



Charlotte County Tourist Development Council

Meeting Minutes

March 4, 2016

B-106 Conference Room

Members Present

Commissioner Chris Constance

Mayor Rachel Keesling

Judy Malbuisson

Julie Mathis

Vice Mayor Kim Devine

Kelly Williamson

Robin Madden

Rick Brunette

Kathy Burnam

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

Cindy Mize, Project Manager

Natalie Hinger, Fiscal Services

Diane Mitchell, Internal Audit

Jim Finch, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center

Lori Tetreault, County Attorney's Office

Guests

Ed Hill, Englewood Chamber of Commerce

Gary Quill, Punta Gorda Airport

Natalie Hinger, Fiscal Services

Todd Taylor, Fiscal Services

Dave DiMaggio, Aqua

Katie Varano, Aqua

Dana Carr, Air Show
Craig Holt, Four Points
Joe Suriol, Interdevco IMS
Ralph Young, WaterFest

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Roll Call/Meeting Minutes Approval

- Ms. Steiner welcomed everyone to the TDC Meeting. Roll call was taken, all members were present. A motion was presented by Julie Mathis and seconded by Vice Mayor Kim Devine and unanimously carried to approve the minutes as written for the Tourist Development Council Meeting January 8, 2016. Mayor Keesling asked about the feasibility study funds which was not initially included in the Bureau budget. Ms. Steiner said the window to do the feasibility study, in order to keep the option on the land open, was very narrow so the decision was made to move forward

2. Citizen's Input

- Craig Holt with the Four Points mentioned outsourcing Travel Agencies to book hotel rooms. He said he feels that this should be looked into. He also talked about hotel packages and asked what we can do to help promote them.
- Mr. Suriol talked about low season and getting visitors to our area during that time.
- Dana Carr briefly spoke about the 2016 Air Show and the funding needed.
- Ralph Young talked about the 2016 WaterFest and the sponsorship needed.
- Jim Finch gave an overview of bookings at the Event Center. Mr. Finch talked about the planned replacement of seating and lighting at the Event Center.
- Mr. Hill mentioned the Experience Englewood event happening this weekend.

3. Diane Mitchell – Financial Report

- Diane Mitchell presented the financials. Collections for the two months ending December 2015 were up 12%. Total revenue year to date was \$605,485. She briefly went through some geographical statistics. Ms. Mitchell briefly spoke about Airbnb and the collection of tourist tax. Ms. Steiner said she will be meeting with the County's legal department on this in the near future.

4. Natalie Hinger – County Budget Report

- Ms. Hinger briefly went through some of the budget numbers. Branding research and feasibility study were mentioned.
- Vice Mayor Devine agreed with Ms. Hinger's Budget assessment.

5. Director and Staff Reports

- Ms. Steiner mentioned the stakeholder interviews conducted for the VCB's brand review process.
- Ms. Steiner talked about the two new half-time positions for the Bureau. Mr. Doherty and Ms. Steiner went through the interview process and announced that Susan Tobin was selected for the position as Meetings Manager.
- Ms. Steiner met with the new general manager of Phase V. She also met with Funk Fest and Air Show organizers.
- Ms. Steiner attended the tourism conference held in Englewood.
- Ms. Steiner briefly talked about the continued work with the "One Community One Message" group.
- The Tourism Luncheon will be held on May 12, 2016 at the Event Center in Punta Gorda.
- Ms. Steiner talked to the Board about attending and supporting the Southwest Florida Travel Rally days on May 4, 2016.

6. Branding Process update – Dave Di Maggio, Aqua

- Mr. Di Maggio gave a brief update on the branding process for the Bureau.

7. Dana Carr – Air Show

- Mr. Carr gave a brief overview of the Air Show logistics.

8. I-75 Jones Loop Road update

- Commissioner Constance gave an update on the Visitor Center. He said they are waiting on the feasibility study to come in. He spoke about the possibility of having this be a regional Visitor Center and trying to change the concept to be more of a Welcome Center. He also mentioned VISIT Florida, the state tourism agency.

RETREAT AGENDA

1. Visitor Center

- Commissioner Constance showed the video he recorded from the VISIT FLORIDA Welcome Center in Tallahassee. He also talked about the mVix television monitor/information system that will be installed at the front lobby of the County building.

2. Event and Festival Funding Guidelines

- Ms. Steiner briefly went through some of the guidelines for the event funding. First was to

decide whether to keep it the same as last year; which was \$20,000 for a new event in Englewood and \$20,000 for a new event in Punt Gorda.

She also the TDC had expressed a desire to have the process open it up to the public which allow any organization to apply. She said the most important thing for the TDC to remember is to adhere strictly to the guidelines.

- Ms. Steiner clarified that this process was the TDC's decision. Commissioner Constance envisioned this money to be a kick start for new events. This whole idea is to bring events to the area in low and shoulder seasons.
- The council members discussed possible points for both new and recurring events.
- Commissioner Constance believes the county needs to build legacy events during low season, this should be the main goal.
- Ms. Steiner went through the sample funding program details. The following was a list of items to be changed or added;
 1. Production of room nights 50 points was good.
 2. Timing of the event: need to move up in the priority questions, and would state must be in low season. May-Oct.
 3. Marketing/Advertising, or B&C, should be 20 points total.
 4. Timing of event: 10 points for one day; 20 points for two day event.
 5. Economic Impact should be 20 points and Alternate Funding Sources or matching funds should be added.
 6. What's left would be additional information provided by event organizer.
 7. Ms. Mathis and Commissioner Constance suggested getting all the additions and edits together and have the TDC hold a special meeting to approve the Event Funding Program.
 8. Ms. Williamson also suggested to add getting resumes of event organizers.
 9. Ms. Steiner mentioned that the organizer does not have to be a 501(c) 3 - organization to apply for funding.
 10. Ms. Mathis said that the final Event Development Program Application information needs to get out to the local community.
- Ms. Steiner reviewed the top four topics that the TDC wished to discuss at this meeting. Ms. Steiner also mentioned having an in-depth meeting about advertising, marketing and budgeting. Mayor Keesling suggested having a public meeting and inviting anyone who would like to join to discuss tourism related items. Ms. Steiner agreed. Commissioner Constance suggested a public outreach meeting can be held for community ideas and thoughts.

- Mr. Di Maggio went through the topics the TDC wished to discuss.
 1. Destination visitation growth and impact on natural product. Some suggested items were:
 - Getting another University in the local area.
 - Transforming Medical Care in the county.
 2. Mr. Di Maggio asked about the expansion of tourism encroaching on the natural resources in the area.
 - Commissioner Constance said yes he was concerned but the comp plan will keep this from happening.
 - Ms. Mathis suggested additional infrastructure, possibly adding new attractions to the county. Council members agreed this needs to be looked into.
 - Vice Mayor Devine suggested taking a poll at the schools to look into attractions for our area.
 - Ms. Mathis mentioned public transportation.
 - Commissioner Constance suggested a shuttle service in season to take guests from PG to Englewood and back again.
 3. Low Season Ideas for driving overnight business:
 - Creating larger events for overnight guests
 - Ms. Steiner suggested getting another committee together to look into this.
 - Vice Mayor Devine was excited with the new branding and how this could all work together to drive more business into the low season.
 - Commissioner Constance asked how other counties are leveraging low season.
 - He also mentioned how Florida Tracks and Trails could help with low season events.
 - Ms. Steiner briefly talked about packaging and how important that is. Mr. Futch talked about Peak End Rule: when a customer remembers the most extreme emotional experience and the last experience they had at the destination. How can we make this work in our county?
 - Ms. Steiner talked about creating a spa weekend.
 - A motion was made by Vice Mayor Devine and Mayor Keesling to open up the discussion to all members present. All members unanimously agreed.
 - Ms. Malbuisson mentioned 24Twenty One Event Center in Port Charlotte and how this venue is available for local events.
 - Mr. Hill talked about getting packages together as well. He also mentioned a

possible shuttle service in the Englewood area. Mr. Suriol suggested more advertising to attract visitors during low season.

- Ms. Mathis suggested all the hoteliers ask their customers if they would be interested in the shuttle service. Vice Mayor Devine said especially if there is an event in town, the shuttle would be a great idea. Ms. Steiner talked about packaging these day trips with the shuttle.
- Mr. Jones asked about a water taxi service.
- Ms. Steiner talked about doing or health camps (in hotels) in the county and packaging these as a wellness vacations.
- Ms. Malbuisson mentioned a geology weekend.
- Vice Mayor Devine asked how the bookings at the Event Center were in the summer. Mr. Finch replied they're not that good. He said he is working on getting concerts confirmed.

4. Lift Markets/Airport Promotions

- Mr. Di Maggio explained the two ways people come: either driving or flying. Ms. Williamson said these lift markets are so important. Markets like Columbus and Chicago need more advertising.
- Mr. Doherty briefly mentioned the trade show he just attended in Chicago and the response he received was great.
- Vice Mayor Devine talked about doing more advertising at these Allegiant lift markets.
- Mr. Futch briefly went over some initiatives the Bureau is working on to gain information on the lift markets. He also went over some geological statistics.
- Mr. Hill said that the Chamber office is starting to collect zip codes and can now add the questions. "How did you arrive?", "and "which airport did you fly into?"
- Commissioner Constance said we need to build a Visitor Center. He talked about a weather ticker on the Weather Channel that was done previously. Maybe this could be looked into again, but do it in the summer months and put a ticker like "Temperature in Punta Gorda this evening is 76 degrees."
- Mr. Di Maggio asked if Real Estate agencies could help with tourism.
- Mr. Suriol said we need to keep educating people on the great things to do in our area.
- Commissioner Constance talked about installing monitors in County locations to provide information about what there is to do in Charlotte County.
- Mr. Jones updated the Council on the production process of the video he has been working on for the past several months.

- Mr. Suriol asked about the Happenings that the Bureau produces. Ms. Steiner said the office will be streamlining this process. New business cards will be printed to hand out to visitors that will take them directly to the website for events.
- The group also talked about how many event calendars there are in the area and how it would be nice to have one central location for all events. Mr. Futch said that Facebook will be the way to go to publish events.

3. Council Comments

- Commissioner Constance thanked Ms. Steiner for her plan for both Englewood and Punta Gorda.
- Ms. Steiner asked the members what they liked from the meeting.
- Ms. Williamson really liked the survey and appreciated the outline.
- Ms. Burnam also liked the survey, and wants to continue to partner and work together in off season.
- Vice Mayor Devine liked the survey as well. She also mentioned Aqua's rebranding process and how this will help with marketing the area.
- Commissioner Constance suggested another retreat in September to discuss other items that were missed or follow up items.
- Ms. Malbuisson liked the free form style for the meeting.
- Ms. Madden agreed and was appreciative with staff and getting the event application process finished and finalized. She also liked the survey.
- Commissioner Constance would like to meet next Friday the 11th to finalize the Event Application Process. The meeting will be set for that day.
- Meeting was adjourned.