

**Tourist Development Council
Pinellas County
March 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

The Pinellas County Tourist Development Council (TDC) met in regular session as created under Pinellas County Ordinance 78-20 pursuant to Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, at 9:04 AM on this date at the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension Magnolia Room, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, Florida.

Present

Dave Eggers, Chair, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chair
Russ Kimball, Vice-Chair, Sheraton Sand Key Resort
Phil Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises
Frank Hibbard, City of Clearwater Mayor
Rick Kriseman, City of St. Petersburg Mayor
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.
Melinda Pletcher, City of St. Pete Beach Commissioner
Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry
Anthony Satterfield, Alden Suites
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

Not Present

Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor

Others Present

Steve Hayes, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO
Tim Ramsberger, VSPC Chief Operating Officer
Liz McCann, VSPC Executive Administrative Assistant
Michael Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney
Amelia Hanks, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk
Other interested individuals

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chair Eggers called the meeting to order at 9:04 AM.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Eggers acknowledged that March 17 is St. Patrick's Day; and that Mayor Bujalski would not be in attendance.

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 17, 2021 REGULAR MEETING

Upon motion by Ms. Moore, seconded by Mr. Satterfield and carried unanimously, the minutes of the February 17 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – NONE.

TOURISM INDUSTRY UPDATES

Visit Florida

Mr. Hayes introduced Visit Florida's Regional Partnership Manager Jen Carlisle and she conducted a PowerPoint Presentation titled *Florida Tourism Update March 17, 2021*, providing an overview of the money that tourism brought to Florida before and after the pandemic, and the positive impact of various Visit Florida marketing campaigns. She related the following information:

- The tourism industry is improving as travel picks up again
- As travel restrictions decrease, campaigns will be targeted at international tourists
- International Marketing conference *Florida Huddle* brought tourism directly to Pinellas County
- There is legislation currently in the Florida House and Senate regarding the removal of Visit Florida's sunset provision
- Governor Ron DeSantis has promised an additional \$50 million to Visit Florida's existing budget

In response to queries by the members, Ms. Carlisle indicated that the legislation moving forward seems favorable to Visit Florida; that she would identify the individuals who are not in support of removing the sunset provision and forward the names to the board members; that the *Wanderlust: Florida* campaign in Canada was not named after the jazz show held in Pinellas County; that Visit Florida does not have immediate budget plans for any additional funds provided by the State; and that Visit Florida is focused on projecting the correct message to the media regarding Spring Break vacationers on local beaches.

MARKETING UPDATES

Rise to Shine Update

Senior Advertising Manager Katie Bridges presented a PowerPoint presentation titled *Rise to Shine Spring Safety Update*, indicating that the Rise to Shine street team is providing rewards to tourists and residents for following the Rise to Shine pledge of masking up, spreading out, washing your hands, and being patient and kind; that there is

messaging in various media covering the Rise to Shine pledge; that there will be a concentration of the street team in popular spots for Spring Break; and that there has been national and local media coverage of Rise to Shine.

Responding to a query by Chair Eggers, Ms. Bridges clarified that families, as well as college-aged students, are responding to marketing campaigns to travel, and Mr. Hayes and Mayor Hibbard provided input.

Digital and Communications Update

Vice-President, Digital and Communications, Leroy Bridges referred to a PowerPoint presentation and provided updates from the department, starting with the media coverage that has helped the County due to large events in the area since the start of 2021, such as Super Bowl LV. He noted that there has been an increase in local, regional, and national media exposure since October 1, 2020; and that VSPC has partnered with Visit Florida for digital opportunities.

Research Supporting Summer/Fall Timing and Messaging

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Research Supporting Summer/Fall Marketing*, Mr. Bridges reviewed various data trends and marketing efforts in the past year, relating that staff is beginning to frame the foundation of how they will be spending money on summer and fall marketing going forward; that there is an upcoming window of marketing opportunity; and that there is a delay of about three months between a campaign and people who witnessed the campaign visiting the County.

In response to a query by Chair Eggers, Mr. Bridges indicated that the exposure time between a campaign and the arrival of tourists has widened more than in previous years; whereupon, he noted that should the forecasted data follow the trend of 2019, marketing data will show a bump in occupancy and tourism as the summer progresses.

Mr. Kimball provided input regarding an increase in large group reservations booked with hotels in the County, several members concurred, and discussion ensued.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

FY 2022 Elite Events Process and Guidelines

Mr. Ramsberger reviewed the report requested by the members at the previous meeting regarding the performance of Elite Events over the past few years; whereupon, he indicated that there are no events that have been disqualified from the category for Fiscal Year 2022.

In response to queries by the members, Mr. Ramsberger related that despite COVID-related limitations on attendance this year, Elite Events could still receive the full amount of requested funding; that staff would determine an event's category based on the project's projected funding level; and that staff has successfully negotiated a funding agreement for every event upon BCC approval.

Discussion ensued and upon motion by Mayor Hibbard, seconded by Mayor Kriseman and carried unanimously, the Fiscal Year 2022 Elite Events processes and guidelines were approved.

Large Scale Special Events Report

Mr. Ramsberger reviewed the Large Scale Special Events report and indicated that the County must approve events with projected attendance larger than 1,000 people to ensure proper COVID-19 protocols, and Mayor Kriseman provided input.

In response to a request from Mr. Henderson, Mr. Ramsberger related that staff can provide a Destination Analysis report; and that attendance is self-reported by organizers of the event. Discussion ensued and in response to queries by the members, Mr. Ramsberger clarified that the St. Petersburg Pride event requested \$45,000 in its original application despite high attendance numbers, and Assistant County Administrator Kevin Knutson confirmed that County staff has reached out to all municipalities to explain how to work with the County regarding large scale events.

Department Reports

All VSPC department reports are available online at partners.visitstpeteclearwater.com.

VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT

TDC Bylaws

Attorney Zas presented the new TDC bylaws. In response to a query by Mr. Henderson, Attorney Zas indicated that regardless of the circumstances, a newly-appointed member would serve a full four-year term; whereupon, Mr. Satterfield expressed concern that the bylaws can be interpreted to show that the County Commissioners do not need a cause to terminate a board member, and discussion ensued.

Upon call by Chair Eggers, Mr. Williams moved, seconded by Mr. Prather and carried unanimously, that the bylaws be approved.

Key Destination Metrics

Mr. Hayes referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Tourism Economic Snapshot March 2021 TDC meeting* and reviewed all of the metrics used to measure the success of tourism in the County during January 2021; whereupon, he indicated that people in Generation X are the majority of those traveling to the County; that VSPC will continue to utilize media connections regarding tourism opportunities in the community; and that the next TDC meeting will be a budget workshop on April 21.

Responding to queries by Messrs. Prather and Henderson, Office of Management and Budget Analyst Jim Abernathy clarified that a \$54.7 million budget is projected for the current fiscal year; that adjustments are made throughout the year to reflect actual performance; and that the VSPC currently uses a modified accrual accounting method.

Discussion ensued, and Mr. Hayes related that the U.S. Travel Association's Board of Directors met recently in Tampa; whereupon, he discussed information from the meeting relating to travel across the United States.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – NONE.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 AM.