

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

September 18, 2019

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:

Karen Williams Seel, BCC Chair, Chair  
Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor  
George Cretekos, City of Clearwater Mayor  
Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises  
Joanne “Cookie” Kennedy, City of Indian Rocks Beach Mayor  
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.  
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry  
Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites

Not Present

Russ Kimball, Sheraton Sand Key Resort, Vice-Chair  
Charlie Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember  
Keith Overton, TradeWinds Island Resorts  
Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn

Others Present

Paul Sacco, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) Interim 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 Karen Seel
- II. CHAIR COMMENTS
- III. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES – August 21, 2019 TDC Meeting
- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS
- V. COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORT – Michael A. Zas

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- VI. PRESENTATIONS
  - A. VISIT TAMPA BAY – Santiago Corrada, President & CEO
- VII. DEPARTMENT REPORTS
  - A. Latin America – Ana Fernandez, Director
  - B. Brazil – Andrea Gabel, Senior Sales Manager
- VIII. CAPITAL PROJECT FUNDING PROGRAM REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION – Tim Ramsberger, COO
- IX. VSPC INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT – Paul Sacco
  - A. Tourism Economics Snapshot – July 2019
  - B. Pinellas County Bed Tax – July 2019
- X. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS
- XI. 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 Seel called the meeting to order at 9:02 A.M. At her request, those in attendance introduced themselves.

#### CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Seel asked for a moment of silence in memory of Senior Meetings and Conventions Sales Manager Jeanine Messerschmidt.

#### MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 21, 2019 MEETING – APPROVED

Upon motion by Mayor Kennedy, seconded by Ms. Moore and carried unanimously, the minutes of the August 21, 2019 meeting were approved.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT - NONE

#### COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORT – NONE

## PRESENTATIONS

### Visit Tampa Bay

Visit Tampa Bay (VTB) President and CEO Santiago Corrada conducted a PowerPoint presentation, provided background information on the organization, and noted that it is a not-for-profit noncharitable organization under contract with Hillsborough County and the City of Tampa to market tourism in the county and promote the Tampa Convention Center.

Mr. Corrada provided a breakdown of VTB spending and related that VTB is primarily funded by Hillsborough County Tourist Development Tax revenue with some additional private funding; that in the past year, it received approximately \$13 million of the nearly \$34 million collected tax revenue, which was based on a five percent collection rate; and that the rate was recently raised to six percent, increasing VTB's expected allocation of tax revenue to around \$15 million of an \$18 to \$19 million annual operating budget.

Referring to Smith Travel Research statistics, Mr. Corrada reviewed occupancy, average daily room rates, and revenue per available room within Hillsborough County, noting that all statistics have steadily improved since 2013 and have continued to rise in the first half of 2019. He related that as a result of steady growth, investments in new hotel properties will help to create a net increase of over 3,000 available rooms over the next few years.

Mr. Corrada related that the majority of visitors to Hillsborough County are from the United States; and that visitors collectively spend over \$4.2 billion annually and sustain over 53,000 jobs in the community; whereupon, he provided statistics on visitor spending and discussed incentivizing airlines to develop more direct international flights into the area, working with VSPC and other partners to ensure the flights would be successful.

Referring to the Tampa Convention Center, Mr. Corrada noted that VTB has a convention sales team working to bring a variety of events to the area, highlighting the Church of God and Christ International Auxiliaries in Ministry (AIM) Convention recently held at the Center, which attracted over 10,000 attendees over the Fourth of July weekend.

Mr. Corrada provided examples of Visit Tampa Bay's current marketing campaign, *Florida's Most*, and discussed the culture, history, and diversity of the area; whereupon, he distributed results of a study highlighting the value of tourism to Hillsborough County residents.

In response to query by Chair Seel, Mr. Corrada stated that the Convention Center's impact on Bed Tax revenue can vary depending on the time of year; and that revenue was up 11 percent in July, which he attributed mainly to the AIM Convention and a few smaller events that followed.

## DEPARTMENT REPORTS

### Latin America

VSPC Latin America Director Ana Fernandez conducted a PowerPoint presentation and provided statistics on the number of Latin American visitors coming to Florida and Pinellas County from different countries, reporting that South America as a whole is the third-highest provider of tourism in Florida; and that the number of Latin American visitors has increased every year since 2013.

Ms. Fernandez discussed VSPC partnering with other area destination marketing organizations to introduce the West Coast of Florida as a key travel stop, noting that they work with tour operators, airlines, media, and travel agents through education, presentations, and familiarization tours that help showcase the diversity of the area; whereupon, she provided highlights of VSPC participation in events organized by Bedsonline, Hotelbeds, and other leaders in the industry.

Referring to current and upcoming promotions, Ms. Fernandez showed photographs of various campaigns and related that a radio promotion will run through October on 21 stations throughout Argentina and will include a sweepstake to give away a trip for two to St. Petersburg/Clearwater.

In response to query by Mayor Cretokos, Ms. Fernandez explained that Spain is included in Latin American campaigns as it has similar patterns and interests; that Spain has a very different culture than most other European countries; and that it makes sense to create Spanish materials and programs that can be used in both markets.

### Brazil

VSPC Senior Sales Manager, Brazil, Andrea Gabel conducted a PowerPoint presentation, provided information on her responsibilities, and discussed the population of Brazil and its place in the top six international markets in attracting visitors to Pinellas County; whereupon, she highlighted the following activities:

- Partnered with Tampa International Airport to discuss Brazil-Tampa Bay Market opportunities with Azul Airlines and its tour operator, Azul Viagens.

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- Met with over 150 Brazilian corporate clients at the Global Tampa Bay Trade Mission in Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- Partnered with Visit Florida in marketing campaigns targeting Tour Operators and Online Travel Agents, working with tour operators to create destination packages, and reaching 820,000 potential visitors and over 3,000 agents through various campaigns.
- Maintained a constant presence in Brazil's major trade shows, such as Festivus de Turismo de JPA, Festuris Trade Show, and World Travel Market-Latin America.
- Promoted St. Pete/Clearwater destinations to industry professionals through familiarization trips and media visits, including tour operators Trend, Flytour MMT Gapnet, and Florida Huddle Brazil, as well as several digital content influencers and other media.

Ms. Gabel reported that in October, VSPC will be participating in the USA Day Workshop with Orinter Tour and Travel, and take part in welcoming Copa Airlines in partnership with Visit Tampa Bay; that in November, she will be attending the 2019 Festuris Trade Show in south Brazil; and that she will collaborate on the Visit Florida Brazil Roadshow in December.

#### CAPITAL PROJECT FUNDING PROGRAM REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION

VSPC Chief Operating Officer Tim Ramsberger referred to project scoring results from the TDC workshop held in August and noted that each of three applicants (Tampa Bay Watch, St. Petersburg Museum of History, and Dali Museum) attained the required minimum score of 700; and that a recommendation from the TDC is now required to move the applications forward to the BCC for approval; whereupon, Chair Seel related that negotiations will take place, and up-to funding amounts have been approved; and that in reference to the Dali Museum application, which is requesting funds for both the museum and a parking structure, her preference would be to fund the museum portion as much as possible and minimize funding for parking, and several members concurred.

Following discussion, Ms. Moore moved, seconded by Mayor Bujalski and carried unanimously, that the TDC recommend approval of the three projects to the BCC, and upon BCC approval, staff negotiate final agreements which would accommodate the members' desire to limit funding for parking structures.

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## VSPC INTERIM PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT

### Tourism Economics Snapshot and Pinellas County Bed Tax – July 2019

Mr. Sacco referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Tourism Economics Snapshot, September TDC Meeting*, and reviewed the July 2019 market comparison and year-to-date data for rooms sold, average daily rate, and revenue per available room, noting that rooms sold in July dropped 0.5 percent when compared to the previous year; and that last year's red tide incident and this year's bad weather may have contributed to a smaller increase overall in July.

Responding to queries by the members, Mr. Sacco indicated that local marketing is increased during the slower summer months and into the fall quarter, and VSPC Senior Advertising Manager Katie Bridges provided information on campaigns that started in late spring for the summer season.

Mr. Sacco presented financial and statistical information regarding the increase in Bed Tax revenue, remarking that it continues to grow and remain strong; whereupon, Chair Seel indicated that it remains on a trajectory to exceed \$60 million for the year.

## MEMBER COMMENTS

Mr. Satterfield reported that the staff has provided detailed information addressing his concerns from last month regarding the Visitors Guide.

## ADJOURNMENT

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