

PASCO COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING

ANNOTATED MINUTES

APRIL 19, 2017

**PREPARED IN THE OFFICE OF
PAULA S. O'NEIL, CLERK & COMPTROLLER**

**THE MINUTES WERE PREPARED IN AGENDA ORDER
AS PUBLISHED AND NOT IN THE ORDER
IN WHICH THE ITEMS WERE HEARD**

10:30 A.M.

**WEST PASCO GOVERNMENT CENTER, BOARD ROOM 1ST FLOOR
8731 CITIZENS DRIVE, NEW PORT RICHEY, FL 34654**

Tourist Development Council Members

The Honorable Kathryn Starkey
Chairman, BCC

The Honorable Camille Hernandez
Vice-Chair, Mayor, City of Dade City

The Honorable Chopper Davis
Councilman, City of New Port Richey

John Heather
Saint Leo University

Adam Friedrich
Holiday Inn Express & Suites Trinity

Thomas Dempsey
Saddlebrook Resort

Piyush Mulji
Hampton Inn Dade City / Zephyrhills

Adam Sala
Treehoppers Aerial Adventure Park

Curtis Beebe - **ABSENT**
Restaurateur

1. Call to Order – Chairman

Chairman Starkey called the meeting to order at 10:36 a.m.

2. Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Donalee Schmidt, Deputy Clerk, gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

3. Roll Call

Ms. Schmidt called the roll. Mr. Curtis Beebe was absent.

4. Public Comment

Mr. Gary Beck, Killer B Promotions, spoke regarding the Professional Bowlers Association Senior Tour. He reported the event had been increased to a six day event and added a PBA 60 Event which was a separate competition for senior bowlers. Next year they planned to expand the event to eight days. The Pasco County Florida Open event was going well. He looked forward to working with the TDC in the future.

5. Adoption of Minutes

a. TDC Minutes January 18, 2017

Chairman Starkey requested a motion to approve the minutes.

Motion to approve the minutes from January 18, 2017; motion carried.

6. Welcome & Introduction of New TDC Members – Kathryn Starkey

Chairman Starkey welcomed the new TDC Members.

Each of the TDC Members introduced themselves and spoke briefly regarding their background.

Chairman Starkey spoke regarding the International Growing Global events held this morning in Lutz. She thanked the Council for starting the meeting later this morning.

7. Sunshine Law Discussion – Elizabeth Blair

TD17-028

Mr. Elizabeth Blair, Senior Assistant County Attorney Office, explained she had served as the Counsel to the TDC since 1999. She referred to information provided to the

members and gave an extensive review of the Sunshine Law, Public Records Law and the Code of Ethics. She explained that at any time when a Council Member ran into a situation where they felt unsure that they were to contact her and she would help them. Key points discussed included never accept anything from anyone if it was for the purpose of influencing their vote, voting conflicts of interest, that all meetings were required to be held in the Sunshine, notice requirements, dialogue between two or members outside of the meeting pertaining to matters that would come before the TDC for a vote, the Sunshine Law did not apply to the TDC Members when talking to someone on another Board such as the Board of County Commissioners, that public records were any document that was made furtherance of government business, personal notes were not public records, Staff was the custodian of the public records for the Council Members, and e-mail.

This item was for information only; no action was taken.

8. Wayfinding Presentation

TD17-029

Mr. Richard Gehring, Strategic Policy Administrator, explained the item and spoke regarding trail and pedestrian/bike movement. The commitment was up to \$100,000.00. He noted the County wanted to create a design criteria which would give them a unified image.

Ms. Paula Baracaldo, Office of Government Affairs, and Ms. Lauren St. Martin, Public Communications Specialist, gave an extensive presentation to the TDC regarding wayfinding.

Ms. Baracaldo defined wayfinding and spoke regarding the need to assist tourists and residents to find their way around the County to provide a warm and friendly environment for those coming into the County, the scope of services was split into two phases, Phase 1 would concentrate on a county wide design standards and Phase 2 would focus on the implementation and location of those items, the ongoing parallel project located on the U.S. 19 Corridor from Hernando to Pinellas; the specific features of the project, funding through grants, and the need for a uniform cohesive look. She reviewed an overlay study and explained they were recommending the creation of a unifying and recognizable theme at entry points through the County, developing a cohesive signage plan for the County along with recommendations on key amenities and assets, Ordinance requirements, the goals of the plan, the promotion of key destinations and a signage system that would help people navigate around the County and trails.

Ms. St. Martin explained they wanted a signage package that would give them a sense of where you were within the County. Each area of the County had its own identities so the signage plan would be the overall umbrella for the County. Each area would have

their own components within the same design scheme. She reviewed the specific funding amounts set aside in the Tourism Development Plan, that the gateway signs located on U.S. 19 would be funded by the Office of Tourism Development, and possible grants. She reviewed wayfinding designs and displayed several examples from other areas.

Chairman Starkey spoke regarding the Harbors West Market Re-Development Plan and spoke regarding the area. The business community was trying to beautify U.S. 19.

Discussion followed between the Council Members and Staff regarding previously allotted monies; the implementation process; colors used; the trail system signage; a feeling the process was moving too slow; the bike hub was a separate project; the nature center and trails; Florida Statute requirements for funding; the process to be followed; the funding amounts; this was an expensive investment; the timing; an objection that hotel money would be used for this project; the importance of branding; the function of the Council; and the funding was part of the approved strategic Tourism Plan.

Mr. Heather stated for the record he was part of a tourism strategic consulting group and would abstain from the vote due to a conflict of interest.

Motion to approve funding up to \$100,000.00 and to shorten the timeframe; motion carried with Mr. Dempsey and Councilman Davis voting nay, and with Mr. Heather abstaining from the vote due to a conflict of interest.

Chairman Starkey noted donations could be accepted for the signage.

9. Request for Visitor Profile Study

TD17-030

Mr. Richard Gehring, Strategic Policy Administrator, stated they did not have an adequate database to guide the investment of tourism dollars to their visitors.

Ms. Lauren St. Martin, Public Communication Specialist, spoke regarding the visitor profile study and requested approval to move forward with the study.

Discussion followed that visitor studies should be done on a consistent basis; exit surveys done by hoteliers; and tracking day visitors.

Ms. Consuelo Sanchez, Project Coordinator III, spoke regarding conversations with the Tourism Director in Citrus who had recently completed a visitor profile.

Mr. Heather stated for the record he was part of a tourism strategic consulting group and would abstain from the vote due to a conflict of interest.

Motion to approve Staff's recommendation; the motion carried with Mr. Heather abstaining from the vote due to a conflict of interest.

10. Event Funding Program Update

TD17-031

Ms. Lauren St. Martin, Public Communication Specialist, explained Staff was developing a step-down program so that anyone who had received funding from the TDC would go into the step-down process moving forward. She reviewed the information distributed regarding the eligibility and funding requirements. On the first year of the event's step-down program, they would recommend the event receive 75 percent of what was received in the third year of funding. The next year the funding would be 50 percent of the prior year, and then up to 25 percent. This would allow the events coming in a six year program. She noted they did not want to get rid of events that could potentially seek other locations for a national or regional competition. This was more for local events that wanted to get started.

Discussion followed regarding how would they determine the lack of effectiveness of the funding of these events; verification of the effectiveness; post event reports; the TDC money was intended to be seed money; possible unintended consequences; specific events; that the events depended upon this funding; concerns with the recommended percentages of the step-down program; the recommendation was too aggressive; the events were told there would be a step-down program and that they would need to prepare and seek other sponsorships; and the graph displayed.

Motion to approve a step-down program, with the first year to be 90 percent, the second year 75 percent, the third year 60 percent and the fourth year 40 percent, with the event being ineligible after the fourth year.

Discussion followed regarding the language of the motion; bed nights produced; the ROI; hotel nights generated by Chasco; they were not attracting new clientele; marketing to new events; the need to be more professional; and other possible percentages.

Motion amended for the percentages to be 80 percent the first year, 60 percent the second year, and 40 percent the third year; motion carried.

Ms. Consuelo Sanchez, Project Coordinator III, noted the item would go to the Board of County Commissioners for final approval.

11. Tourism Office Report

TD17-032

Mr. Richard Gehring, Strategic Policy Administrator, reviewed the information provided.

Ms. Lauren St. Martin, Public Communication Specialist, reported on Facebook and the Visit Pasco website. She noted SAFFIRE had won the bid and spoke extensively regarding the website.

Ms. Consuelo Sanchez, Project Coordinator III, provided the sports update. Staff worked closely with the Tampa Bay Sports Commission. She spoke regarding the Dick's Tournament, the scheduled floor hockey event that would be hosted at Florida Hospital Center Ice, the Semi-Final Fed Cup to be hosted at Saddlebrook, and site visits to hotels within the Wesley Chapel area.

Mr. Gehring referred to a memo that had been distributed regarding All Sports Arena and explained they had not made a timely application. He spoke regarding the Dick's Tournament agreement and noted they had one more year. There had been a decrease in the number of teams attending the event, but the County was contractually committed. They would be monitored closely to ensure they were promoting Pasco hotels.

Discussion followed regarding the Dick's Tournament; that the TDC was led to believe the Wesley Chapel Chamber was going to provide funding toward the event; the annual commitment; 2017 was the last event the County had to fund; funding from the Florida Sports Foundation; and the Florida Sports Foundation was disappointed because of the ROI.

Ms. Hope Allen, President of the Wesley Chapel Chamber of Commerce, explained at no time were they committed to providing \$50,000.00. She noted that would have been one-third of their totaling operating budget. She stated they did participate in trying to acquire sponsorships for the event, but were unsuccessful.

Mr. Gehring spoke regarding the 2018 budget. Staff was proceeding with a budget that was comparable to last year's budget. He referred to the summary sheet showing the proposed funding levels. He noted any savings that came out of the proposed reduction in events would go to increase marketing.

Ms. Sanchez spoke regarding the estimated revenues, the amount that would be budgeted and anticipated expenditures. She spoke regarding proposed cuts for the sponsorships and increases in advertising.

Ms. St. Martin explained they wished to create more of a professional photo and video stock.

Mr. Gehring noted the quarterly Treasurer's Report had been provided.

Mr. Gehring provided an update regarding the Wiregrass Sports Complex. He explained the County had been gifted the 120 acre site of which 100 acres were upland. He reviewed the process that had been followed and explained the RFP was primarily driven by a sports related venue with year round usage. Four firms were ranked, with RADD sports being ranked number one. Last Wednesday the package went before the BCC that acted on three key items which included whether this was the concept plan they wished to implement, would they put another 15 million into the deal, and to increase the Tourist Development Tax from 2 cents to 4 cents. He noted the actions received a unanimously action by the Board.

Chairman Starkey said the County wanted to leverage a little more in the loan so that some of the money could be used on the west side of the County and other places for tourism capital projects, such as more boat ramps and the coast line for tourism industries.

Mr. Richard Blaylock, president of RADD Sports, reviewed his background and explained they had been awarded the RFP. He spoke regarding the process followed and noted they had searched out stakeholders who would use the facility, what fee structures were in place, the needs, and spoke with various entities. He explained they worked with County Staff regarding the scope of the project and the Master Plan that had been developed based upon County needs and public use needs. They were now working on development agreements, management agreements, and financial agreements. He provided an extensive presentation regarding the project and displayed renderings of the complex, the development of a Residence Inn which would be a sports themed hotel, the event lawn, a diagram showing the site, joint maintenance of the project with Parks and Recreation, the facility would be a multi-use facility, specific portions of the facility, challenges, the amphitheater, trail system, and the public use for Monday through Thursday. He reviewed the marketing plan and their relationship with Marriott, various sporting organizations they were in communication with for use of the facility, regional and national tournaments, anticipated economic impacts, a "pay to play" structure, the registration process, discussions with sports entities regarding additional funding, the timeline for construction, raising the tourism tax an additional two cents, debt coverage, and profit sharing with the County.

Extensive discussion followed between the Council Members, Staff and Mr. Blaylock regarding the hotel would be full service with 120 rooms; room night demand projections; use of the space on off-sports days; an opportunity to keep graduations within the County; becoming a sports destination; concerns with the proximity to Hillsborough County; their relationship with the Tampa Sports Commission; the revenue generated from this was unrestricted; pledge sources for lending structures; the 2 cents increase in the tourism tax; Pasco was considered one of the 10 large urban counties in the State; the number of fields at the facility; the Wesley Chapel fields; an advantage of having multiple fields clustered; a multi-use facility versus a seasonal facility; an

increase to the tourism tax; the additional 2 pennies would provide a formal format to lending structures; the pennies could create a debt reserve; the appropriation of the pennies; protection of the tourism development tax; the tax was not a slush fund for the general fund; the possibility of a special tourism development district; concerns with the BCC making a decision without a recommendation from the TDC; the time and money invested in this project; the County ownership of the project with RADD Sports being the operator; the BCC chose to add the additional pennies; this was a new kind of project that had never worked in the sports business; the need for a year round commitment; Saddlebrook was the only resort in the area; they gained the most when they were part of Tampa Bay; the resort atmosphere; hotel rates; the Dick's tournament was headquartered at Saddlebrook; the Johnson report which looked at comparable facilities; that Staff had reviewed the proforma submitted; the room night formula; Wesley Chapel was becoming the most concentrated population area; the private component of the project; the Porter donation; tournament scheduling; that events were programmed two to four years out; examples of typical tournament events; and that the Tourist Development Council was an advisory committee to the Board of County Commissioners.

Motion to Deny raising the Tourism Development Tax for the purpose of backstopping a loan, that the Tourist Development Tax was sacred for promoting County-wide projects and our hotels, and that the County should look for other options particularly the sales tax; motion seconded.

Discussion continued regarding the motion; the proposal given; four different times the TDC had advanced the increasing of additional pennies; the Strategic Plan showed a path for increasing the pennies; the BCC intended to use the pennies as a backstop and to also provide it back as a funding source for expansion of tourism activities; in order to use the funding the County was required to own the facility; the need for a dedicated funding source; concern with the proforma; the total project cost of 44 million; the value of the underlying land was valued between 12 to 25 million dollars; the Board was implementing the recommendations; the decision made by the BCC was appropriate and endorsed the plan; models showed this type of attraction being successful; and a feeling that the first year projections were not realistic.

Ms. Jane Fagan, Sr. Assistant County Attorney, said the intent that was discussed with the Board was that any income from this facility would be used for debt service for any bond issue or loan to build the facility. It was entirely possible they may not touch the additional amounts resulting from an increase in the Tourism Tax. The construction period was anticipated to be 18 months and during that time the operator would be marketing the venue for tournaments and activities.

Chairman Starkey requested the motion be withdrawn and that a proforma workshop be scheduled so that the TDC could feel more comfortable with the proposal.

Mr. Heather refused to withdraw the motion. He restated the motion, to not recommend the use of the Tourism Development Tax to backstop the debt for the sports facility. Mr. Davis again seconded the motion.

Mr. Gehring spoke regarding proposals in the Legislature to propose a structure in financing that had the potential to constrain future revenues, and that any increase in any taxation action would require a referendum. If this legislation did pass, they may not have an opportunity for future pennies.

Mr. Dempsey felt they were being asked to take the two percent tax because they could not get the loan, so that money would back up the loan. He questioned the legality of taking tourist tax money to back up a loan. The fundamental basis behind the tax in the first place was heads in beds. Government tended to take that money and misuse it.

Ms. Elizabeth Blair, Sr. Assistant County Attorney, stated Florida Statutes provided that tourism tax dollars could be used for capital projects including sports complexes. The funds were also allowed to be bonded. This project was completely legal.

Chairman Starkey felt a workshop might be helpful. This was not a private development; it would be a County owned facility that would be run by a contractor. The Board had been very reluctant in the past on increasing the tax. She spoke regarding the Board's review of the proforma. She hoped the Council would support the project.

Chairman Starkey called on the motion; the motion carried with Mayor Hernandez, Mr. Sala, and Chairman Starkey voting nay.

Mr. Gehring stated the TDC was a recommending body and this would go forward to the Board. He asked if the TDC still wished to hold a workshop or were they conclusive in their data and felt they knew everything they needed to know.

Mr. Heather said they could also re-visit the issue; they were just a recommending body. He felt they possibly should have a workshop before this came before them.

Chairman Starkey noted she had expressed her concern that this should have come before the TDC. The Board had a two hour in-depth presentation. She noted Mr. Dempsey had spoken against the proposal, but she did not believe anyone else spoke in opposition.

Mr. Gehring said he would schedule a meeting before the TDC to review the proposal.

Mayor Hernandez said they would hold the proforma workshop, but knew they were only a recommending body. The Board was moving forward. She asked that they be educated on what happened.

Ms. Blair explained they would continue to do the work with RADD Sports as directed by the Board. She noted the effective date of the Bill that would prohibit them from raising the tourism tax would be effective July 1, 2017. In order to raise the tourism tax, she needed to have at least one public hearing before the Board of County Commissioners. She would need to draft the Ordinance as well as an update to the Tourism Development Plan. She spoke regarding the lapse in time before an Ordinance became effective.

Mr. Gehring explained Mr. Doug Traub had resigned two weeks ago and that the position had been advertised. He spoke regarding short term rentals and that the Legislature was considering acts that would affect short term rentals. He spoke regarding discussions with Mr. Traub prior to his departure concerning the possibility of a 501.C.6. organization similar to the structure in Hillsborough and Pinellas, the event funding progressive reduction of funding, the Dick's TOC, Visit Pasco branding, the possibility of linking Tampa into their marketing image, a study regarding opening of a visitor's center at the outlet mall, and the frequency of the TDC meetings.

Discussion followed regarding the TDC meeting frequency; typically there was no TDC meeting in June or December; the requested workshop; and the special event presentations would be held in July.

MR. HEATHER LEFT THE MEETING AT 1:47 P.M.

Mr. Gehring reviewed the past and future events scheduled.

12. Board Member Comments

Chairman Starkey thanked Staff for bringing in lunch. She would not be able to attend the May 17th meeting and that Mayor Hernandez would run the meeting.

Presentation for Michele Baker

Chairman Starkey explained Ms. Baker would be leaving the County in the upcoming months and had been a great supporter of the Tourism Development Council. She presented a plaque to Ms. Michele Baker, County Administrator.

Ms. Michele Baker, County Administrator, stated her last day in the office would be May 12th but that she would continue in a consulting roll through July 9th. She stated it had been an honor and a pleasure. She felt Visit Pasco was on the edge of great things. The County was ready for the next level.

Presentation for Richard Gehring

Chairman Starkey presented a plaque to Mr. Richard Gehring who would also be leaving the County.

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

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Office of Paula S. O'Neil, Clerk & Comptroller

Prepared by: Donalee Schmidt
Donalee Schmidt, Operations Lead
Board Records Division