



TDC Meeting Minutes
Oct. 14, 2021

Commissioner Brian Hamman, chair, called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Council members in attendance

Commissioner Brian Hamman, Darla Bonk, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Tony Lapi, Holly Smith Bill Waichulis and Robert Wells III.

Brian Kramer and Fran Myers were excused.

Smith made a motion to approve the Aug. 12, 2021 meeting minutes. Wells seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

Jack Carver, Florida RV association, announced that the annual Fort Myers RV Show will take place Jan. 27-30, 2022 at the Civic Center.

Jennifer Nelson, Captiva Erosion Prevention District director, thanked the TDC for the erosion prevention project on Captiva. The project is projected to finish Oct. 24 pending weather. A press release will be distributed soon.

Municipalities to be heard

None to be heard.

Report of the executive director

July 2021

The preliminary resort tax collected for July 2021 was \$4,952,229, an 84.5% increase over July 2020 preliminary collections of \$2,678,816.

Tamara Pigott reported that the average hotel occupancy rate in July 2021 was 73.1%, which is up 50.8% from July 2020 (48.4%). The average daily rate for July 2021 was \$170.84, up 21.7% from July 2020 (\$140.33) and RevPAR for July 2021 was \$124.82, up 83.6% from July 2020 (\$67.97).

For vacation rentals, the average occupancy rate in July 2021 was 73%, which is up 28% from July 2020. The average daily rate for July 2021 was \$235, which is up 16% from July 2020. RevPAR for July 2021 was \$171, which is up 594.4% from July 2020.

During July 2021, 814,471 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW), an increase of 217.6% in passenger traffic compared to July 2020.

August 2021

The preliminary resort tax collected for August 2021 was \$2,868,129, a 45% increase over August 2020 preliminary collections of \$1,977,445. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$50,912,656, an increase of 39.9% year-over-year. Bed tax collections for 2020 are record-breaking and there is still one more month to report.

Pigott also reported that the average hotel occupancy rate in August 2021 was 55.7%, which is up 32.1% from August 2020 (42.2%). The average daily rate for August 2021 was \$140.22, up 13.1% from August 2020 (\$124) and RevPAR for August 2021 was \$78.08, up 49.3% from August 2020 (\$52.28).

For vacation rentals, the average occupancy rate for August 2021 was 42%, which is up 40% from August 2020. The average daily rate for August 2021 was \$209, which is up 16% from August 2020. RevPAR for August 2021 was \$88, which is up 63% from August 2020.

During August 2021, 647,534 passengers traveled through RSW, an increase of 180% in passenger traffic compared to August 2020. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 66.7% from the same period last year.

She also reminded the council to update their website listings on LeeVCB.com by 5 p.m. Oct. 31, 2021 before the content migration to the new website.

Sales report

Jill Vance, VCB sales director, reported that her team has either attained or exceeded all sales goals for fiscal year 2020-21. She shared highlights of successful fourth quarter group media and sales activities. The team executed a successful Bridal Guide Wedding Quiz & Sweepstakes promotion, attended a variety of in-person meeting planner trade shows and made 100 sales calls to travel agencies. Vance also presented sales activities for October through December, comprised of in-person meeting planner appointments and consumer and travel advisor trade shows, along with sales calls to feeder market travel agencies.

Pigott gave an international sales update, adding that she had 25 appointments at IPW and a session with top tour operators. International restrictions are loosening and international travelers will soon be able to travel to the US. She will also be attending Brand USA in the UK in early November to conduct appointments and a client event.

Visitor Services report

Simone Behr, VCB visitor services director, reported that the Tourism Ambassador volunteers assisted 40,182 visitors during the fourth quarter of FY20. In August, Visitor Services hosted the 21st Annual Elaine McLaughlin Outstanding Hospitality Service awards honoring our tourism hospitality heroes. On Sept. 19, VCB volunteers celebrated National "Talk Like a Pirate Day" at RSW by handing out shell necklaces and pirate favors to the traveling public. Visitor Services has recruited a number of new volunteers who are currently in training.

Island Hopper recap

Nancy MacPhee, VCB product development manager, provided a recap of results for the 7th annual Island Hopper Songwriter Fest. The festival, held Sept. 17-26, featured 78 songwriters who delivered 113 performances at 21 venues on Captiva, downtown Fort Myers and Fort Myers Beach. Attendance is estimated at 12,500 with all host venues reporting slight increases in business over 2019 when the festival last occurred.

Sports development director

Jeff Mielke, sports development director, reported that 32,484 room nights sold during April through September 2021 with direct visitor spending of more than \$13 million. Youth soccer is still not back to pre-pandemic tournaments. July was a record-breaking month.

New business

Smith made a motion to move the November TDC meeting date to Tuesday, Nov. 9, 2021 at 9 a.m. before the VCB's annual meeting at the Marriott Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa. Waichulis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Matthew Creed, parks superintendent, and Gino Notarianni, senior project manager, presented a request for additional funds in the amount of \$173,230 at Sirenia Vista Park. DePasquale made a motion to approve City of Cape Coral's request. Smith seconded the motion with the note that we are not setting a precedent. Motion carried. One TDC member, Bonk, opposed.

For council information

Glen Salyer, Lee County assistant county manager, said that the BoCC will be considering the professional services contract for the Player Development Complex funding transfer to the Larry Kiker Preserve on Tuesday, Oct. 19. He will give the TDC formal updates as it moves forward.

TDC member items

Smith attended the Governor's Conference and thanked VCB staff for its assistance as it was her first time attending the conference. New City Manager, Dana Souza, starts on Nov. 15.

Bonk thanked the council and VCB staff for a warm welcome and assistance with Governor's Conference.

DePasquale, announced that the Lee chapter for the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association is unable to host the annual taco cook-off due to COVID-19, but will be partnering with the Greater Fort Myers Chamber to host a workforce housing event on Thursday, Oct. 21. Additionally, the chambers are keeping an eye on the sunset clause for VISIT FLORIDA.

Waichulis, added that three accommodations in Lee County made Conde Naste's Reader's Choice Awards list including Pink Shell Beach Resort & Marina, South Seas Island Resort and Gasparilla Inn. Sanibel & Captiva also made the top islands in the US.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:39 a.m.

Next TDC meeting

The next TDC meeting is at 9 a.m., Tuesday, Nov. 9, 2021. The meeting will be held at the Marriott Sanibel Harbour in the Gardens Ballroom. To view a complete tax collections report, go to www.LeeVCB.com. Contact: Tamara Pigott, TPigott@leegov.com, Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.