

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

There was a meeting of the Indian River County (IRC) Tourist Development Council (TDC) on **Wednesday, September 24, 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:

Wesley S. Davis	Vice-Chairman, IRC Board of County Commissioners
Al Paternoster	City of Sebastian
Debra Fromang	City of Vero Beach
Jon Bates	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
Ervin Roberts	Interested in Tourist Development

Board Members Excused:

Sheryl Koenes	Owner/Operator Tourist Accommodations
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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 recording is available and can be heard at www.ircgov.com/Boards/TDC/2008.htm.)

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman, Wesley S. Davis at 2:00 P.M.

Additions or Deletions to the Agenda

Ms. Fromang presented a request from the Economic Development Council (EDC) that the next TDC agenda include a discussion with EDC representatives concerning the Economic District Guidelines under the Indian River County Comprehensive Plan.

ON MOTION BY Ms. Adams, SECONDED BY Mr. Bates, the members voted unanimously to add the EDC's requested

discussion to the agenda of the next scheduled TDC meeting.

Approval of Minutes of the February 20, 2008 Meeting

ON MOTION BY Ms. Adams, SECONDED BY Ms. Fromang, the members voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the February 20th meeting.

Tourist Tax Revenues Update

Mr. Brown, provided updates on the following: year to date Tourist Tax is down 4 ½ percent and revenues are up .6 percent; some surplus actually based on timing of agency payment submissions; beach restoration revenues .2 mill below expenditures; and the Dodgertown facility. Mr. Brown stated that the numbers were right on top of last year's but, due to the economy, he does not anticipate strong revenues in the foreseeable future.

Budget Updates

Chamber of Commerce

Penny Chandler, Director of the Indian River County Chamber of Commerce gave a summary of their goals for 2008 – 2009. She provided the council with a packet containing a review of their promotional efforts that included a breakdown of publications, demographics and statistics. Commissioner Davis asked if the Chamber would be directing some of the tourist revenue to help promote Piper. Ms. Chandler explained that there was a promotion in place called the Piper Passport Program. She said that the program was initiated for those people who come to Vero because of the Piper Industry: to buy, to work, or to train. She pointed out that the program was mostly directed toward those people who are coming for training. An outside company books them and sends them information about the county. They make reservations on their own and Piper makes sure that a welcome packet is sent to their room with a Piper Passport providing information about various leisure/entertainment and business opportunities available within the community. Ms. Chandler then continued reviewing the provided packet. She stated that they had put together a couple of focus groups and marketing committees to try and figure out more ideas. Based on the input, they decided not to focus on New York/New Jersey advertising and instead try an electronic

tourism newsletter e-mailed to addresses that they have captured at various venues.

Ms. Beatty-Self wanted to know if they were getting any hits on their website. Penny said they had significantly decreased as have the number of calls and walk-ins.

Mr. Davis wanted to know whether they were considering changing strategies. He suggested that the Chamber look into what other counties are doing. Ms. Chandler said they were and that was why they were doing the e-newsletters. Discussion ensued about the general malaise of the tourist industry and economy. Ms. Hunt suggested more focus be put on “stay” vacations and how important it is to be doing things that garner enough interest to get free editorials. Mr. Davis strongly agreed with Ms. Hunt and asked Ms. Chandler how she thought the Chamber could entice more editorial exposure. Ms. Chandler responded that the Chamber typically receives approx. 7 million dollars worth of free advertising in editorials due to her many years in the business and the connections that she has made. Ms. Hunt suggested in-state advertising with an “enter-to-win” vacation in IRC in order to get more e-mail addresses. Mr. Bates expressed concern about the lack of a baseball team and the tremendous impact upon the spring tourism. He wanted to know if the Chamber had come up with other possibilities for use of the facilities. Ms. Chandler said that they had not done so but would look into forming a focus group. Discussion ensued about the Dodger facility and what could be done.

Rich Nalbandian, Assistant Director of the Treasure Coast Sports Commission (TCSC), came to the podium and assured the Board that TCSC had many inquiries and sketched a few ideas for the Dodger facility but pointed out that much of what could happen would be based upon how much time they have, if negotiations fail, to make something happen. A lengthy “What if” discussion ensued. Mr. Nalbandian concluded by stressing that the best way to replace a baseball team is with baseball events.

Sebastian Chamber

Beth Mitchell, Director of the Sebastian Chamber of Commerce announced they were holding a special event in Nov. and displayed a MySpace page announcing the BLUES BIRTHDAY BASH. Ms. Mitchell stated the funds raised from the event would be used for updating their building as well as pay for the advertising. She gave the Board a presentation provided by Paris Productions with specific and detailed information concerning fund allocation, advertising plans, event capacity and expectation. Ms. Mitchell explained that \$30,000 would be allocated for advertising with many tie-ins that will drive people to their website which is continuing to increase in the amount of hits. She informed the board of a TDC allocation of \$16,000 that was approved by the BOCC. She explained that the allocation request had been scheduled to go before

the TDC board at the August 20th meeting but since that meeting was cancelled due to Tropical Storm Fay, the county staff advised her to go directly to the BOCC and it was approved. Ms. Mitchell said that the Fellsmere venue has a total capacity of 6,000 and that they were expecting the 3 day maximum of 18,000. She concluded by informing the board that they were in the process of recruiting 150 volunteers. Board Members expressed their enthusiasm for the project and complimented Ms. Mitchell on her diligence.

Treasure Coast Sports Commission

Tom Colucci, Executive Director and Rich Nalbandian, Assistant Director of the Treasure Coast Sports Commission handed out Eco Impact reports to the board. Mr. Colucci pointed out that 15 out of the 36 sports events that they facilitated were located in IRC. He expressed disappointment that they only had 7 teams out of the projected 22 participate in the World Classic Baseball Tournament. Mr. Colucci felt that they would be much more successful with the Firefighter games as Law Enforcement would be added to the event. He added that they were looking into doing more events in North County.

Mr. Davis said he would like to see the TCSC be more proactive about getting teams and events at the North County Pool. Mr. Colucci agreed but felt the county needed more staff and more money. Mr. Davis asked Mr. Colucci to put together a dollar amount and get with him after the meeting to discuss further. Jason Brown, IRC Budget Director, wanted to have an idea of the number of extra staff Mr. Colucci was talking about and Mr. Colucci replied that it would be quite extensive. Mr. Colucci said he would be coming back to the Board to request a 15 thousand dollar budget amendment for the Florida Police and Fire Games. Mr. Davis suggested that a full plan with dollar amount for each event scheduled for this year be given to the Board, in writing. Mr. Colucci said that he would do his best but they were actually planning for next year, 2009-2010, because these events have to be planned at least a year in advance. Mr. Colucci also said that he had heard from others that IRC shooting range was second to none and he would like to put more events there but, it too, would require more funding and work. Mr. Davis noted that the IRC Recreation fund was about to get a million dollars from the Windsor swap and he'd like to see some of those funds allocated to sporting clays. Mr. Davis explained that not having clays was not just a monetary but an environmental issue due to the lead content of the clays. Extensive discussion ensued. Board members inquired about the following: clay shooting, fishing tournaments at the stick marsh, the

underutilization of the IRC Fairgrounds, viable events at Dodgertown, rowing and regattas.

Mr. Colucci and Mr. Nalbandian explained the problems with each as follows: clay shooting could be looked into, catch and release laws hamper fishing tournaments in the stick marsh, the IRC Fairgrounds is municipal ground which is a tough sell and isn't conducive to most sporting venues, Dodgertown should remove the golf course and add more ball fields, and the C-54 canal was not really big enough for large events. Mr. Colucci stated that when you look at sporting venues you must build one. He suggested that IRC build an indoor venue that could host trade shows, sports, conferences and more. Ms. Adams expressed concerns with Mr. Colucci's comments about the C-54. She pointed out that FIT has had major regattas there. Mr. Colucci stated that the boathouses were inadequate and that the Germans, the biggest crew fans, would not find it satisfactory. Ms. Adams wanted to know what he meant by inadequate and why these events had to be so big, why we couldn't do a lot of smaller ones. Mr. Colucci replied that even if they wanted to use it, they couldn't as he had received an e-mail from a Mr. Stuzke that the TCSC would not be allowed usage of the boathouse. Mr. Davis requested to see a copy of the e-mail. Mr. Colucci said he would bring to next meeting. Ms. Hunt stressed that the TCSC should be finding ways to use the venues that are available in IRC rather than seeking events for which there are no venues. Ms. Adams felt that the boathouse and C-54 canal were much worthier than Mr. Colucci was giving credit to. Mr. Colucci admitted that he had not actually been to the boathouse but would do so. Ms. Adams said that she felt quite sure that things could be easily worked out with Mr. Stuzke.

CULTURAL COUNCIL

Mary Jayne Kelly, Executive Director of the Cultural Council (CC) pointed to the report that the Chamber had given as having included a lot of CC's advertising information. She touched on a few issues brought up during the TCSC presentation and added that she'd like to see if these events could also include a cultural side with musicians and artists. Ms. Kelly stated that the CC was working on creating databases that would give concrete information. She said that they were working on databases that could track their out of town markets and hopes that she would have more information to share with the board at the next meeting. Ms. Kelly said that there were 695 events on their cultural calendar for 2009. Ms. Fromang wanted to know why Sunrise and Lyric Theater shows seem more fun than Riverside. Ms. Kelly explained that they were different types. Riverside puts on their own shows and the others are for touring companies. Ms. Kelly said that the 14th Avenue Theater may be good for

that but it was still under construction. Ms. Fromang wanted to know what the City or County could do to help. Ms. Kelly said that it is privately owned and that the owner, Bob Brackett is still trying to get things going but there had been a lot of setbacks. Discussion ensued about different theaters on the Treasure Coast and transformed into a discussion about the need for Indian River County to have a venue for small meetings/conferences and ended with Ms. Chandler pointing out the emergence of a strong girls' lacrosse team in IRC and asking the TCSC representatives what could be done to encourage tournaments here. Mr. Colucci said that it would be difficult because IRC does not have a major field which would have to be 10-15 acres. Mr. Nalbandian said that there were many challenges to large venues in IRC and it had to be a team work effort with hotels, schools, coaches and funding. He said they probably weren't doing as good a job as they could of getting word out about what the TCSC does but would be getting everyone together to talk about it. He thought that he might be able to put a subgroup together. He said that they would get more information together and get back to the board.

There being no further business, Mr. Davis adjourned the meeting at 3:29 p.m.