and clear. Mr. Long indicated that he has solicited feedback from applicants with regard to the recommendations; and that he will distribute their responses later in the meeting.

\* \* \* \*

Mayor Bevis entered the meeting at 9:12 A.M.

\* \* \* \*

Following the members' review of the revised recommendations, Messrs. Long and Ramsberger responded to their queries as follows:

- "Economic benefits" are synonymous with "economic impact" and are addressed under Item 9.
- The recommendations document provided for the members' review is a summary of concepts, in accordance with which the actual guidelines will be drafted.
- It is preferred to have one County-designated consultant experienced in the tourism arena and utilizing the same methodology for each analysis.
- No substantive changes were made to Items 4 and 6 pertaining to funding previously completed projects.
- Funding from other sources (Item 4) would be applied toward a local match, and determination of an existing facility's real estate value and its inclusion in the match amount would depend on whether the facility is being acquired as part of a project.
- Any facilities qualifying for exemption from threshold requirements, as do Major League Soccer training facilities under Item 3, should be considered at the time that plans for their development are established.

During further discussion, Mayor Bevis opined that prior purchases of property by municipalities for land assembly purposes should be taken into consideration with regard to matching funds (Item 4); and that seeing the members' confusion with the document presented today, it may be even more confusing for the public. Mr. Long reiterated that complete guidelines based on the concepts presented today are being drafted and will be presented for approval to the TDC and subsequently to the BCC upon completion; and that the document summarizing the concepts is not intended for public distribution; whereupon, he and Chair Long urged the members not to concentrate on particular verbiage, because it will be addressed in the complete guidelines, and Mr. Ramsberger

indicated that timing is of the essence due to the two-year cycle establishment and the approaching application date for the cycle started last year.

### CONSULTANT REPORT – JULY 2017 VISITOR PROFILE

Mr. Downing referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *July 2017 Visitor Profile* containing information compiled by Research Data Services, Inc. (RDS) and discussed various metrics. He highlighted year-to-date increases as compared to the previous year in overnight visitors (3.3 percent), economic impact (6.5 percent), and resort tax collections (7.5 percent), and pointed out that visitation from Latin America continues to grow disproportionately (19.2-percent increase); whereupon, he indicated that the Average Daily Rate (ADR) is up 4.3 percent, and Revenue Per Room (RevPAR) is up 4.5 percent.

Mr. Downing discussed room rates from January through July, a comparison of occupancies among Florida cities based on research by Smith Travel Research, Inc., and the July Visitor Profile, reporting that St. Petersburg – Clearwater is second in the state with regard to RevPAR; and that it is on track to break its own record for economic impact (up 6.6 percent from the previous year); whereupon, he referred to a 2016-2017 Comparative Tourist Development Tax report, indicating that bed tax collections are up 7.87 and 11.2 percent for July and year-to-date, respectively, noting that the VSPC’s objective to get the greatest economic footprint, rather than number of visitors, is paying off.

In response to query by Chair Long, Messrs. Kimball and Satterfield described Hurricane Irma’s impact on the hotel business, noting that substantial revenue loss due to three to four days of closures and a number of cancellations for several days following the hurricane was somewhat counteracted by rooms contracted to Duke Energy; and that the group bookings side of the business has recovered quickly. Mr. Kimball pointed out that unlike hotels along the beaches, inland hotels filled up during the hurricane, and Mr. Satterfield noted the importance of prompt public notification following the event by organizations such as VSPC and Visit Florida with regard to favorable local conditions.

Responding to query by Mayor Bevis regarding high RevPAR numbers along with continuing demand for rooms along Clearwater Beach, Mr. Downing indicated that 2,500 rooms were added in the last two and a half years, and Mr. Kimball provided background information relating to the development of larger hotels that began there ten years ago, replacing “mom-and-pop” businesses.

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER REPORT – VSPC EOC

Mr. Ramsberger reported that Chair Long and he joined a Tampa Bay delegation to Reykjavik, Iceland, where they met with representatives from Icelandair; and that a new service offering direct flights from Reykjavik to Tampa twice a week has been launched, creating tremendous marketing opportunities in Central Europe; whereupon, he congratulated Mr. Downing and the Tampa International Airport team on the success of the five-year effort to start the service.

Noting the great leadership of the BCC and the Pinellas County Sheriff at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during Hurricane Irma, Mr. Ramsberger recognized the VSPC team consisting of Leroy Bridges, Katie Bridges, Teri Tuxhorn, Marcus Oania, and Jeff Abbaticchio, who served at the EOC through the entire activation period. He indicated that Mr. Bridges led the effort as a communication conduit; and that all communication was reduced to one source, with a focus on transmitting information accurately rather than quickly, and Chair Long commended Mr. Bridges on his reliability and offered kudos to him and his team.

Mr. Bridges thanked the BCC for their leadership and foresight, noting that he was proud to be a part of the EOC effort. He discussed his team's functions, including finding alternate housing for the evacuees, damage assessment within the hotel community following the storm, and utilizing all social media platforms to communicate that the destination is returning to business as usual; whereupon, at the request of Mr. Downing, he presented videos from VSPC Facebook Live showing people enjoying the beach and fishing, noting that one video has had over 14,000 views.

Mayor Bevis related that the City of Oldsmar EOC, at which he was a participant, found great difficulty in dealing with misinformation on social media; and that it is important for the public to use reliable sources, such as the VSPC website. Mr. Bridges indicated that his team was monitoring and correcting misinformation on various social media; and that more content is being posted daily, and VSPC is ensuring a response to every question relating to how the area was affected. Mr. Kimball shared stories about people across the globe expressing concerns and showing care, and Mr. Downing related that Duke Energy representative Theresa Crane has expressed great appreciation of the EOC staff and the level of calm demeanor they have exhibited; whereupon, he commended Mr. Bridges and his team.

PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

Financial Statements – None

Miscellaneous

Mr. Downing provided an update regarding post-hurricane advertising, as well as future plans and events, as follows:

- A discussion was held with Visit Florida regarding best ways to move forward.
- The most effective digital outreach is in the form of real-time images of people enjoying the destination.
- All advertising suspended due to the crisis situation is being turned back on.
- The agency is finalizing plans to bring in disc jockeys from key markets to broadcast live from the destination.
- Positive feedback has been received from international tour operators in response to real-time images.
- Two one-hour morning meetings to provide a marketing plan update will take place in December, on Clearwater Beach and in St. Petersburg.
- A best-of awards show is planned for January with the release of the new magazine.
- International Officers Marion Wolf and Venessa Alexander will provide their reports and action plans for the coming year in October.
- He is flying to Spain on September 22 as part of a delegation that includes Tampa International Airport and Visit Tampa Bay to participate in a trade show for air service development opportunities.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES – NO PRESENTATIONS; REPORTS ON FILE

September 20, 2017

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT REPORTS – NO PRESENTATIONS; REPORTS ON FILE

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – NONE

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 A.M.