

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The Indian River County (IRC) Tourist Development Council (TDC) met on Wednesday, February 24, 2016, at 2:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of the County Administration Building, 1801 27th Street, Building A, Vero Beach, Florida.

You may hear an audio of the meeting; review the agenda and the minutes on the IRC website – www.ircgov.com/Boards/TDC/

Members Present were:

Chairman Joseph E. Flescher, Indian River County Commissioner, District 2
Susan Adams, Mayor, City of Fellsmere
Will Collins, Owner/Operator Tourist Accommodations Appointee
Steve Hayes, BCC Appointee
Harry Howle, III, Councilmember, City of Vero Beach
Keith Kite, Owner/Operator Tourist Accommodation Appointee
Jennifer Bates, Owner/Operator Tourist Accommodations Appointee
Karen Mechling, Interested in Tourist Development not an Owner/Operator

Members Absent were:

Jim Hill, Councilmember, City of Sebastian

Others Present were:

Allison McNeal, Tourism Director, Indian River Chamber of Commerce
Beth Mitchell, President/CEO, Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce
Rick Hatcher, Executive Director, Treasure Coast Sports Commission
Richard Nalbandian, Treasure Coast Sports Commission
Nicole Holbrook, Tourism Director, Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce
Beth Mitchell, President/CEO, Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce
Rick Hatcher, Executive Director, Treasure Coast Sports Commission
Ruth Stanbridge, Indian River Historical Society
Susan Feeney, Executive Director, Heritage Center

Indian River County Staff Present were:

Jason Brown, Director, Management and Budget, Indian River County
William DeBaal, Deputy County Attorney
Kate Pingolt Cotner, Assistant County Attorney
Lisa Hill, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Chairman Flescher called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m., and requested Roll Call. With a quorum in attendance, Chairman Flescher led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Additions or Deletions to the Agenda

Chairman Flescher called for agenda item additions or deletions. Mr. Flescher requested approval to add two items to the agenda. The first is information on the Mardy Fish Tennis Tournament at 4.A. The second is an update at 6.A by Deputy County Attorney, William DeBaal on the Short-Term Vacation Rental Committee.

ON MOTION BY Mr. Howle, SECONDED BY Ms. Adams, the Members voted unanimously (8-0) to approve the agenda with the additional items above.

Approval of Minutes from the December 9, 2015 TDC Meeting (Action Item)

ON MOTION BY Ms. Bates, SECONDED BY Mr. Hayes, the Members voted unanimously (8-0) to approve the December 9, 2015 meeting minutes as amended by Ms. Mechling.

Tourist Tax Revenues Update

Jason Brown, Director, Management and Budget, presented an overview of the most recent revenue figures from December 2015 from the Tourist Development Tax. A PowerPoint presentation, on file at the Commission Office, shows the increase in tourism revenue in Indian River County in comparison to previous years. For the month of December 2015, there was an increase of 13.8% for the month with an overall increase of 16.1% for the year. The revenue comparison shows that the highest yielding month, March, is the peak of the tourism season. The revenues received exceeded the budgeted amount by \$130,707 or 32.8% for the year. Mr. Brown noted that the "shoulder season" is getting stronger and shows increased revenue during the off-season. Mr. Brown added that the National economy is improving, but the international economy, especially in Asia is struggling and may have an impact on tourist revenue.

Mardy Fish Tennis Tournament

Tom Fish explained the upcoming Tennis Tournament which will be held April 22 to May 1, 2016. He advised that the proceeds of the tournament will go to the Mardy Fish Children's Foundation and will stay in the Indian River County community to help with tennis and health promoting activities for youth.

Randy Walker explained the tennis tournament which will bring individuals who are on the earlier levels of professionals that go on to tennis majors. Mr. Walker advised that a typical USTA tournament brings in over \$500,000 in revenue.

Mr. Fish stated that they are starting with this tournament and would like to have other events here like the Federal Cup, World Cup, Davis Cup, Senior's Event or other venues to grow tennis in Vero Beach and provide financial support for the children's health programs.

Commissioner Flescher advised that the financial impact of the tennis tournament to Indian River County will be half a million dollars for just a few days of tennis and it is appreciated that the event will be held here. He stated that the Chambers and Sports Commission will be willing to assist in facilitating the event.

Ranking System

Jason Brown noted that the next meeting of the Tourist Development Council, scheduled for May 11, 2016, will be dedicated to the allocation of funds from the Tourist Tax. He advised that the letters from requestors are due back with their application for funding in April. The allocation of funding to the two Chambers of Commerce will occur later in the year. Mr. Brown explained the ranking system point values, adding that all requests will be funded until the funds are fully expended.

Florida State Legislative Session Update

Kate Pingolt Cotner of the Indian River County Attorney's Office, gave an overview of a proposal at the Florida State Legislature related to the impact on the Tourist Development Tax: Senate Bill 1520 and House Bill 1203 which would apply to the Counties that generate over \$10 million and have three or more municipalities. Ms. Cotner noted that Indian River County does not meet these qualifications, so the bills would not apply to this County. She stated that the bill also allows for up to 10 percent of the day to day operations of law enforcement can be funded through the Tourist Development Tax under the Senate bill. There is also a tax package in the House, but the Senate does not favor the House bill. This bill to redefine the requirements for advertising, requiring 35 percent of the funds to be used on promotion of tourism and allows 10 percent to be used to fund in a coastal community for additional emergency services. Of concern is a requirement that when a TDC allocates \$100,000 or more, a cost/benefit analysis needs to be performed by a specific specialist. This may be changed as the bill is preliminary. Mr. Brown added that it would require the use of an outside source to perform the analysis at a high cost that would impact what funds are available for other purposes.

Short-Term Vacation Rental Advisory Committee Update

William DeBraal, Deputy County Attorney, gave an update on the Short-Term Vacation Rental Advisory Committee and the two ordinances that were previously approved by the Board of County Commissioners. One was to define events being held at beachfront rentals such as weddings, birthday parties, reunions, etc., where it would be advertised as a vacation rental and would feature these events as being able to accommodate these large events. The ordinance was crafted as prohibiting such things as would be allowed at a country club within residential areas. The second ordinance was to regulate the number of cars allowed to be parked at a rental home to areas that can be parked in a garage, carport and up to five additional spots, while prohibiting parking in yards and in street rights-of-way. Mr. DeBraal advised that there have been no complaints filed since the ordinances have been passed. Additional regulations will be coming once the Short-Term Vacation Rental Advisory Committee completes their meetings and provides recommendations. These ordinances do not reach in the municipalities, but are for the unincorporated areas of Indian River County. Mr. DeBraal stated that the limit of the time for a rental is regulated by the State. This is applicable only for a rental home, not for an owners personal events.

Update from the Treasure Coast Sports Commission

Rick Hatcher, Executive Director, Treasure Coast Sports Commission, provided an update on the Sports Commissions efforts to retain and enhance sporting events in this area. Mr. Hatcher advised that there has been a renewed interest in women's golf, especially with national golf tournaments and there has been an increase in the number of pickle ball court requests and playing in the area. He advised that the intergenerational rec center, which will be opening soon, will provide a facility to bring in all types of events. He gave an overview of some of the events that have occurred over the past year and some the Treasure Coast Sports Commission is participating in during the upcoming year. Some of the upcoming events highlighted include an AKC Dog Agility Trials in April and the Lionfish Festival on May 14. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is on file at the Board of County Commission office.

Chamber of Commerce Updates

Allison McNeal, Director of Tourism, Indian River Chamber of Commerce presented an update on Elite airways and the impact it is having on the local hotels. She advised that the flights to Newark, New Jersey, have been very popular and that Elite will be extending them through summer. Ms. McNeal stated that they are working on a survey of the people flying on the Elite flights between Vero Beach and Newark. Penny Chandler added that the survey will provide demographic information on the patrons as to whether they are coming from Manhattan, Staten Island, Newark or other places in the area.

Sebastian Chamber of Commerce representative, Nicole Capp Holbrook, advised that they were recent articles in Florida Travel Magazine which included a two-page spread, the 2016 Visit Florida travel guide, and an article in Smithsonian Magazine which is part of the 2016 Undiscovered Florida locations. Ms. Holbrook stated that the current visitor's guide will be revised this summer. She noted that there had been a recent episode of Destination America on the sport fishing channel that featured Sebastian.

Beth Mitchell updated the Council on the renovations occurring at the Sebastian Chamber of Commerce. She stated that in about six weeks they will hold a public open house to welcome the public in to see the renovations.

Other Matters

Ruth Stanbridge of the Indian River Historical Society briefed the Council on a recent meeting in Micco in relation to All Aboard Florida and getting St. Johns to look into the Section 106 issues and permitting.

Mr. Brown talked about the positive events and growth that have occurred in Indian River County.

Public Discussion

None

Next Meeting Date

The next Tourist Development Council meeting will be held on **Wednesday, May 11, 2016, at 2:00 p.m.**

Adjournment

Mr. Flescher appreciates the local events and efforts to provide opportunities for people to visit the area. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 3:36 p.m.