

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

There was a meeting of the Indian River County (IRC) Tourist Development Council (TDC) on Wednesday, December 15, 2010, at 2:00 p.m. in the Commission Chambers of the County Administration Building, 1801 27th Street, Building A, Vero Beach, Florida.

Present were **Chairman Peter D. O'Bryan**, County Commissioner; **Sheryl Koenes**, Owner/Operator Tourist Accommodations Appointee; **Tracy Carroll**, Vero Beach Municipal Officer; **Richard Gillmor**, Sebastian Municipal Officer; **Ursula Gunter** and **Daniel Fourmont**, Interested in Tourist Development Appointees;

Absent were **Mayor Susan Adams**, Interested in Tourist Development Appointee; **Kathryn Beatty-Self** and **Jon Bates**, Owner/Operator Tourist Accommodations Appointees and **Mayor Jim Hill**, Sebastian Municipal Officer (all excused).

Also present were IRC Staff: **Mike Zito**, Assistant County Administrator; **Jason Brown**, Office of Management Budget Director; and **Darcy Vasilas**, Commissioner Assistant, District 3.

Others present: **Penny Chandler** and **Sue Hunt**, Indian River Chamber of Commerce; **Beth Mitchell** and **Nicole Holbrook**, Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce; **Jennifer Bates**, Holiday Inn Oceanside Sales Manager; **Mary Jane Kelly**, Cultural Council; **Amy Selby**, Spring Hill Suites by Marriott; **Tom Colucci** and **Rich Nalbandian**, Treasure Coast Sports Commission.

Call to Order

Chairman Peter D. O'Bryan called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. He announced historically the current Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) served as the TDC Chairman. However, the Ordinance establishing the TDC allows the BCC Chairman to designate another Commissioner to Chair the TDC, and as such, BCC Chairman Solari had designated him to serve again as the TDC Chairman.

Additions or deletions to the Agenda

The Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce had requested to be added to the agenda as Item 7b.

ON MOTION BY Council Member Gillmor, SECONDED BY Ms. Koenes, the members voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the agenda with the one addition.

Approval of Minutes from May 19, 2010 and August 17, 2010

ON MOTION BY Ms. Koenes, SECONDED BY Mr. Fourmont, the members voted unanimously (6-0) to approve both the May 19, 2010 and August 17, 2010 minutes as presented.

Meeting Calendar

Chairman O'Bryan reviewed the meeting calendar for 2011 and asked for any comments.

ON MOTION BY Councilmember Carroll, SECONDED BY Chairman O'Bryan, the members voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the 2011 Tourist Development Council meeting dates as presented.

Tourist Tax Revenues Update

Mr. Jason Brown, Office of Management and Budget Director, reviewed the information contained in the Tourist Tax Revenue Report dated October 2010, a copy of which is on file in the Commission Office. He provided a brief synopsis of the tourist tax; noting it consisted of 4-cents of bed taxes on all overnight accommodations of six months or less. Of the 4-cents tax, 1.5-cents went to tourism promotion and development; 1.5-cents toward beach renourishment; and 1-cent toward Dodgertown debt service which began February, 2001 to pay for the bonds used to purchase Dodgertown.

Mr. Brown then recapped the last fiscal year which ended in September, 2010. He pointed out the total revenue was up 17.1% from last year but noted in last year's August and September figures, Amnesty payments were included. The State allowed establishments to pay back Tourist Taxes owed over the last three years without penalty. Although the Amnesty payments have ended, he expected a slight increase in this year's Tourist Tax revenue due to additional establishments now paying the tax.

Ms. Koenes thanked Mr. Brown for taking the initiative of working with the TCSC on obtaining documentation from their events and comparing it to the

tourist tax receipts to see how closely the increases in revenues were related to sporting events. She appreciated having the proof the monies awarded to the TCSC were being used to bring money into the county.

Tourism Update – PowerPoint Presentation by the Indian River County Chamber of Commerce (IRCOC)

Ms. Sue Hunt, Director, IRCOC Tourism Division, while giving a PowerPoint presentation, which is on file in the Commission Office, stated she had been working with the local cultural and heritage partners to send out an E-Blast to the Villages in Central Florida promoting holiday happenings and events to bring in more short trip tourism during the colder winter months when people visiting the Treasure Coast were not necessarily heading to the beach.

She reviewed Situation Analysis as:

- Oil spill
- Hurricanes
- Increased gasoline prices
- Recession here and abroad
- Room rate growth remains a concern; reservations may be increasing but room rates are lower and results in lower bed tax collections

Notable Information:

- The Year End revenues exceeded last year's figures by \$30,449
- The Chamber of Commerce (COC) was the designated agency for visitor marketing and promotion
- The COC oversees all visitor industry activities related to the attraction of visitors
- The COC represents the entire County – not one community over another
- The role of the COC Tourism Division was to provide comprehensive county-wide visitor promotion marketing programs to generate the highest possible revenue for the county and businesses
- Tourism marketing goals were to put heads on beds; to generate revenue for the county and its businesses; retention and growth of visitor industry jobs and tax base
- Marketing objectives were to grow the tourism market; enhance the quality of stay; increase the average length of stay and visitor spending; increase repeat visitation and referrals; attract quality

overnight visitors to support local economy through related purchases; attract new visitors through niche markets such as weddings, reunions, small meetings, sports; maintain and establish new tourism partners and extend the marketing budget by using co-op ads

Councilmember Carroll introduced Tim Grabenbauer, City of Vero Beach Marina Director/HarborMaster. She pointed out the marina has had in 2010 1,837 boats with moorings on the average of 5.5 days. Councilmember Carroll recommended having on the tourism website a possible link to the marina website.

Ms. Hunt agreed with Councilmember Carroll's suggestion and provided a packet of information explaining she had prepared a box of the packets to give to Mr. Grabenbauer to have on hand to give to people staying at the marina.

Ms. Hunt distributed an invitation to all members to the January 28, 2011 Indian River County Tourism Sports Committee Familiarization Tour.

Presentation by the Treasure Coast Sports Commission

Mr. Tom Colucci, Executive Director, and Mr. Rich Nalbandian, Indian River County Director, Treasure Coast Sports Commission, reviewed their PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is on file in the Commission Office. Mr. Colucci addressed the Impact Report for the FY 09/10. It showed a \$7,162,209 economic impact for IRC with 9,694 room nights.

One problem Mr. Colucci had dealt with was with bidding on events in the next fiscal year and having to pay for them in this fiscal year.

Councilmember Carroll asked if any of the hotels participating in booking rooms for tournaments did anything to entice people to come back. Ms. Hunt responded there were sports bags prepared by the IRCOC to give out to hotels to have on hand with coupon books.

Ms. Jennifer Bates, Holiday Inn Oceanside Sales Manager, asked for an explanation of the funding shown on the Bid Fees/Sponsorship Chart listed for the February 19 – 21, 2011 President's Day Treasure Coast Challenge in the amount of \$5,000 and the February 20 – April 23, 2011 2011 High School & College Baseball Spring Training in the amount of \$20,000, since the events were being facilitated by the events themselves.

Mr. Colucci replied when these organizations, called event makers, brings an event to an area, the TCSC helps fund it. Basically, the money was going to help with the cost of facilities and bringing the events to IRC.

Ms. Hunt clarified the question Ms. Bates was asking was whether or not the hoteliers were getting their fair share of the room bookings since the money was being spent out of the bed tax for events at the Vero Sports Village.

Mr. Mike Zito, IRC Assistant County Administrator, pointed out there were only 90 rooms at the Vero Sports Village and there were 59 teams participating in the College Baseball Spring Training last year so there would be spillover to the local hotels.

Mr. Zito added there was an issue collecting the bed tax from high school and collegiate events when they submit the Tax Exempt Certificates. He would like to see the issue remedied in Tallahassee.

Discussion was held regarding the future of having rowing and kayaking events.

Presentation by the Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Nicole Holbrook, Tourism Coordinator, Sebastian River Area Chamber of Commerce, gave a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is on file in the Commission Office.

Highlights of the Presentation were as follows:

- Visitor walk-in traffic and calls had increased substantially since 2009
- There were 31,211 page views to their website from 87 countries/territories
- Monthly Tourism E-Blasts are sent out on the first of each month to over 3,100 e-mail subscribers
- Events planned for 2011 were reviewed
- A Fellsmere Destination Video was shown

Other Matters

There were none.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:51 p.m.