



Charlotte County Tourist Development Council

Meeting Minutes

November 7, 2014

Administration Conference Room

Members Present

Commissioner Chris Constance
Julie Mathis
Kathy Burnam
Councilmember Rachel Keesling
Judy Malbuisson
Councilmember Kim Devine
Ken Stead
Kelly Williamson

Members Absent

Rick Brunette

Staff Present

Lorah Steiner, Director - Tourist Development
Chip Futch, Marketing Director
Jerry Jones, Charlotte County Film Director
Sean Doherty, Sports Marketing Manager
Elizabeth Parker, Admin Svc Coordinator
Diane Quilty – Fiscal Services

Guests

Ed Hill, Englewood Chamber of Commerce
John Wright, Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce
Sue Randall, Punta Gorda Tourism Committee
Denise Dull, Charlotte County Hospitality Association
Joe Suriol, Interdevco
John Zacarri, A To Z Marketing
Craig Holt, Four Points Sheraton
Patti Allen, Fishermen's Village

1) Call to Order/Roll Call

Ms. Steiner welcomed everyone to the Tourist Development Council meeting and members and guests introduced themselves.

Commissioner Constance called the meeting to order, roll call was taken, and all members were present except Rick Brunette. 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 September 5, 2014.

2) Denise Dull – Charlotte County Hospitality Association

Ms. Denise Dull thanked the Council for inviting her to the meeting. She provided an overview of the Charlotte Harbor Hospitality Association. The group is reorganizing, has about 50 members and membership is growing. Ms. Dull said she could not have put this group together without the support of the VCB and especially Deanna Fritz, the Bureau's Marketing Assistant. Every other month the CHHA hosts an interactive program which is very well attended. Ms. Steiner mentioned how important this vehicle is for moving tourism forward. Councilmember Keesling asked who can join. Ms. Dull said anyone interested in promoting tourism in the area, however accommodations interested in being a member must be in Charlotte County.

3) Sue Randall – Punta Gorda Tourism Committee

Ms. Randall talked about a few 30 second promotional videos Mr. Keith Tracy is producing about Punta Gorda. Ms. Randall said the committee will be working with the Super Boat team on another parade in Punta Gorda to be held in conjunction with the Super Boat Races next year. The Visitor Center is staying very busy. The committee is talking about signage on the highway. Ms. Randall was extremely excited about the new Tracks and Trails venue opening up in late winter of 2015.

4) Citizens Input

Mr. Joe Suriol from Interdevco made a presentation to the Council about the City of Punta Gorda and the County working together to bring in visitors to Charlotte County in the off season. A few of his ideas were -

1. CCHA working with City of Punta Gorda to come up with a plan to attract visitors to the area in summer season.
2. Better communication with the Hospitality Association, Chambers and the Bureau.
3. Budget for the Bureau, bed tax dollar better usage. How we can market Allegiant Airlines better. Also to target the international travelers example – identifying Brazilians who live in Florida to get visitors here and possibly putting some travel packages together.

4. Teamwork. Hosting pre and post events for larger venues in the area such as the Wine & Jazz Festival.
5. Where to find the forum to discuss these ideas. How to put all the efforts together to move forward with some of these ideas. Mr. Suriol is glad the County has a CCHA. He is hoping this group can take the lead on some of these objectives.

Ms. Patti Allen with Fishermen's Village briefly talked about the off season as well and reaching the gap between season and non-season. She feels collaborative efforts are being done. She mentioned the One Community, One Message group and having a consistent message throughout the area. Ms. Allen asked about the festival and event sponsorship dollars available. She would like to see if Punta Gorda could get some of these dollars for a sustained marketing program. She feels this would be a better use of these dollars rather than an event.

Mr. John Zacarri talked about his seat on the Sarasota TDC. He briefly talked about some large events taking place in Sarasota County and the possibility of bringing some of these to Charlotte County.

Mr. Holt mentioned Allegiant Airlines and the co-op opportunities. He mentioned that the Four Points captures visitor origins which can be a great marketing tool. Mr. Holt as a representative of the Four Points is now a member of the CCHA.

5) Diane Quilty- Budget Report

Ms. Quilty reviewed some of the budget figures. Ms. Steiner mentioned to the Council that sometimes the reports are difficult to decipher, as we can only use the software/format given to us by the county.

Ms. Devine suggested that maybe a plan would be a good idea to match the dollars with all the detailed items on the budget sheet. Ms. Steiner said that that has already been done. Councilmember Keesling asked about getting more detailed information for the budget numbers. Commissioner Constance asked if we can do an electronic document for the members to review. Mr. Futch will re-sort the budget document that was originally done at the previous meeting. He will try to get a new spreadsheet outlined for the council. Ms. Burnam suggested a heading, a narrative, a total and the backup. Ms. Steiner said it is in the document supplied. Ms. Steiner mentioned the narrative would be the marketing plan.

Ms. Steiner said how important the CCHA, Punta Gorda and Englewood tourism committees and the chambers are to the County and how we all need to work together.

6) Director and Staff Reports

Mr. Futch gave a brief overview of growth vs. budget comparisons. Summer collections were up over 19% versus the previous year. He reviewed some summer advertising initiatives.

Ms. Steiner reviewed several major Bureau initiatives, first of which is the 2015 Visitor Guide. The new website is also a major undertaking. "Show Us Your Charlotte" Campaign is moving along with the third contest underway. The Co-Op marketing process is on line. Mr. Futch set up Event Brite for registration for Co-Op advertising sales. Ms. Steiner updated the Council on Florida Tracks and Trails. She also mentioned the Brazil Market Smart Phone App. Ms. Steiner talked about the approach for a Natural Brand Awareness campaign. This will be something the Ad Agency will be working with the Bureau on. Ms. Huber is attending a social media conference in Tennessee.

Ms. Steiner briefly mentioned the RSW Volunteer Airport FAM tour that took place earlier this week, which was a tremendous success. Commissioner Constance mentioned the closing of the Jones Loop Road rest area. Ms. Steiner said the County is sending a request to the state to receive the rest stop property and possibly using it as a visitor center. She will be coordinating with FDOT and other agencies to see if this is feasible.

7) Discussion of Sponsorship guidelines

Ms. Steiner reviewed the draft specification for the new 2015 Festival and Event sponsorship document. The purpose of this funding is to increase overnight stays and visitor expenditures during the low season. The amount of the sponsorship would not exceed \$20,000. She went through some specific guidelines. She asked for input from the council. Mr. Stead mentioned that the Englewood Chamber has already agreed to host a water event in Englewood next year. This could lead into other events around it and will be a charity event. They are building it locally. Mr. Wright asked about the dollars and he thought it was more geared toward programs, than events. At this time the process will vet through the Chambers. The TDC will look at the applications and make a decision as to what events would receive funding. Councilmember Keesling feels the city can do great things with that money. Ms. Burnam suggested a branding initiative could be done. Ms. Devine suggested a large FAM tour of the area with Media, Industry Partners.

Ms. Steiner said there needs to be some consensus. She does not feel giving an organization the money is the way to go. Mr. Stead suggested that we could add this verbiage to the criteria – *an event for off season*. Mr. Stead made a motion and was seconded by Kim Devine to change - under the guidelines from through November 1, 2015 to *Jan 1, 2016*. This motion was unanimously approved by the council. Councilmember Keesling asked if there could be a liaison to oversee the sponsorship funding progress. For Punta Gorda the liaison would be Councilmember Keesling and Mr. Stead would be the lead for Englewood.

Commissioner Constance is going to speak to the Legal Department about the Ex Officio's on the Tourist Development Council. Councilmember Keesling asked about Ex Officio guidelines. Ms. Steiner will look into this and report back to the Council on her findings. Mr. Wright asked Ms. Steiner how she would like the information distributed for the Event Sponsorships. Ms. Steiner suggested that these requests need to come through the Chamber offices. A motion was presented by Julie Mathis and seconded by Judy Malbuisson to move forward with the approval of the event sponsorship process with the changes noted.

Ms. Steiner briefly touched on the tourism breakfast theme and asked members what their thoughts were for next year. She is putting some guidelines together for the Tourism Hall of

Fame. Ms. Steiner asked what theme would they like this year. The council talked about resurrecting the Tourism Awards. Ms. Malbuisson suggested “one community one voice” for a theme. Ms. Devine suggested a nature themed event. The council agreed with the nature theme.

8) Ex Officio Comments

- Councilmember Keesling asked who are the Ex Officio's? These would be non-voting members of the Council. John Wright, Ed Hill and Gary Quill from the Airport would be considered Ex Officio's. Commissioner Constance and Ms. Steiner will get clarification of who is considered an Ex Officio.
- Mr. Wright suggested resurrecting the International consulate visits to the area. Mr. Wright said it was done about 5 years ago and was a tremendous success.

9) Citizens comments

- Ms. Patti Allen talked about the Pirate Festival at the village. The intent was to make this an event for the whole City of Punta Gorda. She spoke about the partnerships and how this event was a great success. She would like to have some of the dollars from the festival sponsorship that is available for the Pirate Festival. She asked Ms. Steiner if she can apply for this money. Ms. Allen can partner with the Chamber and fill out the paperwork. Ms. Steiner said she would like this to be available for brand new events not existing ones.
- Commissioner Constance said we will discuss all particulars at the January meeting.
- Mr. Joe Suriol would like to get more events into the Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center and would like to see Economic Development and Tourism work more hand in hand.
- Councilmember Keesling asked if we could get a member of the Event Center to act as Ex Officio at the Council meetings.
- Commissioner Constance mentioned the crawler on the weather channel locatetoparadise.com. that airs when the weather is bad up north. This produced over 5,000 hits in a short period of time.

10) Council comments

- Ms. Burnam mentioned the Lighting of the Village which is November 15, please don't miss it.
- Ms. Malbuisson mentioned that the CCHA will be meeting on the 4th Wed of the month at 8:00 a.m. The next interactive meeting is scheduled at Treasure Lanes.
- Councilmember Devine said she believes the perfect conduit for the Council is the CCHA.
- Mr. Stead talked about Stump Pass becoming a serious issue. It will greatly affect transit boat traffic to the area. Commissioner Constance said that engineers are working on this

but could take some time to resolve the problems.

- Ms. Mathis asked about the boat races. Commissioner Constance said the organizers will be updating the board next week.
- Commissioner Constance Adjourned the meeting.