



## **Charlotte County Tourist Development Council**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**March 7, 2014**

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

#### **Members Present**

Commissioner Chris Constance  
Captain Ralph Allen  
Rick Brunette  
Kathy Burnam  
Mayor Rachel Keesling  
Councilmember Kim Devine

#### **Members Absent**

Julie Mathis  
Judy Malbuisson  
Hazel Crouch

#### **Staff Present**

Lorah Steiner, Director  
Elizabeth Parker, Admin Svc. Coordinator  
Chip Futch, Marketing & Communications Coordinator  
Sean Doherty, Sports/Marketing Manager  
Jennifer Huber, Public Relations Manager  
Jerry Jones, Film Commissioner  
Deanna Fritz, Administrative Assistant  
Diane Quilty, Budget  
Diane Mitchell, Audit

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

Commissioner Constance called the meeting to order, roll call was taken Julie Mathis, Judy Malbuisson and Hazel Crouch were excused. All other members were present.

**2) Approval of Meeting Minutes**

A motion was presented by Ms. Kathy Burnam, seconded by Councilmember Kim Devine, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes as written for the Tourist Development Council Meeting held January 10, 2014.

**3) Lorah Steiner – Director’s Report**

Ms. Steiner spoke about the focus areas she has been working on the past several months. First of which is reorganization of the Charlotte Harbor Hospitality Association. This association should also serve as a voice for the local tourism industry. Ms. Deanna Fritz is working as a liaison for the group. One of the first meetings was held last week and local community members from every discipline were in attendance. At this initial meeting the group discussed - what the industry wants the association to provide. The top three things were networking, sharing information and cross promotions. Ms. Deanna Fritz and Ms. Steiner are working with the new president. This organization is helping move tourism forward. There will be a board retreat next week.

Ms. Steiner was pleased to mention that the Bureau will be resurrecting the Tourism unity event, which will be held at the Event Center on May 15<sup>th</sup> 8:00 a.m. Anthony Hargrove will be the guest speaker for the event. The first Tourism Hall of Fame award will be given out at the breakfast.

Ms. Steiner believes the previous tourism awards which were given out at previous tourism luncheon events could be passed on to the Hospitality Association to organize and host.

One of the next initiatives Ms. Steiner and Mr. Futch are working on is the Brazil application. She briefly explained the program. She met with other SW Florida VCB’s to discuss this initiative.

The 2015 budget process was moving forward.

Ms. Steiner discussed tourism plans for Punta Gorda and Englewood and the Beaches. The initiative is to create a master marketing plan for the County. Ms. Steiner has met with Nancy Prafke and Nancy Johnson (Team Punta Gorda) to discuss the process for the Punta Gorda Tourism Plan meetings. She briefly explained the process and how the new committee groups can work. Ms. Keesling thought these groups would be redundant and unmanageable. She mentioned several that were already in existence such as Boaters Alliance, Downtown Merchants Association, Chambers, Cycling Team, MPO Bike Organization, and Team Punta Gorda. Mayor Keesling suggested one group could target these marketing efforts. Ms. Devine also mentioned there were several groups already formed. Mayor Keesling briefly mentioned the Tourism Teams. Ms. Steiner told the council that the loss of the Bureau’s Advertising Agency, Public Relations Agency and Marketing Director in 2012 made it impossible to continue tourism teams work after their initial findings. She said their reports would serve as a foundation for the Master Plan. Commissioner Constance suggested the Chambers should assist with these marketing initiatives. It was also mentioned that both chambers already have a tourism committee which could assist in moving this project forward. Ms. Steiner said this initiative is still in the preliminary stages. She is looking to get input from all the

community organizations.

Ms. Steiner went through a few of the suggestions for these committees. Cycling and signage were a few examples. Mayor Keesling also mentioned many of these organizations are looking for funding. She also said the City of Punta Gorda does not even have marketing dollars. She asked Ms. Steiner how long she thinks this process will take. Ms. Burnam asked what is the goal? Commissioner Constance added that this will be a lightning rod exercise to get some thoughts and ideas down. Ms. Steiner said this is a way to bring everything together to finalize a clear Bureau marketing plan. Ms. Steiner said this process should take about 2-3 months and will likely begin after season. Ms. Steiner said she will take all the questions and concerns to Nancy Prafke and Nancy Jonson and come back to the Council with a plan. Ms. Steiner reiterated that the county needs place recognition opportunities and both Punta Gorda and Englewood need name recognition.

Ms. Steiner briefly talked about the Best of the Road and Where to Retire Magazine which are great exposure pieces for the county. Ms. Devine mentioned these digital assets such as Best of the Roads, Where to Retire or even the Best Sports park are important advertising for the county.

Ms. Devine showed the City of Punta Gorda brochure which will be distributed throughout the region and asked the council to assist with funding the printing cost. Mr. Brunette suggested some of the area organizations could assist in the cost. Commissioner Constance talked about getting QR codes and somehow co-oping some ads on the brochure. Ms. Steiner said she will bring the budget breakdown for the council to review at the next meeting. Commissioner Constance suggested sending out a meeting request through Outlook for upcoming council meetings. Ms. Burnam talked about the home expo she attended in Venice. 65% of the people were residents along with snowbirds. Many of them had not been to Punta Gorda since 2006. She said many of the people mentioned the hurricane. She asked why have they not been back for a visit. Many said they forgot that we have rebuilt the area after the storm. Commissioner Constance talked about driving down 41 and how the area needs to be revitalized.

Ms. Steiner said the exercise today was very welcomed and thanked the council for coming.

#### **4) Diane Mitchell – Financial Report**

Diane Mitchell presented the Tourist Development Tax information for 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Oct 2013 – Dec 2013. Collections for the period were \$457,392 an increase of \$64,370 or 16.4% compared to the prior year. She briefly went through some geographical collections by category and area. Commissioner Constance suggested that Diane Mitchell give a presentation to the Board about Tourist Tax Collections. Ms. Mitchell will check with Barbara Scott to see if this is possible. He also suggested getting the local media to do a story on the tourist tax collections. for our Charlotte County citizens.

#### **5) Council Comments**

Ms. Burnam said the numbers are up at the Village.

Ms. Devine asked everyone to go on line and vote for Best Sports Park. She also mentioned that Here Come The Mummies will be performing in PG This weekend.

Commissioner Constance thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

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