

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

There was a meeting of the Indian River County (IRC) Tourist Development Council (TDC) on Wednesday, February 20, 2008 at 2:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of the County Administration Building, 1801 27th Street, Building A, Vero Beach, Florida.

Board Members Present:

Sandra L. Bowden	Chairman, IRC Board of County Commissioners
Al Paternoster	City of Sebastian
Debra Fromang	City of Vero Beach
Jon Bates	Owner/Operator Tourist Accommodations
Sheryl Koenes	Owner/Operator Tourist Accommodations
Kathryn Beatty-Self	Owner/Operator Tourist Accommodations
Susan Hunt	Interested in Tourist Development Not an owner/Operator
Susan P. Adams	Interested in Tourist Development Not an owner/Operator

Board Member Absent: Ervin Roberts / Excused

IRC Staff Present: Jason Brown, Office of Management and Budget Director; Bill DeBaal, County Attorney; Beth Casano, Commissioner Assistant, District 5/Recording Secretary.

(Note: The numbers in parenthesis correspond to the approximate location of agenda items on the audio recording of this meeting. The recording is available and can be heard at www.ircgov.com/Boards/TDC/2008.htm.)

Call to Order

Chairman Sandra Bowden called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m. There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes of the May 16, 2007 Meeting (00:00:22)

ON MOTION BY Al Paternoster SECONDED BY Susan Adams the members voted unanimously (8-0) to approve the September 19, 2007 meeting minutes as submitted.

Tourist Tax Revenues Updates (00:01:30)

Jason Brown, IRC Budget Director provided a handout and summarized Indian River County's modest decline (approx. 5%) from the previous year. The month of December was of concern as it was reflecting the downward turn tourist activity. He stated that the revenue had been budgeted conservatively and that any measures that would be

needed as far as cuts were not necessary at this moment. He commented that Indian River County has always had the philosophy not to cut back on tourism when tourism was down and thus, would not be recommending any major changes at this moment but difficult decisions could be coming depending on the revenue estimate.

Mr. Bates wanted definite separations of numbers in order to know where the revenue was coming from. Mr. Brown said that most of the revenue is from hotel rooms and also stated that the Clerk of the Court was proactive in going after Mobile Home Parks that rent out RV lots. Recent changes in the legislation provided exemptions to the parks so a lot of parks then became exempt. Chairman Bowden requested that a representative from the clerk's office should give more information at a future meeting.

Sue Hunt said if you look back at the information from the post hurricanes and felt that they were falsely inflated due to influx of workers staying there to assist. She felt that there weren't additional dollars there and that things hadn't changed as much as it seemed.

Susan Adams wanted to know how things are recorded so that there are hard numbers and facts. Jason said he would have Rick Woodard from the Clerk's office here for the next meeting.

Budget Updates

No changes.

Other Matters (00:12:43)

Laurie Burns, Tourism Marketing Director for the Indian River County Chamber of Commerce gave an oral overview along with a report summary of their marketing plan for the past year. The overview consisted of issues of Florida vacation guides, dining guides, advertisements, articles, editorials, and vacation newsletters. Ms. Burns reported that they had delved into the small meeting market for the first time with two publications geared to a market needing a smaller venue but did not try to go up against those designed for Orlando and other larger convention cities. Ms. Burns pointed out examples of promotions of certain tourist spots like McKee Jungle Garden and their subsequent increase in attendance.

Mr. Bates questioned the figures given for the attendance at McKee and other attractions; he wanted to know if there was a way to ascertain how many were local day trips and how many were overnight stays by doing some kind of survey with guests. Ms. Burns said they had done that before and if Mr. Bates would like to see the thousands they had to get rid of because they weren't used.

Beth Mitchell, Director of the Sebastian Area Chamber and Nicole Holbrook, Tourism Coordinator. Ms. Mitchell stated that out of the 70,000 a year received from the TDC,

they have been able to support a variety of projects. This year, they were able to complete renovations and add two paid positions. Ms. Mitchell then recapped the ways they have applied funding, from TDC and others, in the past: the Pelican Island Centennial Event; the Eco Heritage Interactive CD Tour; and then, after the hurricanes received a grant and published the book, "Special Places." Ms. Mitchell then introduced their new project, a 5 minute video, "Destination" of the Sebastian River Area. Ms. Mitchell credited Bob Barber for his assistance with this project. After showcasing the video, Ms. Mitchell said that their website has had 200,000 hits and know that people are actually watching the video. They want to get the video out to the market place and throughout the State of Florida, NY Metropolitan Area and Boston Metro Area. Ms. Mitchell closed her presentation by telling the council that she would be back with a proposal for TDC to fund the distribution of the video. Discussion ensued on ways to get the video more airtime with different venues. Ms. Mitchell thanked all the people and businesses of Sebastian that provided material. A question arose concerning the surfing contests and whether out of town people stayed in Melbourne or Sebastian.

Public Comments (00:44:13)

Charlie Wilson spoke. Mr. Wilson mentioned his controversial position last year and said he would like to, again, encourage the Chamber to do "something different." Mr. Wilson expressed the following concerns: dependency on magazines and narrow demographic choices; overhead costs; and, that many restaurants were getting hurt from lack of business. Mr. Mitchell stated that the restaurateurs are forming a nonprofit to request funding so that they can run an advertising campaign for Orlando, looking for a younger more active visitor. Mr. Wilson also recommended that the EDC use the TDC as an arm and that the area find ways to have more radio sponsored parties. Mr. Wilson went on to challenge the council to do something new and see if there is a blip. Mr. Bates pointed out that in the past they had gone after the Orlando market and spent a lot of money and it didn't work because the residents go to Cocoa; no reason to come another hour south.

Adjournment (00:52:25)