

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The Indian River County (IRC) Tourist Development Council (TDC) met on Wednesday, December 7, 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/PSPC/2015.

Members Present were:

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

Members Absent were:

Steve Hayes, BCC Appointee
Jim Hill, Councilmember, City of Sebastian

Others Present were:

Allison McNeal, Tourism Director, Indian River Chamber of Commerce
Penny Chandler, Director, Indian River Chamber of Commerce
Beth Mitchell, President/CEO, Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce
Nicole Holbrook, Tourism Director, Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce

Indian River County Staff Present were:

Mike Smykowski, Director, Management and Budget, Indian River County
Lisa Hill, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Chairman Flescher called the meeting to order at 2:00 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. The addition of Dylan Reingold, Indian River County Attorney, to review the Public Records and Sunshine Laws was requested by the Chairman.

ON MOTION BY Mr. Howle, SECONDED BY Mr. Collins, the Members voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the agenda as presented.

Approval of Minutes from the August 17, 2016, TDC Meeting (Action Item)

ON MOTION BY Mr. Howle, SECONDED BY Mr. Collins, the Members voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the August 17, 2016 meeting minutes with spelling corrections and the addition of Barbara Hoffman's last name on page three by Ms. Mechling.

Review of Public Records and Sunshine Laws

Mr. Reingold noted that the Sunshine Laws and the Public Records Laws are two separate laws that work together.

The Sunshine Laws provide rights to access all government proceedings of public boards. This includes not only the Commissioner Board meetings but all other committees and boards. Mr. Reingold stated that there are three specific components that must be met: 1) open to the public; 2) public notice and ability to attend, and; 3) minutes and recordings must be maintained. Additionally, the rules apply when there is a gathering of two or more members of the same board and deals with things that could be voted on by that board or commission. This includes a third party conduit sharing information between two or more board members. This applies specifically to members of the same board or committee, but not two different boards or committees. Discussion about children, the weather or other items not of a public nature is allowed between members. All discussion of a matter must be done publicly and includes any items that are contained in text messages, emails, or other social media. Simply, the members are not allowed to discuss anything that may come before the board or committee.

The Public Records Laws relate to the maintenance of the records and the ability of the public to obtain records, metadata, and any other materials of a public nature. Drafts and personal notes are not considered public records as long as they are not distributed between other members. Emails are public record depending on the subject matter whether they come from a public account such as those of Indian River County or a private email account. Public information requests can come from a formal written request from citizens or attorneys or it can be a verbal request for information at hearing. The timeframe to fulfill the request depends on the scope of the request.

Welcome to new member, Amanda Smalley

The Council welcomed new member Amanda Smalley who is replacing outgoing member Susan Adams as the representative on the Tourist Development Council as "Interested in Tourist Development, Not an Owner/Operator." Ms. Adams resigned from the Tourist Development Council when she was elected and sworn in as County Commissioner for District 1. Ms. Smalley briefly discussed her involvement in the community, which includes manager as Skydive Sebastian, a business that brings in people from all over the world and is a draw for tourists in the community.

Approval of 2017 Tourist Development Council Meeting Dates

The 2017 meeting schedule for the Tourist Development Council is as follows:

February 22, 2017
May 10, 2017
August 23, 2017
December 6, 2017

ON MOTION BY Ms. Bates, SECONDED BY Ms. Mechling, the Members voted unanimously (7-0) to approve the 2017 meeting schedule as presented.

Tourist Tax Revenues Update

Mike Smykowski, Director, Management and Budget, presented an overview of the most recent revenue figures through the end of September 2016 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. The revenue figures through September 2016 show the Year to Date (YTD) increase over the 2014/2015 actual revenues at 6.4%, or 12.7% over the expected revenue budget. Mr. Smykowski indicated that there was a slight decrease in revenue shown for September and April of 2016, but this did not reflect a trend for the entire year.

Mr. Kite noted that the revenue figures from September 2016 show a great example of how an event, like the PGA Tournament that was held in September, 2015, can make a great impact on the tourist tax revenue.

Allison McNeal, Tourism Director, Indian River Chamber of Commerce, asked about the collection of fees from the hotels and other entities having an impact on the revenue received in September. She noted that there is a 10% fine for late filing of the taxes received.

The Council discussed an interest in seeing a breakdown of the revenues received based on the type of rental unit such as hotel room, campground, short term rentals such as Airbnb and a separate figure for the late fees received. The Council also questioned whether boats at the marinas were under the same obligation to pay the Tourist Development Tax. Ms. McNeal proffered that under the current State legislation, marinas were not taxed.

Mr. Collins asked if there were any reports which show the addition of new units, changes in price in existing inventory versus the change in how many tourists are visiting the area. Ms. McNeal advised that she receives a STR report that compares the surrounding area Counties and shows the occupancy rates as well as the cost per night at rooms, which she would provide the Council through the BCC office.

Mr. Howle asked what portion of the Tourist Development Tax goes to the municipalities of the County. Mr. Smykowski stated that the County receives all of the revenue from the tax directly and the municipalities receive none of the funds directly.

The Council requested that the more detailed breakdown of units and revenue streams be brought before them at a future meeting.

Request to Speak from Alan Snel, Escape Adventures, regarding bicycle touring

Mr. Snel provided an overview of the bicycling tours being provided by Escape adventures, which is now headquartered in Indian River County. There are seven different treks in Florida with two within Indian River County. One of the treks is along Jungle Trail to Pelican Island Wildlife Preserve. He advised that the company works with people to provide any needed equipment, transportation to and from the venue and act as a guide providing information on the area to the participants. Mr. Snel stated that Escape Adventures has been in operation for a very long time and has provided tours in areas throughout the United States, with previous emphasis on the Southwest. Mr. Snel advised that Escape Adventures would like to work with the Tourist Development Council and other areas tourism entities to partner in providing an experience for the patrons.

Mr. Snel indicated that Mr. Hugh Aaron of Bike/Walk Indian River County and Vero Cycling would be discussing bicycle information specific to Indian River County. Mr. Aaron advised that Indian River County has received National designation as a bicycling community which should be advertised in the tourist information. He advised that bicycling tourism would be a benefit to the County. Mr. Aaron expressed a desire for signage and promotion of the award of the National

designation. Chairman Flescher directed him to bring his presentation to the proper venues, the MPO and the County Commission.

Other Matters

Ms. Bates noted that the Blue Angels will be coming back for the next Vero Beach Air Show in April 2018.

Mr. Kite noted that the Vero Beach Wine and Film Festival will be held June 8 to 11, 2017 and the group sponsoring this event would like to come to the February 2017 meeting to discuss the festival.

Mr. Kite also discussed the need for the Chambers and others in marketing Indian River County should bring back the importance of the Starfish Council and become an ambassador. The Starfish program unifies all entities and provides leverage for more tourism funding efficiency.

Ms. Mechling advised that there was a great advertisement in the recent AARP magazine from the Sebastian Chamber which was greatly highlighted tourist activities.

Ms. Smalley advised that the Sebastian Skydive will be holding its International event from December 28 to January 1 at the Sebastian Airport.

Council Matters

There were no Council matters noted

Next Meeting Date

The next Tourist Development Council meeting will be held on **Wednesday, February 22, 2017, at 2:00 p.m.**

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 3:35 p.m.