



Charlotte County Tourist Development Council

Meeting Minutes

May 2, 2014

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

Members Present

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

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

Ed Hill, Englewood Chamber of Commerce
Cindy Dobyms, Above Water
Don McCormick

1) Call to Order/Roll Call

Commissioner Constance called the meeting to order, roll call was taken and all members were present.

2) Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion was presented by Councilmember Kim Devine, seconded by Kathy Burnam, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes as written for the Tourist Development Council Meeting held March 7, 2014.

Ms. Steiner opened the meeting by presenting an award to Hazel Crouch for her years of service as Chairman of the TDC. Ms. Steiner thanked Ms. Crouch for her tremendous support of tourism.

3) Don McCormick – Charlotte County Cultural Plan

Don McCormick went through some highlights of the cultural plan for Charlotte County. At this point he is trying to raise funds to pursue this effort. He needs community and financial support. He spoke about all the cultural art entities in the area such as CPAC, Charlotte Players, Symphony etc., Ms. Steiner added that the arts are an important part of the community and to tourism. She asked the council for support in this plan. Commissioner Constance asked Mr. McCormick what dollar amount he was requesting. Mr. McCormick said he was looking at an amount of \$30,000 total and right now \$15,000 is committed. Commissioner Constance suggested some private companies could donate. He also spoke about the new maestro at the symphony and how they are looking for a new vision for a new symphony hall and how this would tie into the cultural plan for the county. Commissioner Constance talked about the possibility of a new location and how Murdock Village would be an excellent site. Ms. Devine asked about the first step which would be to hire a consultant. She also asked what the steps would be after that. Mr. McCormick said that getting the community together on this effort would be the next step moving forward. Councilmember Devine asked Mr. McCormick if you can't raise \$30,000; how you will raise the rest too actually implement the plan? Mr. McCormick explained that once the \$20,000 is raised, the Gulf Coast Community Foundation will talk to him about additional funding to help move the plan forward.

Ms. Quilty told the council that there is funding available in the budget if the council decided to donate to this initiative. Commissioner Constance also believes in the Arts Plan. Ms. Crouch made a motion to donate \$2,500.00 to the Charlotte County Cultural Plan and Ms. Mathis seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by the council.

Ms. Steiner told the council that Captain Allen's term is expired and he had chosen not to re-apply. The TDC would be seeking another volunteer to fill that seat.

4) Above Water – Cindy Dobyms. Yearly Public Relations Report

Ms. Huber introduced Cindy Dobyms to the council.

Ms. Dobyms went through the resulting coverage for visiting journalists from 2012-2013. She first mentioned "print" which is traditional magazines and newspapers. She also went over the ad value which was 700,927 in free

advertising and 24,709.525 reader impressions.

Ms. Dobyms went over the value of hosting travel writers. She briefly summarized articles that were published in the Niagara Gazette, Orlando Magazine and Gulf Shore Life.

She mentioned the Bureau's public relations efforts. Ms. Dobyms talked about the bloggers, also called "on-line influencers" and what they do for advertising the area. Ms. Dobyms also talked about regional travel writers and the impact they have.

Ms. Dobyms recapped media visits that occurred last year. There were 15 visiting journalists, and 82 editorial placements.

She mentioned the exciting media hits that continue coming in 2013 and beyond. Ms. Huber spoke on the power of social media, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest just to name a few. They are such positive free advertising tools. She also talked about the tweet up for the Rays. Ms. Steiner mentioned The 10 Best Sports Park winner the Charlotte Sports Park. The Bureau along with Community Services purchased the logo and the rights to use the 10 best logo. Ms. Huber mentioned how social media and Twitter users helped get the sports park information out for voting. She briefly explained the Twitter program to the council members. Ms. Dobyms said they also track social media. Ms. Dobyms summed up the importance of hosting travel writers and journalists. Ms. Huber also mentioned how important it is for the industry partners and how thankful we are for their kind donations to assist in hosting these individuals. The Bureau could not do these media visits without their help.

5) Lorah Steiner – Director's Report

Mr. Futch showed the council the Show Us Your Charlotte link on the website and briefly explained the program. This program is a photo contest. The Bureau will be selecting the top winners and prizes will be awarded.

Mr. Futch has been working on the Charlotte County Hospitality Association website. This is a very important organization in the county. He briefly went through the actual website.

Ms. Steiner mentioned the reclassification of the marketing position.

Ms. Steiner talked briefly about the new vacation rental regulations. Essentially it allows local government to regulate rentals of fewer than 7 days but does not permit stay requirements of more than 7 days. Mayor Keesling asked for more details about this bill. Ms. Steiner will get further details.

Ms. Steiner also spoke about a legislation bill for medical tourism which is moving forward and included grants available for local Economic Development organizations for targeting these markets. Commissioner Constance said that he believes Orlando and Miami would be the areas they would look at and probably not our county.

The tourism breakfast is scheduled for May 15 to be held at the Event Center and will be honoring Becky Bovell the previous Tourism Director. She will be awarded with a bronze plaque and will be the first inductee into the Tourism Hall of Fame.

The Charlotte Harbor Happenings bulletin has been going out weekly with activities, entertainment and festivals happening throughout the county.

Ms. Steiner talked about first quarter research numbers which will be available by April 30. Dr. Klages from Research Data Services will be attending the next meeting to give the council an overview. The Rays Spring

Training research numbers will also be available at the next meeting.

The Bureau is reviewing the numbers from the Super Boat Grand Prix. The committee is compiling revenue, ticket sales and attendance estimates. Ms. Steiner said the overall consensus was the race went very well. Mr. Hill from the Englewood Chamber said the results were mixed. More people said business was up than he previously thought. Ms. Steiner said most people thought traffic would be very heavy but it was relatively quiet. Mr. Hill also suggested getting the business community more involved in the event making it a great festival. Mr. Brunette said the waters were filled with boats. He said Natural Resources were doing a great job patrolling the beaches. Ms. Steiner asked all council members to give their input about the boat races. Mayor Keesling mentioned that most racers and spectators really enjoyed the parade. Mr. Doherty said the only complaint he heard from teams was the long wait to launch their boats in the water. Mayor Keesling also inquired why so many people had stayed in Sarasota when there was plenty of availability in Charlotte County. Mr. Hill believed that it was just lack of communication. Ms. Doherty said there was also a problem with the website accommodations page on the Super Boat website. Ms. Steiner said the organizing group is excited and committed to having next year's event run much more smoothly as the foundational work has already been done. Apr 10-12 is the date for next year's Grand Prix. Ms. Steiner will have more economic impact numbers available at the next meeting.

Ms. Steiner thanked Mayor Keesling and Mr. Kunik for their assistance on the Punta Gorda Tourism Plan meetings. The meeting focus will be partnerships and packaging our area.

Ms. Quilty mentioned that since Capt. Allen is no longer on the council if someone from the council would like to step up and look at the financials and give a report at the upcoming TDC meetings. Ms. Devine asked about the vacant seat. The replacement needs to be an industry partner. Ms. Steiner said she would like to see a balance and would like to have more representation from west county. There was a general consensus the person filling the vacant seat should be from west county. Ms. Quilty explained how the process works.

Ms. Steiner briefly talked about the Tracks and Trails new attraction coming to the area. Ms. Steiner asked TDC members about attending a retreat on July 11th.

6) Council Comments

Ms. Malbuisson thanked everyone for supporting the cultural plan.

Ms. Burnam thanked the Bureau for all their hard work and dedication.

Ms. Crouch thanked everyone for her beautiful plaque.

Mr. Brunette briefly talked about his participation on the sales tax committee. Ms. Mathis also spoke about the committee. She feels that the process was very good. Mr. Brunette appreciated the comment about getting someone on the board from west county for representation on the Tourist Development Council. Ms. Brunette briefly talked about the Stump Pass dredging project. He also mentioned the Tropical Nights event that was held on the island and over \$315,000 dollars were raised from the event.

Ms. Steiner briefly mentioned a Beach Bus Route that was talked about in regard to the county transportation plan and she would like the council's thoughts on this concept.

Ms. Devine was excited to mention that the Punta Gorda brochures are being printed and now available. They

will be stocked at the chambers and the welcome center.

Ms. Devine was approached by Focus Magazine and they will be including the complete Punta Gorda brochure in their magazine. Ms. Devine also spoke on the holiday events at the village and trying to make this event bigger and better calling It Project Illumination. Nov 15th starts the holiday season. Ms. Burnam mentioned the meeting planner boxes from the village will be going out in Nov and how this will be a great tie in to the holiday season.

Ms. Mathis suggested that a Fam trip should be organized to get people out to west county and also Punta Gorda and Port Charlotte people out to west county. Many citizens don't know what the other areas have to offer.

Commissioner Constance thought it was important to have three chambers woven into the Council. He feels it's a great idea. The new Locate To Paradise website had 5,000 unique hits on their site.

Commissioner Constance adjourned the meeting.