



## **Charlotte County Tourist Development Council**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**January 10, 2014**

**Charlotte County Visitor's Bureau  
BCS Conf Room**

#### **Members Present**

Commissioner Chris Constance  
Captain Ralph Allen  
Rick Brunette  
Kathy Burnam  
Judy Malbuisson  
Hazel Crouch  
Julie Mathis  
Mayor Rachel Keesling  
Councilmember Kim Devine

#### **Staff Present**

Lorah Steiner, Director  
Elizabeth Parker, Admin Svc. Coordinator  
Chip Futch, Marketing & Communications Coordinator  
Sean Doherty, Sports/Marketing Manager  
Jerry Jones, Film Commissioner  
Diane Quilty, Budget

#### **Guests**

John Wright, Punta Gorda Chamber  
David Dunn Rankin, Charlotte Sun

#### **Citizens**

Chris Evans

**1) Call to Order/Roll Call**

Commissioner Constance called the meeting to order, roll call was taken and all members were present. He also introduced the new member of the Bureau - Deanna Fritz.

**2) Approval of Meeting Minutes**

A motion was presented by Ms. Burnam, seconded by Judy Malbuisson, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes as written for the Tourist Development Council Meeting held November 8, 2013.

**3) Captain Ralph Allen – Budget Report**

Captain Allen gave a brief budget report to the council. He passed out a chart on how bed tax dollars were spent in 2013. Mayor Keesling asked about the stadium debt services. Captain Allen said the debt payment increases 3% every year. Commissioner Constance said we are finally at a good point where the 2% covers the debt services. Ms. Steiner asked if the council would like comparative budgets from other surrounding Bureaus. Mr. Brunette said a budget report would be a great resource.

**4) Diane Mitchell – Financial Report**

Ms. Mitchell presented the financials for 12 months ending September 30, 2013. Total revenue generated was \$2,568,947, which showed a 3% increase from the same period one year ago. The ending fund balance was \$1,102,264. Mr. Mitchell reviewed some geographical reporting details. Ms. Steiner said a key indicator, revenue per available room or REV PAR is up which is very favorable.

**5) Citizens Input**

Mr. John Wright mentioned that the Wine and Jazz festival had the wrong date printed on the packet. It was agreed it was a typo in the packet but the correct date is on the VCB Website. The Welcome Center distributed 17 boxes of literature with an uptick in traffic. Mr. Wright said visitors are looking for coupon books. Ms. Steiner thanked Mr. Wright for taking on the job of operating the Welcome Center. Mayor Keesling asked if the advertising has helped bring in new visitors to the welcome center and about capturing visitor email addresses. Commissioner Constance asked about visitor numbers at the center. Mr. Wright said he is not sure how this can be done. The Center does have a visitor register book for visitors to sign. Commissioner Constance suggested that FDOT could possibly assist in helping acquire visitation numbers at the Welcome Center.

**6) David Dunn Rankin, Charlotte Sun**

Mr. Dunn Rankin gave a presentation on a proposal for changing the county name from Charlotte County to Charlotte Harbor County. He briefly went through some of the highlights on the website project he has been working

on.

He has been gathering information with all the local fishing guides in our area and trying to create a designated website; Where to fish, Whom to fish with, etc., this website will have many components.

Ms. Devine talked about this project and using proper key words within the website to drive traffic She also talked about the need for everyone to have a cohesive message.

Mr. Dunn Rankin showed the website to the council.

Mr. Chris Evans who is assisting Mr. Dunn Rankin briefly talked a bit more about this new endeavor and asked how the Bureau or the TDC can assist. Mr. Dunn Rankin was looking for feedback from the council on this project. He suggested rebranding the county to Charlotte Harbor. He said the newspaper would campaign to support this effort. He also estimated it would cost between ten to fifteen thousand dollars to change all the signage in the area. Mr. Dunn Rankin also suggested that this item could be placed on a ballot for the citizens to vote.

Mr. Evans reiterated that the biggest resource in our county is the water.

Commissioner Constance said any change in the county name would need to go to the citizens for a vote. Mr. Evans suggested getting more community support first before they proceed further with this project.

Ms. Steiner said that Charlotte County needs place recognition. Ms. Burnam said this project was something the council really needs to consider and Mr. Wright agreed with the idea.

#### **7) Lorah Steiner – Director’s Report**

Ms. Steiner briefly went through some details of the Marketing Plan and provided copies to the council members. The council reviewed the marketing plan. Mayor Keesling suggested the bureau host an Arts or Sports Fam Tour. Ms. Steiner said that was a great idea that could be explored. Mr. Doherty mentioned the bureau did a Golf Writer Cup event several years ago which was very well received.

Ms. Steiner will get the council a cheat sheet for the budget. Ms. Devine requested to see comparison numbers. Ms. Steiner showed the Adopt a Meeting Planner boxes and explained how the program works. Ms. Steiner also showed the council members a deck of playing cards which could be used as a promotional item for Charlotte County.

The Show us your Charlotte contest will be ready to review at the next TDC Meeting.

#### **8) Council Comments**

Ms. Malbuisson volunteered for the Mercedes event and mentioned how the attendees loved the area.

Ms. Burnam thanked the Bureau for the great job they did on the marketing plan. She briefly talked about the FAM Tour at the villages. She also mentioned the Villages have had a record year. The numbers were up 15-20%.

Ms. Mitchell told the council that the department is out and about in the county pursuing rental properties for tourist tax collections.

Ms. Crouch thought a Golf Fam Tour is a great idea for our area.

Mr. Jones mentioned that the Dr. Beach video would be ready by March 30<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Keesling also mentioned the possibility of helping local community organizations develop videos. Ms. Steiner Mr. Jones might be able to assist

with this when he has more time. She noted he was a half time employee.

Ms. Devine briefly talked about the "One Community One Message" initiative which will be an ongoing effort.

Mr. Brunette mentioned the strong visitor inquiries at Palm island. He also stated that corporate business is picking up. Outback Steakhouse had their annual meeting on the island. He also mentioned the island had a very busy Thanksgiving and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was a wonderful success with 175 in attendance. Indiana hospitality students will be coming to the island. He briefly talked about the internship program. Mr. Brunette said he has also been busy on Stump Pass issues.

Capt. Allen said the King Fisher Fleet should have a good winter.

Ms. Mathis talked about the project that the economic development office, chambers and local realtors, to develop a website that is a one stop shop for information. This is also in conjunction with the Weather Channel which has a crawler on the channel in all the Allegiant lift markets inviting people to visit the website [www.Locatetoparadise.com](http://www.Locatetoparadise.com). Ms. Mathis also mentioned the Super Boat Races and how the community needs to come together to make this a successful event.

Mr. Doherty mentioned a few exciting events coming to our area.

Commissioner Constance mentioned that Punta Gorda was named the number one place to retire in February 2014 issue of Where to Retire Magazine.

Commissioner Constance adjourned the meeting at 9:45 a.m.