

**Tourist Development Council  
Pinellas County  
January 18, 2023**

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 9:10 AM in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building, 333 Chestnut Street, Clearwater, Florida.

**Present**

Janet C. Long, Chair, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chair  
Russ Kimball, Vice-Chair, Sheraton Sand Key Resort  
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.  
Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn  
Clyde Smith, Bilmar Beach Resort  
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

**Not Present**

Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor  
Copley Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember  
Frank Hibbard, City of Clearwater Mayor  
Phil Henderson, Jr., Starlite Cruises  
Melinda Pletcher, City of St. Pete Beach Commissioner  
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry

**Others Present**

Steve Hayes, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO  
Katie Bridges, Senior Advertising Manager  
Rosemarie Payne, Leisure Travel Director  
Michael A. Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney  
Katie Poviones, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk  
Other interested individuals

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Long called the meeting to order at 9:10 AM.

**CHAIR COMMENTS**

Chair Long provided introductory comments regarding her priorities as Chair of the TDC for the upcoming year.

## **MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 21, 2022 MEETING REGULAR MEETING**

Chair Long suggested to move the approval of the minutes to the TDC's next meeting in the absence of a quorum at today's meeting; whereupon, Mr. Kimball made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Williams and carried unanimously, to defer the approval of the December 21 meeting minutes to the following TDC meeting.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS – NONE**

### **INDUSTRY PRESENTATION**

#### St. Pete/Clearwater International Airport (PIE) Presentation

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Tourism Development Council, January 18, 2023*, the Airport's Director of Air Service Development and Marketing Jeff Clauss provided updates regarding the past year including information regarding PIE's growth, top markets, and concessions revenue increases. He highlighted that PIE had eight record-breaking months culminating in a new all-time record for passenger traffic with 2,445,919 people flying in or out of the airport in 2022; that two new flight locations were added for a total of 63 nonstop destinations; and that industry-wide workforce shortages continue to pose a challenge for flight capacities.

Thereupon, Mr. Clauss introduced the President of Starmark International Jacqui Hartnett and she provided an overview of PIE's marketing initiatives and accomplishments in 2022. She emphasized that PIE received the highest award in the category of creativity in public relations at the Flagler Awards presented by VISIT FLORIDA at the annual Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism; and that marketing initiatives administered via Facebook and Fox 13 News delivered impressions and click-through rates that were two to five times higher than industry averages.

In response to queries by the members, Mr. Clauss discussed strategies for expanding PIE's destination and airline options, construction updates, a recent collaboration with Creative Pinellas to add a mural to one of PIE's gate areas, and other topics.

### **DEPARTMENT UPDATES**

#### Advertising Updates

Ms. Bridges provided introductory comments and introduced BVK Vice President Carmen Boyce; whereupon, Ms. Boyce referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *FY 21-22 BVK Media Recap* and provided an overview of VSPC's media strategy, markets, and

audiences, and discussed highlights of the last year's advertising accomplishments. She elaborated on results in print, out-of-home, and broadcast media as well as outcomes from activations and collaborations with Adventure Cities, influencers, and local news stations. She emphasized the following accomplishments of VSPC's Fall – Winter 2021/22 campaign:

- The campaign had significant positive impacts on intent to travel (especially among niche audiences), overall awareness, and visitor spending.
- Total economic impact and taxes generated by the campaign increased 13% and 15%, respectively.
- The campaign garnered an estimated return on investment of 36:1 and maximized annual media purchases by delivering \$8.48 million in added value.

During discussion, Ms. Boyce noted that the data and results presented were obtained from Destination Analysts' recent Ad Effectiveness Study; and that the annual goals set for advertising were exceeded, with 1.91 billion impressions and \$18.01 million in media value. Responding to queries by the members, Ms. Boyce provided information regarding marketing directed towards art tourists and marketing plans for target markets, with input from Ms. Bridges and Mr. Hayes.

### Global Travel Update

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Leisure Travel International Update*, Ms. Payne provided an overview of the Department and its international support functions. She introduced the account teams for the United Kingdom, Central Europe, and Canada and discussed key accomplishments in each market; whereupon, she elaborated on post-pandemic changes to leisure travel.

### Department Reports

The item was not addressed.

## **VSPC PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT**

### Destination Metrics

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Pinellas County Tourist Development Council Meeting*, Mr. Hayes reviewed the November 2022 statistical data regarding tourist development tax (TDT) collections, including hotel and vacation rental occupancy, average daily rates, and visitor profile metrics. He highlighted that the number of rooms

per municipality was added to the presentation following a request at the previous TDC meeting; that there was an increase in first-time and international visitors, as well as in the mean number of days and nights spent in the destination; and that the average time between the decision to visit and arrival day rose 86% from 44 days to 82, which may prompt a shift in timing for messaging if the trend endures.

During discussion and in response to queries by the members, Mr. Hayes provided clarifying comments regarding how vacation rental metrics are tracked, the agenda for the upcoming joint TDC/BCC meeting, the return of meetings and conventions, and the Latin America and Middle East travel markets. Upon request by Chair Long, Mr. Hayes noted that he would schedule a beach renourishment update for a future TDC meeting.

#### Joint BCC/TDC Meeting Reschedule

Mr. Hayes related that the meeting was rescheduled to February 28 and will take place at the Sheraton Sand Key Resort.

#### 2023 TDC Meeting Schedule

Mr. Hayes indicated that the meeting schedule has been finalized; that the June meeting date was moved to the 28th to avoid conflicting with BCC Budget Information Sessions; and that the May 17 meeting will include the annual budget presentation.

#### Employee Recognition

Mr. Hayes recognized Tracey Nix for her five-year anniversary of employment with VSPC and discussed her background; whereupon, he provided an update on VSPC's current employment vacancies and explained that there are nine open positions in various stages of the hiring process. In response to queries by the members, Mr. Hayes provided clarifying comments and noted that the vacant senior sales and marketing positions were updated to reflect their new duties; and that the positions will be advertised in the next 45 days and filled approximately 60 days after that; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding the importance of hiring for those positions as soon as possible.

Thereupon, County Administrator Barry Burton appeared and provided information regarding the hiring timeline for the senior positions and a backlog in positions that need to be reclassified by Human Resources.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:01 AM.