

## TDC MEETING MINUTES

June 12, 2014

Commissioner Larry Kiker called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Council members in attendance: Joe Murgalo, René Affourtit, Fran Myers, Jeff Webb, Colleen DePasquale and Tony Lapi. Pamela Cronin, Rob Wells, Mayor Kevin Ruane and Councilman Forrest Banks were excused.

René Affourtit made a motion, seconded by Fran Myers to approve the TDC Meeting Minutes of May 8, 2014. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Public to be Heard**

- Sharon McAllister with ArtFest Fort Myers thanked the TDC board for their support of the Arts programs.
- Lisa Sbuttoni with Edison & Ford Winter Estates shared that the Estates has been awarded the American Chemical Society's National Historic Chemical Landmark distinction for the Edison Botanical Research Laboratory. This designation defines Edison Ford as a national scientific landmark and they are in the process of developing STEM tours and naturalist programs. They also won their 2<sup>nd</sup> award of Excellence from Trip Advisor, as well as the Chrysalis Award for the Sales and Marketing category. On July 12th, Pure Fort Myers will begin providing Naturalist Tours on the Caloosahatchee River.
- Jennifer Jennings with the Greater Pine Island Chamber announced their new building will be finished in 3 weeks and they are looking forward to getting settled. Mango Mania will be July 19-20. She also introduced this year's Mango Queen, Valerie Hedman, who is a full time resident of Bokeelia.
- Matt Johnson with Harborside Event Center and CCC thanked the TDC Board for their continued support.
- On behalf of Leoma Lovegrove, Jennifer Berg, Alestra Marketing announced that Leoma's line will continue for the next few years with Bealls. She will be coming out with a patriotic and Christmas lines this year. Leoma received an Award of Excellence from Trip Advisor. She is planning a trip to paint in Monet's Garden in Giverny, France. They have invited her to exhibit at Bernard's Home in October and then in May do a class there as well.
- Will Prather thanked the TDC Board for their continued support of the Arts & Attractions program which is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> year.

### **Municipalities to be Heard**

- Judith Zimomra, Sanibel City Manager reported that they had a record number of vehicles that crossed the Sanibel causeway in April. They had a 5.3% increase which is equal to 15,283 additional vehicles. Mayor Kevin Ruane is in Fort Lauderdale lobbying for improved flood insurance rates for Florida.

### **VCB Executive Director's Report**

- Tamara Pigott reported the preliminary bed tax collections continue to rise to record levels. For the month of April 2014, a preliminary total of \$3,059,233 was collected, a record-breaking 29.4% increase over the preliminary collections in April 2013. Fiscal year-over-year collections increased 16.3% with \$23,001,682 collected.
- April 2014 STR Report – Occupancy was up 4.6%. ADR increased by 15% and RevPAR was

up 20.3%. Lee County experienced a 19.9 % increase in Room Revenue with Available Rooms decreased by 0.3% and Rooms Sold up 4.32%.

- RSW Report – Total Passenger count of 865,554 for April 2014, an increase of 6.1% over April 2013.
- Key indicators were up including page views, accommodations services and visitor guide books.
- Tamara Pigott announced a new intern from FGCU that started at the VCB, Lauren Blasingim, will be working with the MARCOM team. She is seeking a Bachelor's degree in Resort & Hospitality Management.
- Laura Chmielewski, VCB; Clayton Reid, MMGY; and Katie Meckley, VCB, gave a MarCom update. Clayton reported that younger visitors (Gen X) are travelling to Southwest Florida in increasing numbers, and even though Baby Boomers (mature travelers) still continue to visit, their numbers are decreasing. The VCB is focusing on technology (smart phones, iPads, tablets) and website content as we look forward to the next fiscal year. Katie shared that the VCB is continuing its summer promotion, Saved by the Shell. To date, the promotion has generated 23,000 entries for give-a-ways, and 11,000 entries for grand prizes. The VCB has added summer promo inserts in print publications in the drive markets of The Villages, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Orlando, and Tampa. Laura announced a new late summer promotion in our top DMA of Chicago – an art mural project to be created by Artist, Judy Ledgerwood, as inspired by the artist's experience in our area. The billboard campaign debuts in September at EXPO Chicago, an international art festival at historic Navy Pier. There will be eight wallscapes, as well as, 56 digital billboards unveiled across the city of Chicago with Ledgerwood's work. In addition, VCB staff is hard at work organizing the inaugural Island Hopper Songwriter Fest that will be held the last weekend in September on Captiva, and the first weekend in October on Fort Myers Beach. The festival will feature free performances by nationally acclaimed singer-songwriters in intimate settings at popular island venues. Check out IslandHopperFest.com for the latest updates on the festival. Laura also announced that the VCB won the SMITTY award from Travel & Leisure for the Google Glass Campaign in the best contest/giveaway category and an Honorable Mention for the best Marketing Video for *Awaken* from Ragan's PR Daily.

### **Special Presentations**

- Mike Thrasher with Captain Jack Boat Tours announced that they offer private tours along with Swamp Buggy and airboat rides through 253 acres of land. They will be offering free tickets for Dad's on Father's Day.
- Pamela Johnson, Deputy Director, gave the Strategic Plan Status update after 1 year. The VCB continues to be on track to reach their strategic goals.

### **Old Business**

- René Affourtit made a motion, seconded by Colleen DePasquale to approve the formalization of eight of the nine eligible Events Marketing funding requests for FY 2014-15. The motion passed unanimously. The events funded include the Captiva Holiday Village, Cape Coral Festival of the Arts, Coconut Festival, Fort Myers Beach Bash, Fort Myers Beach Film Festival, Mango Mania, The Surf & Turf Experience and Fort Myers Beach Sandsculpting Championship. In addition, the TDC will vote in August on funding \$16,375 for the 8th Annual Sanibel Writer's Conference. René Affourtit abstained from this vote.
- Tamara Pigott updated the TDC regarding the new hotel that will be adjacent to Harborside Event Center.

### **New Business**

- Fran Myers made a motion, seconded by René Affourtit to approve the Proposed Budget Report. The motion passed unanimously.

- René Affourtit made a motion, seconded by Tony Lapi to approve the formalization of Attraction Marketing requests for FY 2014-15. The motion passed unanimously.

**TDC Member Items**

- Jeff Webb reminded everyone of the next LCHA meeting June 26<sup>th</sup> at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point & Spa. Rick Michaels from Lee County Economic Development will be the speaker.
- Colleen DePasquale announced that the Greater Fort Myers Chamber will be hosting a Business Symposium on August 28<sup>th</sup> at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort & Spa.
- René Affourtit reminded everyone of the Florida Governor's Conference September 22-24, 2014.
- Commissioner Larry Kiker thanked everyone for their attendance at meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m.

The next regular meeting of the TDC is scheduled for **THURSDAY, August 14, 2014, 9 a.m. at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa, 5001 Coconut Rd., Bonita Springs, 34134. The TDC will not meet in July. All reports are included with Minutes on file at the VCB and available at [www.leevcb.com](http://www.leevcb.com).**