



TDC MEETING MINUTES

October 12, 2017

Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. Council members in attendance: Commissioner Cecil Pendergrass, Vice Chairman René Affourtit, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Kevin Ruane Marni Sawicki, and Rob Wells. Tony Lapi and Bill Waichulis were excused.

Vice Chairman René Affourtit made a motion to approve the Aug 10, 2017, TDC meeting minutes. Kevin Ruane seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The TDC recognized 33 participants that recently earned the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute's Certified Guest Service Professional (CGSP) designation. Dr Nicole King-Smith, tourism & hospitality training manager, announced that the total number of hospitality graduates in Lee County to date is 524.

Public to be Heard

- Beth Oliver, Offshore Sailing School, wanted to thank Lee County hotel partners, the VCB, and the TDC for their hard work and support post-Hurricane Irma.
- Stephanie Eakin, The Westin Cape Coral Resort at Marina Village, attended the Canada sales mission with the VCB and expressed how valuable it was for her. Eakin also introduced their new general manager, Michael Tighe.
- Jack Carver, Florida RV Trade Association, reported that the RV industry is doing well post-Hurricane Irma, and is hopeful for a great season.

Municipalities to be Heard

Judie Zimomra, city manager of Sanibel, wanted to thank the TDC and the VCB Executive Director, Tamara Pigott, for their support post-Hurricane Irma. Sanibel had all but one beach open within two days post-storm and by day five, all Sanibel beaches were open.

VCB Executive Director's Report

Tamara Pigott reported that the preliminary resort tax collected for July 2017 was \$2,736,243, an increase of 0.6 percent over July 2016 preliminary collections of \$2,718,942. The preliminary resort tax collected for August 2017 was \$1,727,998, an increase of 5.4 percent over August 2016 preliminary collections of \$1,639,587. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$38,504,891, a decrease of 0.1 percent year-over-year.

- STR Report – Occupancy for July decreased by 5.7 percent, ADR increased by 0.9 percent and RevPAR was down 4.8 percent. Occupancy for August decreased by 3.6 percent, ADR increased by 1.9 percent and RevPAR was down by 1.8 percent.
- RSW Report – During July 2017, 530,428 passengers traveled through RSW, an increase of 9.6% compared to the same period last year. During August 2017, 481,185 passengers traveled through RSW, an increase of 11.5 percent compared to the same period last year. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 3.3 percent from the same period last year.
- Domestic and International Sales update: Jill Vance, director of sales, reported on sales goals from 2016-2017 including a 13 percent increase in group meeting room nights booked year over year. She also presented upcoming sales activities including two new shows with focus on corporate business. Stefanie Zinke, international tourism sales manager, described the success of the Eurowings Influencer fam and Brand USA Germany Lufthansa Megafam. She reported on a recent sales and PR mission to three Canadian cities with four industry partners, which garnered extensive media coverage in both travel trade and traditional media.
- Visitors Services Update: Judi Durant, director of visitor services, reported that the fourth-quarter showed 30,193 visitors assisted at RSW, bringing the year-to-date total to 169,081. She presented plans to launch an interactive kiosk at the airport later this month that allows visitors to plan their vacation activities and have a customized itinerary emailed to them.
- Communications update: Francesca Donlan, communications director, presented media highlights that included domestic and international coverage in major publications. She reported on post-Irma communication efforts and shared upcoming media visits and initiatives.
- Marketing update: Brian Ososky, director of marketing, presented an overview of the fall campaign, “Get Away Together” that focuses on couples travel. The campaign will feature print, digital and TV elements. Ososky played three post-Hurricane Irma videos that were shared on social media after the storm to let the public know that Lee County is open for business.

New Business

René Affourtit made a motion, seconded by Kevin Ruane to approve the post-Hurricane Irma Marketing Plan. The TDC approved recommending additional funding for BoCC approval as follows: \$500,000 for marketing efforts and \$175,000 to promote the new Eurowings flights from Cologne and Munich that are set to begin in May 2018. The funding source comes from tourist tax reserves. The motion passed unanimously.

Emergency Beach Nourishment Request

René Affourtit made a motion, seconded by Kevin Ruane to approve the emergency funding request from the Captiva Erosion Prevention District for \$25,000. The money, which comes from the reserve fund, will pay for a post-storm beach survey and impact assessment. The motion passed unanimously.

Events Marketing Subcommittee Nominations

Rob Wells made a motion, seconded by Kevin Ruane to approve the FY 18-19 events marketing subcommittee. The following TDC Members were nominated to serve on the subcommittee:

Pamela Cronin, chair; Kevin Ruane, Colleen DePasquale, Bill Waichulis and Fran Myers. The motion passed unanimously.

Fort Myers Beach Tram Proposal

Steve Myers, transit director, LeeTran, and Katie Meckley, marketing manager, LeeTran, presented a proposal to implement a seasonal tram that would run along Fort Myers Beach between Bowditch Point and Matanzas Pass Preserve. The proposal requests 85 percent of the cost of the tram be funded from tourist tax dollars. The TDC requested additional information before voting on the proposal.

TDC Member Items

- René Affourtit mentioned his concern on the low number of international flights into RSW following the Air Berlin closure and asked why a large international airline carrier such as Lufthansa doesn't jump in to fill the gap?
- Brian Kramer announced that the Lee County chapter of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association and the Lee County Hotel Association have merged as one, and is now called the Lee County Chapter of the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, Oct 19, at the Hilton Garden Inn on Alico Road and the guest speaker will be county manager Roger Desjarlais.
- Rob Wells wanted to recognize Brian Ososky and the VCB marketing team, as well as entire the VCB staff, for the awards won at the Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism.

The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m. The next TDC meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Monday, Nov 13, 2017 at the Lee County Admin East building, first floor conference room 118, 2201 Second Street, Fort Myers, FL 33901.

To view a complete tax collections report, go to www.LeeVCB.com.

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