

**Tourist Development Council  
Pinellas County  
May 17, 2023 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 9:08 AM in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building, 333 Chestnut Street, Clearwater, Florida.

**Present**

Janet Long, Chair, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chair  
Russ Kimball, Vice-Chair, Sheraton Sand Key Resort  
Brian Aungst, Sr., City of Clearwater Mayor  
Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor  
Copley Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember  
Phil Henderson, Jr., Starlite Cruises  
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.  
Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn  
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry  
Clyde Smith, Bilmar Beach Resort  
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

**Others Present**

Steve Hayes, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO  
Katie Bridges, Senior Advertising Manager, VSPC  
Craig Campbell, Community and Brand Engagement Director, VSPC  
Lisa Dozois, Film Commissioner, VSPC  
Eddie Kirsch, Digital Producer, VSPC  
Rosemarie Payne, Leisure Travel Director, VSPC  
Caleb Peterson, Senior Business Development Manager, VSPC  
Hortensia Simmons, Senior Meetings & Conventions Sales Manager, VSPC  
Michael A. Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney  
Mackenzie Comerer, Vice President, Lou Hammond Group  
Katie Poviones, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk  
Other interested individuals

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Long called the meeting to order at 9:08 AM.

## **CHAIR COMMENTS – NONE**

## **APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES**

Ms. Moore made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Bujalski and carried unanimously, that the minutes of the April 19, 2023, meeting be approved.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS – NONE**

## **CAPITAL FUNDING REQUEST**

### Salvador Dali Museum Expansion Request

#### THE DALI MUSEUM

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *The Dali Museum Expansion Funding Request*, Salvador Dali Museum Executive Director Hank Hine discussed the museum's global recognition, its economic impact on the area, and the purpose of the funding request. He highlighted that the current request is for an expansion project that is different from that which the TDC recommended for funding in 2019; that parking enhancements included in the previous request were removed in favor of additional programmatic exhibition and convention space; and that the cost of the project has increased due to a modified scope and rising prices of materials and labor.

Salvador Dali Museum Building Task Force Chair Trevor Burgess elaborated on the project and the funding request, noting that the TDC approved \$17.5 million in capital funding or half the cost of the museum's expansion in 2019; and that today's funding request for \$16.5 million in addition to the previously-approved amount would equal half of the updated project cost of \$68 million. Thereupon, Marketing and Development Committee member Tim Bogott discussed the museum's contributions to tourism and Tourist Development Tax (TDT) generation, as well as the benefits that the expansion project could provide to the community and the County.

In response to queries by the members, Messrs. Hine, Burgess, and Bogott commented on the TDC's previous funding to the museum, parking solutions in downtown St. Petersburg, a proposed payout schedule, and other topics. The members discussed additional expected capital funding requests, and Chair Long suggested that the TDC and the BCC could tour the museum to get a better understanding of the proposed expansion without violating Sunshine Law requirements, and Mr. Burgess noted that construction is prepared to begin on the project; whereupon, Mr. Williams moved that the TDC

recommend the funding request to the BCC. The motion was seconded by Mayor Bujalski and carried unanimously.

## CROSSROADS CONSULTING LLC

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Dali Museum – Evaluation of Current Capital Projects Funding Request*, President and CEO of Crossroads Consulting Susan Sieger provided information regarding an evaluation conducted of the Salvador Dali Museum’s capital project funding request. She discussed the project’s background and purpose, development cost, proposed quarterly payout schedule, and projected impacts to museum attendees metrics, room nights, the local economy, TDT, and destination exposure; whereupon, she presented various metrics to guide the TDC in deciding the potential capital grant amount and indicated that the request is consistent with the priorities set forth in VSPC’s Strategic Plan. Responding to queries by Mr. Henderson, she provided clarifying comments regarding factors taken into consideration during the evaluation.

## DEPARTMENT UPDATES

### FY 2024 Budget Presentation

#### FY 24 REVENUE PROJECTIONS

Operating Budget Manager Jim Abernathy referred to a document titled *Tourist Development Council FY 2024 Budget* and presented the proposed budget, relating that the TDT revenue for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 has surpassed the projected amount of \$91 million and is estimated to reach approximately \$95.8 million; that the FY 2024 budget request is \$95.6 million, which is a 5% increase over FY 2023; and that each percent of TDT is projected to be worth approximately \$16 million.

#### CAPITAL PROJECT FUNDS UPDATE

Mr. Abernathy referred to page 16 of the Budget document and indicated that the only capital project currently committed for funding is the Florida Holocaust Museum through a reimbursement grant upon the project’s future completion; that while funding requests for projects associated with the Philadelphia Phillies, the St. Petersburg Historical Society, and the Salvador Dali Museum’s original request in 2019 were conceptually approved by the TDC and BCC, a formal agreement with the County will need to be approved prior to each project receiving funding; and that new potential funding requests will be added to the document on an ongoing basis.

In response to queries by the members, Mr. Abernathy provided clarifying comments regarding previously-funded projects referenced on the document and reserves for beach renourishment and the capital funding program, highlighting that approximately \$110 million is projected to be available in reserves for capital projects in FY 2024; and that no funds have been set aside for specific future projects. During discussion, Mayor Aungst noted that he will be meeting with the Philadelphia Phillies tonight to discuss their project; and that he expects the imminent funding request to exceed \$40 million due to the large scope and investment in the project.

## VSPC FY 2024 BUDGET REVIEW

### 1. Overall Summary

Mr. Hayes referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *St. Pete/Clearwater FY 2024 Budget* and provided an overview of VSPC's vision, mission, strategic direction, and information to remember going into FY 2024. Thereupon, he presented VSPC's expenses by area and department, noting that the FY24 budget request is \$41.1 million; and that of the budgeted funds, 79% goes towards marketing, 18% is dedicated to business development, and 3% is associated with community engagement.

### 2. Advertising & Promotions

Ms. Bridges referred to pages 25 through 33 of the Budget document and to the PowerPoint and presented information regarding the following:

- FY 2023 Highlights
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- Top Priorities for Continued Success

Responding to queries by Mayor Bujalski, Mr. Hayes provided clarifying comments regarding employment vacancies for senior positions at VSPC, improvements to internal communications, and the organization's long-term strategic direction; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding the prioritization of filling vacant senior positions and pay classifications for the vacancies, and Mr. Hayes noted that he would provide status updates for the vacant senior positions at the June TDC meeting. In response to a query by Mr. Smith, Ms. Bridges discussed opportunities for advertising and promotions if the Department's budget was increased.

### 3. Digital & Data

Mr. Kirsch referred to pages 34 through 46 of the Budget document and to the PowerPoint and presented information regarding the following:

- Elements for Success
- Key Figures and Indicators
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- Budget Notes

Responding to queries by Mr. Smith and Mayor Bujalski, Mr. Kirsch discussed growth opportunities and the impact of a vacant position in the Department, with input from Mr. Hayes.

*The meeting was recessed at 12:01 PM and reconvened at 12:52 PM.*

#### 4. Communications

Ms. Comerer referred to pages 47 through 57 of the Budget document and to the PowerPoint and presented information regarding the following:

- Key Figures
- Storytelling Successes
- Top Priorities
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

In response to queries by Mr. Henderson and Mayor Bujalski, Ms. Comerer provided clarifying comments regarding year-to-year changes in total impressions, the Department's weaknesses, and other topics.

#### 5. Film Commission

Ms. Dozois referred to pages 58 through 71 of the Budget document and to the PowerPoint and presented information regarding the following:

- FY23 Highlights
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- Priorities
- Goals Moving Forward

Responding to queries by Mr. Kimball and Mr. Williams, Ms. Dozois discussed the County's film incentive program in relation to those of other counties and Departmental priorities.

#### 6. Global Travel

Ms. Payne noted that the newly-formed Global Travel Department combines leisure travel sales and marketing initiatives across all domestic and international markets; whereupon,

she referred to pages 72 through 104 of the Budget document and to the PowerPoint presentation and presented information regarding the following:

- Global Travel
- Continued Success
- Strengths & Opportunities
- Priorities Moving Forward

Ms. Payne introduced Kaus Media Services Director of Public Relations Steffen Hager and Rooster Sales & Marketing Director Jayne Brooke as VSPC's public relations and marketing partners in Central Europe and the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Scandinavia, respectively. Thereupon, Mr. Hager and Ms. Brooke discussed promotional highlights in their destinations, strengths and opportunities, and priorities moving forward. In response to queries by the members, Mr. Hager and Ms. Brooke and Payne elaborated on partnerships with international airlines, airlines considering adding direct flights to the destination, comparing today's international travel trends to pre-pandemic levels, and other topics, and Ms. Comerer and Mr. Hayes provided input.

#### 7. Meetings & Conferences

Ms. Simmons referred to pages 105 through 120 of the Budget document and to the PowerPoint presentation and presented information regarding the following, with input from Mr. Hayes:

- Meetings Highlights
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- Pace Reports
- Priorities Moving Forward

Responding to queries by the members, Ms. Simmons discussed strategies to deliver the aforementioned priorities, in-market competition, and the Department's incentive program, with input from Mr. Hayes.

#### 8. Sports & Events

Mr. Peterson referred to pages 121 through 134 of the Budget document and to the PowerPoint presentation and presented information regarding the following:

- Highlights
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- New & Exciting Events & Championships
- Top Priorities

In response to queries by Mr. Henderson and Mayor Bujalski, Mr. Hayes provided clarifying comments regarding progress on the ToyTown study, and Mr. Peterson elaborated on the rising popularity of pickleball and growth opportunities for sports complexes in Pinellas County.

*Mayor Aungst left the meeting at 2:43 PM.*

## 9. Community & Brand Engagement

Mr. Campbell referred to pages 139 through 158 of the Budget document and to the PowerPoint presentation and presented information regarding the following:

- FY23 Highlights
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- Priorities Moving Forward

Responding to a query by Mr. Smith, Mr. Campbell discussed new promotional asset opportunities; whereupon, he introduced Oliver Kugler as the new Community Relations Manager for VSPC.

### Department Reports

The item was not discussed.

## **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS**

Mr. Hayes provided closing remarks on the budget presentation, indicating that feedback provided by the members during the meeting will be taken into consideration as the budget continues to be refined; that next steps in the budget process include a BCC budget information session in June prior to the County Administrator's presentation of the complete budget in July and public hearings in September; and that while he will keep the members updated on any changes made to VSPC's budget, they are welcome to speak with him regarding any questions or comments they may have about the budget.

In response to a query from Mr. Henderson, Chair Long provided an update on discussions with the Army Corps of Engineers regarding beach renourishment, noting that the BCC will be having a policy discussion related to the possibility of the County having to fully fund renourishment activities; and that she will be joined by County staff in an upcoming trip to Washington, D.C. to meet with the Army Corps for further discussion. Mr. Henderson stressed the importance of preparing for increased costs associated with beach renourishment and made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Bujalski, that

the FY24 budget reflect three-fourths of a TDT percent going towards beach renourishment instead of the half of a percent.

Responding to queries by Mr. Kimball and Mr. Williams, Attorney Zas provided clarifying comments regarding the proposed motion, indicating that the TDC has the authority to recommend an increase to the beach renourishment allocation to the BCC; and that the additional quarter of a TDT percent would equate to approximately \$4 million; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding the significance of beach preservation. Upon call for the vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Messrs. Kimball and Henderson remarked on surplus dollars available in the budget and suggested for those funds to be utilized to address challenges mentioned by staff during the department presentations. Mr. Hayes noted that some of the surplus funds are dedicated to decision packages which were not presented to the members, as they have not yet been approved. Thereupon, Chair Long encouraged the members to be patient, as County staff finalizes the budget prior to making any decisions, noting that the TDC could vote to recommend the budget to the BCC in June or July.

Mayor Bujalski emphasized that Mr. Hayes should take the feedback offered by the members on the budget into consideration during his presentation to the BCC, and Mr. Henderson commented on the importance of differentiating visitors who visit for the day versus those who stay overnight in future budget documents.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 PM.