

PINELLAS COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

December 16, 2020

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 Pinellas County Cooperative Extension Magnolia Room, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, Florida, on this date at 9:06 A.M. with the following members present:

Pat Gerard, Chair, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chair

Russ Kimball, Vice-Chair, Sheraton Sand Key Resort

Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor

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 (late arrival)

Others Present

Steve Hayes, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO

Tim Ramsberger, Chief Operating Officer

Katie Bridges, Senior Advertising Manager

Leroy Bridges, Vice-President, Digital & Communications

Suzanne Hackman, Vice-President, Business Development

Liz McCann, Executive Administrative Assistant

Teri Tuxhorn, Administrative Director

James Abernathy, Budget and Financial Management Analyst, Office of Management and Budget

Michael Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney

Other Interested Individuals

Amelia Hanks, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Agenda

- I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL – Chair Pat Gerard
- II. CHAIR COMMENTS – Chair Pat Gerard
- III. APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES – November 18, 2020

- IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS
- V. FINANCE UPDATES
  - a) Approval of Finance Subcommittee Minutes from 10-21-2020
  - b) Latest Financial Report – Steve Hayes
  - c) Capital Funds Program – Jim Abernathy
- VI. DEPARTMENT UPDATES
  - a) Digital & Communications: Leroy Bridges
  - b) Advertising: Katie Bridges
  - c) DEPARTMENT REPORTS
- VII. VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT – Steve Hayes
  - a) Tourism Strategic Plan Discussion
  - b) Economic Snapshot
- VIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS
- IX. ADJOURNMENT

All documents and presentations provided to the Clerk’s Office have been made a part of the record.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Noting that Chair Gerard is running late, Vice-Chair Kimball called the meeting to order at 9:06 A.M. and welcomed the incoming Chair, Commissioner Dave Eggers, to the meeting; whereupon, at the Vice-Chair’s request, the members introduced themselves.

CHAIR COMMENTS – NONE

MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 18, 2020 REGULAR MEETING – APPROVED

Upon motion by Ms. Moore, seconded by Mayor Kriseman and carried unanimously, the minutes of the November 18 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

FINANCE UPDATES

Mr. Hayes indicated that discussions previously held during Marketing and Finance Subcommittee meetings will now be a part of the regular TDC meetings.

Finance Subcommittee Minutes of October 21, 2020 – Approved

Mr. Prather moved, seconded by Mr. Henderson and carried unanimously, that the minutes of the October 21 meeting be approved.

Latest Financial Report

Mr. Hayes referred to a document titled *Visit St. Pete Clearwater FY 2021 Budget, November 2020* and the Tourist Development Tax 2020-2021 comparative report and discussed the revenues and expenses for November 2020 and Fiscal Year 2021, highlighting the following and noting specific budget line items:

- October 2020 numbers are not reflected on the report; the revenue was down 13.3 percent compared to October 2019.
- Revenue for Fiscal Year 2020 was \$48.4 million, surpassing the projected \$37 million.
- There are no cooperative sales opportunities for the first two months of Fiscal Year 2021 due to COVID-19.
- Expenses such as Personal Services and Operating Expenses are under budget due to staff working from home and very limited travel, as events are canceled or conducted virtually due to COVID-19.
- Creative Pinellas will be receiving funding pursuant to an agreement approved by the BCC.
- A total of 3.4 percent of the Promotional Expenses budget has been expended so far; for Advertising and Marketing, Elite Events, and some other expenses, funds have been allocated but not yet paid out.

Responding to queries by Mr. Prather, Mr. Hayes related that the United Kingdom marketing office has closed; and that the office in Germany continues to promote travel to St. Pete/Clearwater and

offers valuable insight into the German market; whereupon, Ms. Tuxhorn provided details regarding the International Travel contract and the Intergovernmental Services budget items.

Capital Funds Program

Mr. Abernathy referred to a document titled *Tourist Development Tax Fund – Capital Funding Program FY18-FY27* and provided an update regarding the current and projected fund balance and the existing and potential obligations and commitments for various capital projects. He indicated that the County finished paying for two major projects over the last three years, the Clearwater Marine Aquarium at \$26 million and the Toronto Blue Jays spring training stadium in Dunedin at approximately \$42 million, as well as some small projects; and that \$4.4 million from the \$20.8 million budgeted for Fiscal Year 2021 capital funding had to be used for marketing and advertising due to COVID-19; whereupon, he noted the importance of keeping the marketing and advertising portion of the VSPC budget fully funded.

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Mr. Williams entered the meeting at 9:27 A.M.

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Responding to queries by the members, Mayor Hibbard provided an update regarding negotiations with the Phillies, noting that an outside firm has been hired to assist; and that it is critically important to keep the team in the City of Clearwater and in the county. Mr. Abernathy indicated that there is no current commitment to the Tampa Bay Rays for any projects in the Capital Project Funding Program, and Mayor Kriseman provided input regarding ongoing negotiations and a potential need for funds.

Mr. Abernathy provided clarification regarding the numbers listed on the above-referenced document, indicating that the fund balance and the ability to complete the projects will depend on future revenues. Chair Gerard reiterated that the 60-percent portion of the Tourist Development Tax dedicated to marketing and advertising is untouchable; and that any unforeseen expenses would be funded by the 40-percent portion dedicated to Capital Projects.

Mr. Kimball suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to have a presentation regarding beach nourishment. Discussion ensued concerning the following, and Attorney Zas responded to queries by the members:

- Easement requirements
- The process of applying for renourishment
- Options for increasing the TDT funding of beach nourishment
- The need to dredge John's Pass
- The possibility of utilizing beach nourishment funding for dredging

## DEPARTMENT UPDATES

### Digital and Communications

Vice-President, Digital and Communications, Leroy Bridges conducted a PowerPoint presentation titled *TDC Meeting 12.16.20 Digital and Communications* pertaining to the ongoing and completed programs and campaigns, and played videos showcasing a local community, a new accommodation, and an art exhibit, relating the following:

- The Expedia Recovery Program is a \$100,000 campaign running on the Expedia and Vrbo platforms.
- The TripAdvisor campaign concluded with \$672,000 in economic impact.
- The ADARA Impact tool utilized to measure the return on digital marketing investment showed that more than \$26 million was generated in hotel revenue since June 1 as a result of digital marketing efforts.
- VSPC's video content is diverse and has a great YouTube presence.

Mr. Bridges discussed the challenges in obtaining media coverage of the destination in 2020 due to COVID-19 and successful use of webinars organized by many VSPC departments, noting that prior to March 2020, VSPC had never hosted a webinar. In response to queries by the members, he provided information relating to last-minute trip bookings, geographic marketing and the top markets, working with airlines and local airports to expand the market, the cost of video production, and the impact of COVID-19 on flight capacity and frequency.

Advertising

Senior Advertising Manager Katie Bridges referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *TDC Meeting 12.16.20 Advertising* and provided an update regarding co-op and Gulf to Bay magazine advertising sales, indicating that while co-op sales have been about the same as before, Gulf to Bay sales decreased from \$303,395 to \$187,894 compared to last year; that the plan is to release the magazine in May 2021 and distribute it throughout the summer, fall, and winter; that the department is working with the Tampa Bay Times and focusing on new outdoor content; and that having a new vendor for the digital version of the magazine will open it up for enhanced capabilities.

Department Reports – None

VSPC PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT

Tourism Strategic Plan Discussion

Mr. Hayes provided information regarding the development of VSPC's new strategic plan, indicating that HCP Associates will be providing consulting services; that the company's Vice President, Robert Allen, is in attendance; and that the purpose of the plan is to realign the organization for the next five years, focusing on increasing the visitor economic impact and other issues. He discussed the approach, timeline, and related matters, noting the importance of broad stakeholder input and challenges relating to the pandemic; whereupon, he related that the process will begin in January of 2021; and that the final presentation to the Council will occur in September of 2021.

Responding to query by Mayor Bujalski, Mr. Hayes confirmed that the TDC will be included in the strategic planning workshop, and Mr. Kimball provided input.

Economic Snapshot

Mr. Hayes referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Tourism Economic Snapshot December 2020 TDC Meeting* and indicated that the report includes all metrics, and additional data regarding vacation rentals will be included going forward. He pointed out that the 2021 TDC meeting schedule has been provided to the members and discussed the upcoming dates; whereupon, he noted recent positive publicity regarding the area and the need for visibility and recognition, and the members provided comments.

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BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSION

Ms. Moore complimented the team on the strategic plan approach and direction.

Mr. Hayes expressed gratitude for Chair Gerard's work throughout the year on behalf of himself and the staff and presented her with a gift to commemorate her chairmanship.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 A.M.