



## Charlotte County Tourist Development Council

### Meeting Minutes

May 8, 2015

Administration Conference Room

#### Members Present

Commissioner Ken Doherty  
Julie Mathis  
Kathy Burnam  
Councilmember Rachel Keesling  
Judy Malbuisson  
Vice Mayor Kim Devine  
Kelly Williamson

#### Members Absent

Commissioner Chris Constance  
Ken Stead  
Rick Brunette

#### Staff Present

Lorah Steiner, Director - Tourist Development  
Jerry Jones, Charlotte County Film Director  
Sean Doherty, Sports Marketing Manager  
Elizabeth Parker, Admin Svc Coordinator  
Jennifer Huber, Public Relations Manager  
Dianne Quilty – Fiscal Services  
Diane Mitchell – Internal Audit

#### Guests

Ed Hill, Englewood Chamber of Commerce  
Denise Dull, Charlotte County Hospitality Association  
Patti Allen, Fishermen's Village  
Jim Finch, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center  
Craig Holt, Four Points Sheraton

### 1) Call to Order/Roll Call

Commissioner Doherty welcomed everyone to the Tourist Development Council and called the meeting to order. Roll call was taken, Commissioner Constance, Rick Brunette and Ken Stead were absent and excused and all other members were present. A motion was presented by Julie Mathis, seconded by Vice Mayor Kim Devine, and unanimously carried to approve the minutes as written for the Tourist Development Council Meeting held March 6, 2015.

### 2) Citizen's Input

Ms. Patti Allen from Fishermen's Village thanked Ms. Steiner for the bureau efforts in the expansion project at the Villages. She would like to do a presentation to the board on this exciting endeavor. Ms. Allen also spoke about the Vietnam Wall attraction, and mentioned the letter sent in support of this possible attraction. This item is on the agenda for the next BCC Meeting. Ms. Allen asked about the Visitor's Guide and said she would like to see the guide printed on a January date. She said they missed the entire season because the guide was out so late. Ms. Burnam said their biggest miss was the Villages Trade Show. Ms. Steiner said that this year the job was done by the advertising agency rather than in-house. She mentioned that it is a bit frustrating getting information back to the bureau, from the ad agency, as to the changes for the new guide. She also noted that Chip Futch plays a critical role in guiding the Visitor Guide development process and he was very involved with the development of the new website, at the same time the Visitor Guide was being developed. Julie Mathis and Vice Mayor Kim Devine suggested a penalty clause could be in place for next year. Ms. Steiner will definitely look into this. Ms. Steiner said with the two new part-time positions coming on board for a Project Manager and a Meetings Manger this will be a tremendous help to the bureau. Ms. Steiner thanked the Board of County Commissioners for their approval of these new positions.

Ms. Denise Dull gave an update on the Charlotte Harbor Hospitality Association. The group celebrated their first anniversary. Between the networking and program meetings, they are keeping very busy. One of their next initiatives is reaching out to the dining community to join the association and trying to support more local events in the area.

Mr. Ed Hill gave a Chamber update. They just produced an app for the new Englewood Community Guide. He said the Tourism Assembly meetings are going very well. Two initiatives the chamber is working on are – a youth naturalist program and a restaurant week. The Waterfest event has been awarded 501 3c status. Ms. Steiner mentioned friends of Waterfest and encouraged everyone to join.

Jim Finch gave an update on the event center; which is increasing events and going strong. He will give more detail at further meetings.

### 3) Attraction Funding Discussion

Ms. Steiner talked about the process for attraction funding. Ms. Steiner stated the Vietnam Wall project is a

great concept for the area. There is one in Oklahoma and one in Pensacola, FL. Ms. Steiner had asked the Vietnam Wall Memorial group to do some research on this project so the TDC would have a better understanding of the potential tourism draw for the project, based upon that research. We don't know what the return would be from TDT. She also stated that a true destination attraction brings people in to stay overnight.

Councilmember Keesling said that this attraction project is very appropriate for the use of Tourist Development tax dollars. She asked about the bureau support of the new Tracks and Trails attraction. Ms. Steiner said the bureau only gave a small sponsorship for the Country Life Music Festival for this attraction. Ms. Steiner said due diligence needs to be done. Vice Mayor Devine said it looks like we are talking about two areas a main attraction and a smaller venue. Ms. Steiner said she would contact the organizer to find out what the total amount was they were requesting from Charlotte County. Commissioner Doherty said he thought the endeavor was good for the county but needs to move forward cautiously. Ms. Malbussion suggested this might open the flood gates of people requesting funding. So far the Vietnam Wall group has raised \$220,000.00.

Councilmember Keesling asked Ms. Steiner about the attraction process, which was supposed to be discussed at the meeting today. Ms. Steiner said establishing this process needs to be done, but the Vietnam Wall project is here now and needs to be addressed in a timely manner. Ms. Devine suggested that any group that comes to the TDC for funding needs to have money raised before their approach. She also suggested in-kind services could be included. Commissioner Doherty said to pay close attention to the next meeting as there should be a better idea as to what the group is looking for. Ms. Steiner said that she did not realize that their target date was September. That is why she decided to talk about the attraction funding process at a later meeting date. Commissioner Doherty suggested the council could schedule another meeting to discuss this further. Ms. Dull mentioned that a sub-committee through the Hospitality Association could possibly take this project on. Ms. Steiner will start working on getting this information to the board members before they meet about the attraction process. Councilmember Keesling asked about a subcommittee. She suggested a group that could meet and give recommendations to Ms. Steiner. Commissioner Doherty suggested getting with the legal department about setting up another meeting.

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

Diane Mitchell presented the financials for the first quarter Oct 2014 through Dec 2014. Total collections for the period were \$539,671 (an increase of 18%) compared to the prior year. She also reported on the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter Jan 2015 through March 2015. Total collections for the period were 1,781,538 (an increase of 22%) compared to the prior year. She briefly went through some geographical statistics. The new numbers came out yesterday and we are up 24% in March.

#### **5) Dianne Quilty, Budget Report**

Ms. Quilty shared the latest budget figures with the TDC. Ms. Steiner briefly went through some account

streams. Commissioner Doherty asked about getting a more detailed budget report but unfortunately with the county software system it is not possible; however Mr. Futch is working on a document that will give a detailed description of Bureau expenses. Ms. Steiner also noted all expenditures are reviewed with Ken Stead prior to each TDC Meeting.

#### 6) Director and Staff Reports

Ms. Steiner briefly went through her director's report in the TDC Packet. She talked about pushing more advertising dollars into summer and shoulder seasons. Ms. Steiner discussed some key bureau initiatives. Brand USA is one initiative that provides great exposure for the area. They offer exceptional packages in the international market. The Outdoor Magazine ad was a value buy, and beautifully placed in the magazine. She also talked about some other advertising initiatives to include billboard signage and additional visitor guide distribution points in the Tampa market. More videos will be coming out as well.

Ms. Steiner talked about the Tourism Luncheon event coming up in May. She mentioned the Spring Training annual survey which we might or might not be doing. She said the VCB's were working with the state to come up with a formula all VCB's could use to determine Spring Training economic impact as the cost to do intercept studies is quite high. Ms. Steiner talked about airport data collection. She is still checking on this with Mr. Quill from the Punta Gorda Airport.

Mr. Jones briefly talked about bringing a drone festival to the area. He will keep the council updated on this project.

Ms. Steiner met with the Rays organization to discuss promotion of Stone Crabs and community engagement. Ms. Steiner congratulated Mr. Doherty on getting his Certified Sport Executive Certification.

#### 7) Citizen's comments

Ms. Patti Allen spoke about the letter in support of the Vietnam Wall. She said she would be happy to be on a subcommittee to facilitate with this project. Ms. Allen asked if citizens can speak during the meeting. Councilmember Keesling said at the City of Punta Gorda they usually let the citizens speak during their city council meetings. Commissioner Doherty said it depends on the meeting itself and can be discussed with the council members as to how they would like to approach this item.

Ms. Allen feels strongly about the Wall Project and what it will bring to the Charlotte County area.

#### 8) Council comments

- Vice Mayor Devine asked how the website was going, Ms. Steiner said everything is in place but the process will be ongoing. There is still a great deal of content that needs to be updated. Vice Mayor Devine also asked about getting a site to upload photos that the bureau might be in need of.
- Ms. Malbuisson said the arts community can help out with photos as well.
- Ms. Williamson asked if the bureau was going to have a soft launch for the new website. Ms. Steiner said that yes the bureau would be getting information out to the community on the new bureau site.

- Ms. Burnam is working on getting her listing updated on the new site. Ms. Burnam mentioned the Naples market and 70% of the people have never heard of Fishermen's Village. She feels this market should be looked into. She also mentioned the exciting expansion of Fishermen's Village.
- Commissioner Doherty thanked everyone and adjourned the meeting.