



Charlotte County Tourist Development Council

Meeting Minutes

January 9, 2015

Administration Conference Room

Members Present

Commissioner Chris Constance
Julie Mathis
Kathy Burnam
Councilmember Rachel Keesling
Judy Malbuisson
Vice Mayor Kim Devine
Ken Stead
Kelly Williamson
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
Jennifer Huber, Public Relations Manager
Diane Quilty – Fiscal Services
Diane Mitchell – Internal Audit

Guests

Ed Hill, Englewood Chamber of Commerce
John Wright, Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce
Denise Dull, Charlotte County Hospitality Association
Patti Allen, Fishermen's Village
Bobbie Marquis, Wanna-B Inn
Carol Moore – Englewood Sun
Vito Bisceglia – Waterfest Committee

1) Call to Order/Roll Call

Ms. Steiner welcomed everyone to the Tourist Development Council. Julie Mathis called the meeting to order, roll call was taken and all members were present. A motion was presented by Vice Mayor Kim Devine, seconded by Kathy Burnam and unanimously carried to approve the minutes as written for the Tourist Development Council Meeting held November 7, 2014.

2) Diane Mitchell, Financial Report

Diane Mitchell presented financials for the 12 months ending September 2014. Total collections for the period were \$3,033,288 (an increase of 18%) compared to the prior year. She briefly went through some geographical statistics. Ms. Steiner mentioned that Ken Stead will be presenting a budget report for the council starting at the next meeting. Mr. Stead briefly mentioned he will be working closely with Ms. Steiner and Mr. Futch to get a comprehensive budget report for the council members to use.

3) Diane Quilty, Budget Report

Ms. Quilty briefly went through some budget figures and said the beginning balance is a bit askew because the numbers came in late.

4) Review of Festival/Event Applications and Vote

Mr. John Wright Punta Gorda Chamber President gave an overview of the event application for a Brews, Blues and BBQ event. He went through details on this possible event to take place in June of 2015. The site for this event would be the History Park. **A motion was presented by Councilmember Keesling, seconded by Judy Malbuission and unanimously carried to approve the \$20,000.00 funding to the Punta Gorda Chamber for the Brews, Blues and BBQ Event.**

Mr. Ed Hill, Englewood Florida Chamber of Commerce President, gave an overview of the event application for an Englewood Beach WaterFest. He went through details on this possible ten daylong event to include boat racing, fishing tournaments and many more water activities. This will be an all-volunteer event with proceeds benefiting local charities. Ms. Carole Moore Waterfest Committee Member said the positive feedback has been tremendous. She briefly talked about the sponsorships and how this will help sustain this event in future years. Mr. Stead said they are waiting on a media package to present to the sponsors before going forward. **A motion was presented by Councilmember Devine, seconded by Kathy Burnam and unanimously carried to approve the \$20,000.00 funding to the Englewood Florida Chamber of Commerce for the Englewood Beach WaterFest Event. Council member Ken Stead recused himself due to his affiliation with the Englewood Chamber.**

5) Director and Staff Reports

Commissioner Constance gave a brief overview on the I-75 Visitor Center. He said the Dept. of Transportation would be closing the building. The areas that do not get enough traffic are scheduled to be shut down. He suggested the facility should be turned into a Southwest Florida visitor center. This would encompass all surrounding counties, such as Sarasota, Lee, and Collier. He spoke about the importance of keeping the site open as a visitor center. He will get more details and bring them to the TDC. He will be gathering community members for support as well. He is requesting letters of support to present to the Secretary of Agriculture, the Governor or local Senator's offices in support of this facility. Ms. Steiner will get information to the TDC Council. Ms. Steiner briefly mentioned more particulars in her director's report in the TDC Packet.

Ms. Steiner discussed the funding for expansion of existing festivals. She wanted the Council members input in this initiative. She would like to review how we can take an event like the Wine & Jazz Festival or the Pirate Festival and expand them.

Ms. Steiner requested information from the legal office on ex officio's on the council. The legal department's initial response was that it would not be allowed by statute. However, Ms. Steiner will ask a legal representative to be at the next meeting to clarify.

Ms. Steiner went over some bureau initiatives. She met with Team Punta Gorda and Pedal and Play to discuss free bike and pedal and play marketing for the area. Vice Mayor Devine said it would be nice to have an app for the biking and walking trails. Ms. Steiner mentioned Charlotte State Bank is working on an art map. Mr. Futch and Ms. Steiner made a presentation to the City of Punta Gorda on advertising, earned media and promotion. She also attended a roundtable discussion with the Sun Newspaper to discuss the current status of tourism along with challenges and opportunities. Mr. Stead said his takeaway was the opportunity to cross pollinate with offerings in the area. He appreciated the thought of working closely with other counties and come together for the good of the entire area. He met with FDOT to look at the transportation plan for Charlotte County. Ms. Steiner also talked about the Holiday Lights Fam Cruise. She briefly talked about the Mariner's Bag program.

Ms. Steiner talked about a destination DVD which was suggested by Joe Suriol of the Four Points Sheraton. She said this project will be completed after the new website launch..

Commissioner Constance spent some time with Mr. Futch going over the new structure of the new website. Ms. Steiner mentioned how proud she was of Jennifer Huber being nominated as one of the top travel bloggers in the state of Florida.

Mr. Doherty went through some of the major event happenings in Charlotte County. A few named were: the AAU All State Gymnastics coming in November, the bureau also hosted a BMX event which was held last month; and the F-18 Regatta will be returning to Charlotte Harbor in January. Mr. Doherty mentioned the two grants the Bureau received from the Florida Sports Foundation. Mr. Doherty met with Florida Sports Foundation and participated in a site tour of the area. A track and field event might also take place in the area. Vice Mayor Devine asked how the leads go out. Mr. Doherty briefly explained the process. She suggested possibly mailing

out some sort of goodie bags to the attendees. Ms. Dull mentioned that the CHHA could possibly handle. Ms. Williamson said they do this now for larger groups visiting the area.

Mr. Doherty is on the bicycle committee and they are in the process of designing a kiosk with trails, and possibly a phone app. Mr. Doherty also mentioned the bureau is working on a golf guide.

Mr. Futch showed the video that Mr. Jones shot at the BMX Qualifier Race.

6) Council comments

- Vice Mayor Devine wished everyone a happy healthy and prosperous new year.
- Mr. Brunette briefly talked about his sixth winter at Palm Island Resort. He spoke about the pacing of the advanced bookings.
- Mr. Stead mentioned that Captiva Cruises is expanding their services in the Englewood area to include Useppa Island and Cayo Costa. They should be up and running sometime in February. Ms. Stead mentioned that Stump Pass is still of concern. He knows there is no quick easy solution. Commissioner Constance said that the proper authorities are working on this issue and some dredging will be done in the near future.
- Ms. Burnam said the year ended on a great note. She talked about the Villages Expo coming up soon.
- Ms. Mathis mentioned the Chamber Office had been very busy and the Chamber Expo event is coming up on Feb 5th at the Event Center.
- Commissioner Constance briefly talked about the signage in Punta Gorda in reference to biking. Councilmember Keesling and Vice Mayor Devine said that the county needs to work on the biking friendly community concept.
- Commissioner Constance also wanted to thank the City of Punta Gorda for the great job they did on clearing out the courthouse area biking path and now you can see over the water. Commissioner Constance also mentioned that Melanie Lenz with the Rays will be here at the next Board Meeting talking about some new happenings with the Tampa Bay Rays.
- Commissioner Constance mentioned the next TDC Meeting is scheduled for March 6th and he adjourned the meeting.