



## **Charlotte County Tourist Development Council**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**September 5, 2014**

**Administration Conference Room**

#### *Members Present*

Commissioner Chris Constance  
Julie Mathis  
Kathy Burnam  
Mayor Rachel Keesling  
Rick Brunette

#### *Members Absent*

Judy Malbuisson  
Councilmember Kim Devine  
Ken Stead

#### *Staff Present*

Lorah Steiner, Director - Tourist Development  
Chip Futch, Marketing Director  
Jerry Jones, Charlotte County Film Director  
Jennifer Huber, Public Relations Manager  
Sean Doherty, Sports Marketing Manager  
Elizabeth Parker, Admin Svc Coordinator  
Diane Mitchell, Finance  
Gordon Burger, Budget Director

#### *Guests*

Ed Hill, Englewood Chamber of Commerce  
John Wright, Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce  
Thomas Hecker – Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center  
Jack Wert, Executive Director, - Naples, Marco Island Everglades CVB

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

Commissioner Constance called the meeting to order, roll call was taken Councilmember Kim Devine, Judy Malbuisson and Ken Stead were on vacation. All other members were present. Commissioner Constance welcomed Tom Hecker from the CHEC.

**2) Approval of Meeting Minutes**

A motion was presented by Julie Mathis, seconded by Kathy Burnam and unanimously carried to approve the minutes as written for the Tourist Development Council Meeting held July 11, 2014.

**3) Jack Wert - Executive Director, Naples, Marco Island, Everglades Convention & Visitors Bureau - Review of State TDT Statute**

Mr. Wert gave a presentation to the council on the Tourist Development Tax State Statute. Mr. Wert went over more specifics. Some of the highlighted items were:

- History of Florida's Tourism Legislation –
  - Sole purpose was to promote tourism to and within Florida
- Definitions of Tourist
  - Tourist means a person who participates in trade or recreation activities outside the county of his or her permanent residence or who rents or leases transient accommodations
- How F.S. 125.0104 can help DMO's
  - Helps to identify allowable uses of TDT
- Other tourism statutes, ordinances, resolutions to consider and uses of the tax.
- Attorney General Opinions
- Tax Collector & County Finance issues/remedies
- Tourist Development Council make up
- Current & future threats to changing 125.0104

Ms. Mathis asked about collecting the tourist tax from homes. Mr. Wert said that any owner of an accommodation rented for six months or less should be paying tourist tax.

Mr. Wert explained how important it is to get accurate information from the tax collector's office and to get tourist tax figures from specific geographical locations.

Mr. Thomas Hecker from Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center asked about the grants program for nonprofit organizations. Ms. Wert said that grant programs can be of great benefit but the process needs to be easy for these organizations to get through.

Mayor Keesling asked about the original tourist tax plan. She also asked about other ordinance and resolutions pertaining to the Tourist Development Council. Ms. Mitchell said she believes the original plan was established and there were one or two changes to the original ordinance. The Bureau will try to locate the original tourist tax ordinance for the Council members to review.

Mr. Wert mentioned the amended plan is the one that you go by not the old one.

Mayor Keesling asked about sub county special taxing district and how some cities control parts of the tourist tax. Mr. Wert said yes there are a few counties that have this in place. These counties have sub taxing districts for specific use. Mr. Wert said for example Sanibel has a specific use for beach renourishment. Mayor Keesling asked Mr. Wert about cities controlling the tourist tax dollars. Ms. Steiner suggested that Mayor Keesling was inquiring about whether the city of Punta Gorda could receive some of the tourist tax dollars collected. Ms. Steiner asked about the 3 percent and whether a portion of it could it be used by the city. Mr. Wert said this process could be done but the city would have to set up a separate tax plan. Mr. Wert said this was done by one county but got extremely confusing. He said he strongly discourages this idea. Ms. Steiner noted the current budget was not sufficient to provide for separate funds for a specific area of the county and would weaken the ability of the VCB to market the destination.

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

Diane Mitchell presented the financials for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter ending June 2014. Total collections for the period were \$2,516,305 (an increase of \$371,012 or 17.29%) compared to the prior year. The collections for June were up \$32,779 or 18.34% compared to June 2013 collections. She briefly went through some geographical statistics.

Ms. Steiner mentioned the anomaly in May. She met with finance to figure this out. Some hotels pay monthly and some pay quarterly. This is why some of the numbers are skewed. When one of the accommodations paid late it reflected no money was collected in May for that property.

#### **5) Gordon Burger, County Budget Director**

Mr. Burger went over the 2014 Tourist Development projection with actuals. He told the council about how the numbers are calculated. Mr. Burger went through some of the line items in the budget report. Mayor Keesling asked about the increase in salaries and wages line item which was due to a three paycheck month. Mr. Burger also went over the Tourist Development 10 year history chart with the council. Ms. Steiner explained how we need to be very conservative with the budget. Mr. Burger talked briefly about the \$200,000.00 reserve. Mr. Burger will get a contingency plan out to the council. Mayor asked about getting the backup material for the budget expenses. Mr. Burger said no there is no place on line to go for that information. Ms. Steiner said she and Mr. Futch would look into getting those documents on line.

#### **6) Chip Futch/Lorah Steiner, Review of Tourist Development Expenditures for next fiscal year**

Mr. Futch handed out the expenditure report to the council. Ms. Mathis appreciated the extra details in the sheet. Ms. Steiner mentioned that this budget sheet is based on the approval from the board for the additional \$475,000.00

dollars to the advertising line item. Mr. Futch briefly went through some of the line items on the expenditure sheet. Ms. Steiner talked briefly about how successful the visitor's center is with the help of John Wright from the PG Chamber. She then went through more details on some of the advertising line items. Commissioner Constance suggested the council move forward as the meeting today must end at 10:00 as there is another group meeting promptly at 10 a.m.

Mayor Keesling asked about Allegiant Airlines and why Charlotte County presence is not more visual on their website. Ms. Steiner explained the airline operates on a "pay-to-play basis. They work with attractions with admission fees. Allegiant buys the tickets at a reduced rate, takes a markup and packages the tickets with hotel, rental car and air. Non-paid attractions do not get space on the Allegiant site. . You must pay to have a presence on their site or in their in-flight magazine. She also mentioned that it has been very difficult getting in touch with them.

Ms. Steiner told the council they could have another meeting to drill down on the budget further. Ms. Steiner will work on getting an easier budget sheet to look at. Commissioner Constance asked whether these items could be placed on the bureau website. Mr. Futch said he doesn't know if it can be done on the existing site but will be glad to check on this with the new website vendor coming on line shortly.

Ms. Steiner talked about establishing a marketing committee within the Tourist Development Council.

Commissioner Constance adjourned the meeting promptly at 10:00a.m.