

Tourist Development Council
Pinellas County
December 21, 2022

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 9:06 AM in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building, 333 Chestnut Street, Clearwater, Florida.

Present

Charlie Justice, Chairman, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chairman
Russ Kimball, Vice-Chairman, Sheraton Sand Key Resort
Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor (late arrival)
Frank Hibbard, City of Clearwater Mayor
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.
Melinda Pletcher, City of St. Pete Beach Commissioner (late arrival)
Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry
Clyde Smith, Bilmar Beach Resort (late arrival)
Kenneth T. Welch, City of St. Petersburg Mayor
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

Not Present

Phil Henderson, Jr., Starlite Cruises

Others Present

Steve Hayes, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO
Katie Bridges, Senior Advertising Manager
Craig Campbell, Sports and Events Interim Director, Community and Brand Engagement Director
Eddie Kirsch, Digital Producer
Rosemarie Payne, Leisure Travel Director
Michael A. Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney
Katie Poviones, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk
Other interested individuals

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Justice called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM.

CHAIR COMMENTS – NONE

APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES

Mayor Hibbard made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Kimball and carried unanimously, that the minutes of the October 26, 2022, meeting be approved.

Reporter note: the September 21, 2022 meeting minutes referenced in the meeting agenda were previously approved at the October 26 TDC meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – NONE

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Ms. Pletcher and Mr. Smith arrived at 9:08 AM and 9:09 AM, respectively.

Advertising Updates

Mr. Hayes related that several departments will present updates and plans for the coming months in anticipation of increased visitation to the destination during the winter; whereupon, referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Winter Marketing Campaign Update*, Ms. Bridges provided information regarding the following topics:

- New and ongoing initiatives in VSPC's geographic markets and out of home media
- Print advertisements featuring the 'Let's Shine' brand campaign messaging
- Promotion of the destination via the televised golf tournament 'The Match'
- Collaboration with golf social media influencer Carolina Romero
- Positive reader satisfaction for Gulf to Bay magazine and planning for its new edition

Mayor Bujalski arrived at 9:16 AM.

In response to queries by the members, Ms. Bridges provided clarifying comments and elaborated on out-of-home media in digital electric vehicle charging stations and gas station television. Upon request by Mr. Hayes, she discussed VSPC's sponsorship of and participation in the New York Travel & Adventure Show taking place in January.

Thereupon, referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Visit St. Pete/Clearwater Co-op Marketing Plan 2022/2023*, Mr. Kirsch provided an overview of VSPC's 2023 Cooperative Advertising Program and its ad details, display ads, and ad opportunities in meetings dedicated programs and the VISIT FLORIDA Vacation Guide. He highlighted that there were 58 unique ad opportunities as part of 83 available advertisement spots; and that 14 partners submitted applications for a total potential investment of \$140,000.

Responding to queries by the members, Mr. Kirsch, with input from Mr. Hayes, provided clarifying comments regarding partner participation, unsold ads, and geographic diversity of advertisements. He indicated that the number of participants remained steady from previous years; and that while VSPC uses Twitter to share information, it does not use it to advertise.

Europe/UK Market Update

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Europe/UK Market Update*, Ms. Payne provided information regarding leisure travel sales initiatives in Europe and the United Kingdom including international partnerships, familiarization (FAM) educational visits, and future events. She emphasized that the Leisure Travel department hosted over 140 travel advisors, industry media, and other very important guests (VIP) on FAM trips in November and December; and that she will present a more comprehensive update on these and other programs implemented by the Department at the January TDC meeting.

In response to queries by the members, Ms. Payne, with input from Mr. Hayes, discussed international marketing initiatives and other topics, highlighting that she will elaborate on post-pandemic market strategies in Europe at the January TDC meeting; that VSPC recently collaborated with Visit Tampa Bay on an activation in Germany in conjunction with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers game in Frankfurt; and that during the activation, Mr. Hayes and Chairman Justice were able to meet with clients and VIP customers to talk about the destination; whereupon, Chairman Justice and Mr. Hayes elaborated on their experience and takeaways from discussions with clients.

Sports & Events Update

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Sports & Events FY22 Recap*, Mr. Campbell compared sports and events metrics from Fiscal Year (FY) 19 to FY 22, noting that there were improvements across the board, including in the areas of the number of events hosted, room nights and bed tax generated, and economic impact. He provided an overview of the metrics of individual sports and events and highlighted that softball, baseball, and aquatics continue to be the top market segments in the county; that the running/challenge, basketball, and volleyball segments are growing significantly; and that there is room for improvement in the baseball, bowling, and cycling segments.

Responding to queries by the members, Mr. Campbell provided clarifying comments and indicated that a facility in the county with 10 or more rectangle fields to accommodate large tournaments would enable growth in the field sports segment; and that pickleball presents significant potential as a future market segment. In response to a query by Mr. Prather, Mr. Hayes related that the budget process begins in January, at which point

funding for sports and events will be reviewed to determine whether adjustments are necessary, and Chairman Justice noted that there is always an opportunity for budget amendments if deemed advisory by the TDC and approved by the BCC.

Thereupon, Mr. Campbell introduced Sports & Events Department staff and acknowledged their excellent work.

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 September and October 2022 statistical data regarding tourist development tax (TDT) collections, including hotel and vacation rental occupancy, and average daily rates. He related that \$95.2 million in TDT was collected during FY 22, which is a 30% increase over FY 21; that the increase in inland hotel occupancy during October was likely due to Hurricane Ian evacuations; and that new data from Smith Travel Research (STR) will soon allow metrics for the destination to be compared to those of other markets.

In response to a query by Ms. Moore, Mr. Hayes indicated that staff is currently developing a webinar to inform and invite more vacation rental companies to share their metrics via discounted participation in a co-op program; and that Destination Analysts will make a presentation at the January TDC meeting providing an overview of FY 22 metrics and the latest quarterly report; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding recent trends in hotel occupancy and daily rates.

Joint BCC/TDC Meeting Reschedule

Deviating from the agenda, Mr. Hayes explained that the joint BCC/TDC meeting set to take place in November was postponed due to Hurricane Nicole; and that Assistant County Administrator Kevin Knutson is working on rescheduling the meeting to a date in February.

2023 TDC Meetings

Mr. Hayes related that the members should have received a draft schedule for the TDC's 2023 meetings. Thereupon, he provided clarifying comments regarding dates for select meetings that may need to be changed due to scheduling conflicts.

VSPC Staffing Update

Mr. Hayes provided an update on VSPC's current employment vacancies and recent hires, highlighting that four positions have been filled since November; that two positions are currently being advertised; that the details of four positions are being finalized; and that he recently met with Workforce Relations regarding the Chief Marketing Officer and Vice President of Sales positions; whereupon, he thanked staff for their willingness to adapt and assist in accomplishing tasks while positions are being filled.

Outgoing TDC Member Recognition

Chairman Justice related that Mayor Welch has resigned his position on the TDC and is delegating someone else to take his place; whereupon, he thanked the Mayor for his service on the Board and his advocacy for his community and the arts, and presented him with a plaque expressing the gratitude of the TDC members and VSPC staff. Mayor Welch provided brief comments, noting that St. Petersburg City Councilmember Copley Gerdes will replace him on the Board.

Earlier in the meeting, Mr. Kimball thanked the outgoing Chairman for his great leadership and efforts to represent tourism-related interests to the BCC, and presented him with a plaque expressing the gratitude of the TDC and VSPC for his service. Chairman Justice thanked the members and staff for the important work that they do.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS

Ms. Moore thanked staff for their hard work this year and discussed the importance of continuously renovating and beautifying the destination.

Mayor Hibbard thanked staff for their work this year and spoke about an upcoming event.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:02 AM.