

**PASCO COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING**

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 18, 2015

**PREPARED IN THE OFFICE OF
PAULA S. O'NEIL, CLERK & COMPTROLLER**

**THE MINUTES WERE PREPARED
IN AGENDA ORDER AS
PUBLISHED AND NOT IN THE
ORDER THE ITEMS WERE HEARD**

10:00 A.M.

**WEST PASCO GOVERNMENT CENTER, BOARD ROOM
8731 CITIZENS DRIVE, NEW PORT RICHEY, FL**

Tourist Development Council Members

The Honorable Kathryn Starkey
Board of County Commissioners
- **ABSENT**

The Honorable Camille Hernandez
Vice-Chairman, Mayor, City of Dade City

The Honorable Chopper Davis
Councilman, City of New Port Richey

Kyle VonKohorn
Fairfield Inn and Suites

Gail Cushman
Days Inn and Suites
- **ABSENT**

Toby Caroline
Paradise Lakes Resorts
- **ABSENT**

Jack Phethean
Little Everglades

Pat Ciaccio
Saddlebrook

Piyush Mulji
Hampton Inn
- **ABSENT**

1. CALL TO ORDER – 10:00 A.M. – Chairman

Vice-Chairman Hernandez called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

2. Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. Donalee Schmidt, Deputy Clerk, gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

3. Roll Call

Ms. Schmidt called the roll. Chairman Starkey (excused), Ms. Gail Cushman (excused), Ms. Toby Caroline and Mr. Piyush Mulji (excused) were absent.

4. Public Comment

Mr. Mark Abbott, former Port Richey Mayor, explained 10 years ago the cities had voted to approve an underwater park off the coast. The project was stopped due to application fees with the State of Florida. He spoke regarding a meeting with Dr. Sylvia Earl, a retired Chief Scientist with NOAA, who had an organization which set-up underwater parks worldwide. He explained that off the coast there were two sets of sponge beds, one of which had soft corals growing on it. A representative from the State of Florida had been to the site and had discussed the permitting requirements. He felt the park could be built with a no-anchor zone, with boats parking around the edges and people would snorkel into the area, with possible advertising on hotel websites.

Mr. Eric Suojanen thanked the TDC for their efforts. The bayou businesses appreciated the effort. He stated he was a business owner and spoke regarding the Paddlepalooza event held last year which brought people into the area. The Bayou Business Association needed more seed money because of the momentum with eco-tourism. He spoke regarding possible marketing campaigns for the area.

5. New BUSINESS

a. Event Sponsorship Agreement – Pasco Paddlepalooza, Walt Loos TD15-033

Mr. Walter Loos, representing the Bayou Business Association, distributed information regarding Pasco Paddlepalooza to the Council.

VICE-CHAIRMAN HERNANDEZ moved to receive and file information submitted by Mr. Walter Loos; **MR. VONKOHORN** seconded.

Vice-Chairman Hernandez called on the motion; the vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Mr. Loos spoke regarding the 2014 event with Gil Dawg being the primary organization and that for several reasons was very taxing on Gil Dawg. For this year the event would be under the Bayou Business Association which was a conglomerate of businesses throughout the water district. He provided a presentation of the event which was scheduled for April 17 – 19, 2015, and spoke regarding the planned activities which included the Poker Pub Crawl, Dragon Boat Races, partnerships with various organizations, and a benefit concert featuring Bearded Brothers. He noted the proceeds of the event would go toward improvements along the waterfront for the Bayou Business Association, and to assist in sending kids to summer camp through the New Port Richey Parks and Recreation Department. On Sunday a park to park race would be held with the New Port Richey Parks and Recreation Department which would start at Francis Avenue Park, run down the Cotee River and finish in front of the Waterfront Park. This race would tie the two cities as well as the river together. He spoke regarding additional activities scheduled for the event and he outlined the event funding request in the amount of \$5,000.00. He understood the event did not quite follow the bed night grid for funding, but noted that 100 percent of the proceeds stayed within the community.

Discussion followed between the Council Members and Mr. Loos regarding the event held last year; the Salt Springs Classic race; possible benefits of separating this event from other events; different markets; room nights; event advertising efforts; upcoming local races; possible co-marketing opportunities; the actual hotel room night reimbursement; promotion of the County, and the need to remain fair and consistent.

Vice-Chairman Hernandez stated Staff's recommendation was for \$2,000.00.

Mr. Ed Caum, Tourism Manager, spoke regarding Staff's recommendation for \$2,000.00 and noted the event was in 60 days. He felt in order to be effective they should be 90 days out and preferably 120 days out. By the time the application was submitted, they had a limited amount of time to market to the region. Staff's recommendation was to focus the \$2,000.00 regionally. They really could not plan for travelers to come in from long distances within a 60-day window. Staff's recommendation was for \$2,000.00 with a performance based contract.

Councilman Davis spoke regarding the event held last year. He suggested they consider the \$2,000.00 and a performance based contract for the \$10.00 per room, with no upper limit.

Extensive discussion followed among the Council Members regarding Councilman Davis' suggestion.

Councilman Davis stated he would include in his recommendation a cap of \$5,000.00.

Vice-Chairman Hernandez clarified \$2,000.00 would be allocated, and then a performance based contract for the room nights with a total cap of \$5,000.00.

Ms. Elizabeth Blair, Senior Assistant Count Attorney, stated the contract would be drafted to have the \$5,000.00 inclusive of the \$2,000.00.

COUNCILMEMBER DAVIS MOVED as stated, \$2,000.00 would be allocated, with a performance based contract for \$10.00 per room, with a cap of \$5,000.00.

Mr. Ciaccio clarified the room nights would be certified room nights.

Ms. Blair stated that was correct.

Ms. Roni Lloyd, Sports Marketing Coordinator, explained they wanted to support the efforts. She spoke regarding the 12th Annual Shark Bite event held on Honeymoon Island in Pinellas County the weekend before this event. She felt marketing efforts needed to be done in order to grow this grass roots event, even locally in order to get the buzz going in the Pinellas County areas. She noted items were suggested last year which she would suggest again in order to make sure that they tapped into the surrounding counties which had similar events and similar interests.

Mr. Loos noted they had a relationship with the Shark Bite event and noted last year information regarding this race was placed into the Shark Bite bags.

Mr. VonKohorn asked if there was a fee for racing in Paddlepalooza and whether there was an incentive tied-in with the Shark Bite.

Mr. Loos noted there was a fee for the race and that currently there was not an incentive with the Shark Bite. He said typically the event organizers were very protective of their income sources.

Ms. Lloyd spoke regarding possible radio advertising opportunities.

MR. PHETHEAN SECONDED THE MOTION.

Vice-Chairman Hernandez called on the motion; the vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Councilman Davis spoke regarding a team from the Villages with an average age of 68 years who participated in last year's event.

Mr. Loos thanked the Council for their support.

**b. Event Sponsorship Agreement – Speed Skating, Angie Serini
TD15-034**

Mr. Caum noted Ms. Serini was unable to attend the meeting. He provided the presentation regarding the event and noted the event has been sponsored for several

years. This event did not have major growth and was a regional qualifier to move onto the nationals. A letter was included within the packet where the organization had been approached to move the event out of Pasco County. He spoke regarding the room night chart and growth of the event. Staff recommended a performance based sponsorship agreement for \$10.00 per certified room night with a cap of \$3,000.00. In the application, the organization had requested more funding.

Ms. Lloyd referred to the application and spoke regarding their marketing efforts being limited to \$330.00. She tried to look at the event as a spectator, not just a participant. She spoke regarding the organization's website and event advertising. Staff had told them they were looking for their marketing efforts to promote the event and felt that may have contributed to their limited growth.

Discussion followed regarding past amounts given to the organization; last year there was also a concern expressed about losing the event; that events would come and go; approval should not be based upon whether they could lose the event; the need to attract new events; expectation from the events; the event had been sponsored for more than 5 years; they should not be the sole source of funding for the event; Staff was available to assist the events; last year they had been given \$4,000.00; increases in costs; the speed skating event versus the artistic skating event; event dates; economic impacts; marketing efforts took several months; this event was a regional qualifier; last year's event had 503 certified room nights and this year 520 room nights were expected for the two events combined; a focus on each event separately; May and June was a difficult time of year for the industry; a willingness to support the event; a suggestion that a \$10.00 ESA certified room night contract could be done with a cap of \$4,000.00; previous direction to Staff that the contracts be more performance based so that the events were held more accountable; marketing efforts; a suggestion that a flat amount of up to \$1,000.00 be given for marketing with a room base contract; this was a regional event which would bring people in from locations outside of Florida to benefit tourism in general; the event costs continued to increase; there was no need to over market, but they could do more collateral marketing with sponsors to off-set costs; and the event had been reliant upon the County providing a source of income.

COUNCILMAN DAVIS MOVED approval of \$1,000.00 being directed toward marketing with a \$10.00 certified room based contract.

Mr. Phethean asked if there was time to make the \$1,000.00 effective.

Ms. Lloyd said the event was scheduled for Memorial Day weekend. She felt knowing what they had done in the past that there were some things they could do even if they promoted the event more collaterally using their website and the Southern Region website. She spoke regarding the use of social media and on-site presence.

Mr. VonKohorn spoke further regarding the use of social media and questioned whether the event had room to grow.

Ms. Lloyd spoke regarding area venues and the goals of the event.

Mr. Phethean clarified the motion was for a flat \$1,000.00 earmarked for marketing and Option One which was the event sponsorship with \$10.00 per room night and a cap of \$3,000.00.

Vice-Chairman Hernandez asked if the marketing would be at the direction of Staff.

Councilman Davis said that was correct.

Ms. Lloyd spoke regarding the contract language and outlining the expectations of the event.

MR. PHETHEAN SECONDED THE MOTION.

Vice-Chairman Hernandez called on the motion; the vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

**c. Event Sponsorship Agreement – Artistic Skating, Angie Serini
TD15-035**

Mr. Caum explained this was a longtime event and spoke regarding the event. He noted the demographics were similar to the previous item. This event was also a regional qualifier and would draw people from across Florida. He felt there was an opportunity to grow the marketing aspect of the event. Last year they were given a flat \$5,000.00 for the event. Staff recommended a performance based certified room night contract up to \$4,000.00 and to assist with their marketing efforts.

Discussion followed among the Council Members regarding the amount of the agreement; the use of other partnerships and sources; and expectations.

COUNCILMAN DAVIS MOVED approval of a \$1,000.00 flat amount, with \$10.00 per certified room night up to \$4,000.00 for a total of \$5,000.00; **MR. PHETHEAN SECONDED.**

Vice-Chairman Hernandez called on the motion; the vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Ms. Blair clarified the \$1,000.00 amount was for marketing, plus Option One.

Councilman Davis said that was correct and that the total amount would be \$5,000.00.

d. Discussion Medical Tourism

Mr. Caum spoke regarding medical tourism and noted people travelled to have surgeries and enjoyed amenities while they were recuperating or if their family came with them. Florida was a nature tourist destination and had not really focused on medical tourism. Last year the legislature provided funding to Visit Florida in the amount of 2.5 million dollars in marketing with matching grants and then 2.5 million dollars into a study, with a large portion going toward research and strategic planning. He spoke regarding partnerships with Visit Florida and explained there were usually a co-op and a match. The Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council had asked the regional partners which included Pasco, Hillsborough, Pinellas and Manatee to collectively look at what could be done in order to incentivize or bring people to the Tampa Bay Region. He spoke regarding a presentation developed by Mr. Avera Wynne and explained he felt Pasco County wanted to be a partner of scale. He spoke regarding top destinations in the world and noted each country seemed to have their own specialty such as Costa Rica which specialized in eyes and dental procedures. The estimates from Visit Florida showed there was 100 billion dollars spent on medical tourism in Florida, with 3.5 million of that amount directly in hotel bookings. He spoke regarding possible stakeholders such as insurance companies, hospitals, and airlines. A direct benefit was that it would create heads in beds, increased economic opportunity within the hospitality industry, and would increase medial service options to Tampa Bay residents. He spoke regarding available hospital beds within the area. He felt Pasco should be represented at their percentage and to not be expected to put in the same amount as the larger neighbors. He noted that dollar figures had not come out; he just wanted to inform the Council that the conversations were happening within the region. He spoke regarding the feasibility analysis and felt that County Staff could conduct an internal analysis of what was available in Pasco. A program would also need to be developed of what would be done and spoke regarding the possibility of a medical tourism alliance within the region. The destination marketing and branding would need to be consistent with Visit Florida in order to bring it to a regional level. He did not feel this would be a major piece of Pasco right now, but could be in the future.

Mr. Phethean stated he was happy that Mr. Caum had indicated they would support it at a percentage that was commensurate with the County. He agreed others should help with the pool such as hospitals, doctors, insurance companies, hotels and airports.

Mr. Ciaccio felt that was the intent and that whatever hospital took the lead would affect Pasco County.

Vice-Chairman Hernandez spoke regarding the need to have a seat at the table, the ULI Report, and the booming medical care industry.

Mr. Caum noted the item would come back to the BCC and he would continue to update the Council.

Councilman Davis spoke regarding Dr. Bonati and Dr. Gill and suggested they start their own quiet marketing with the hotels and let them know the TDC was available.

**e. Time Certain – Presentation Human Trafficking – Cpl. Wilkett
11:15 a.m.**

Corporal Allen Wilkett provided a presentation on Human Trafficking and explained it was a problem that was not recognized by many people, because they were simply not aware of the issue. He explained Human Trafficking was modern day slavery and was known as the crime beneath the surface. Unless people were aware it was difficult to identify and to pursue with both investigation and prosecution. He said worldwide 150 billion dollars per year was generated by criminal activity, with Human Trafficking being ranked number two behind drug trading. According to the United Nations Human Trafficking generated approximately 32 billion dollars per year. Human Trafficking involved people who, against their will by coercion, force or fraud, were forced to the lifestyle typically in order to pay off debt bondages. There were three areas of Human Trafficking recognized by the Federal Government. The first area was forced labor which involved the agriculture community and construction trades. Usually people were forced into labor to pay off debt bondage. He explained it typically cost \$7,500.00 to bring someone into the County illegally. The second area was involuntary servitude which was normally a wealthy family with a domestic servant who was typically an undocumented worker. The third area was the commercial sex trade. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated there were 20.9 million individuals in Human Trafficking and the United Nations listed the number at 27 million. He explained further that of the 20.9 million, approximately 14.5 million were in forced labor and 4.5 million were in the commercial sex trade. He noted the sex trade generated 28 billion dollars.

Mr. Phethean asked if the statistics listed were for the United States or for the world.

Corporal Wilkett said his statistics were worldwide. He referred to the polarisproject.org which was the federally funded clearing house for Human Trafficking for the United States. He spoke regarding source countries and destination countries and explained typically the source countries were Russian, eastern European, and eastern Asian countries. Of all of those countries, the United States was the largest consumer. The individuals were brought into the United States both internationally and domestic. By media standards, Florida had been listed as number three as the consumer of Human Trafficking, which was a hard number to qualify and quantify because it came from Polaris project's numbers of reported Human Trafficking cases. A lot of the minor sex trafficking came from runaways and throwaways. He spoke regarding organ farming where people were being killed in order to harvest their organs to sell on the black market, law enforcement efforts regarding the issue, and a task force had been created. The task force now covered seven counties and had created a community campaign against Human Trafficking. They recognized some of the largest breeding grounds for this problem was an area where the TDC was involved. The reason why Florida was

such an attractive Human Trafficking consuming State was because of the climate, the weather, large hotels, tourism, major sporting events, and large conventions which were attractive for the trafficker to target. He spoke regarding targeting of the strip clubs and a requirement to provide Human Trafficking awareness training to all of their employees once a year. Another area to look at was tourism. He noted many areas were joining the effort voluntarily. He spoke regarding awareness training for various industries such as hospitals, schools, hotels, and tourism. He distributed a bookmark to the Council members and explained the bookmark was created as a way to raise awareness throughout the County. The bookmark listed key questions to ask a trafficking victim as well as behaviors and indicators for Human Trafficking.

Discussion followed among the Council members and Corporal Wilkett regarding who to contact in order to become involved; the Human Trafficking Commission; the presentation training provided; that presentations could be provided by the Community Speakers Bureau; there was room on the Council for a hospitality representative; and the awareness campaign.

Corporal Wilkett felt by working together they could prevent a lot of things and to have awareness of the issue. He felt the tourism/hotel portion was critical.

Mr. Caum thanked Corporal Wilkett for his presentation. He felt it spoke very highly of what the Sheriff's Office wanted to do in order to partner with them. The Board of County Commissioners had already invested time regarding the issue. He felt the open position on the Commission should be filled by a hotelier in order to lend credibility with other hoteliers.

Ms. Blair explained the open position was not intended for a Staff person. She spoke regarding the make-up of the commission and explained all of the individuals had some connection to an at-risk population or industry which had human trafficking occurring. She noted former County Commissioner Henry Wilson served as Chairman of the Human Trafficking Commission. She explained the commission would be meeting monthly for the first six months and then would meet on a quarterly basis. She felt it would be ideal for a TDC member who had a hotel to sit on the Commission or someone who was involved with the tourism industry.

Mr. Phethean asked if a pamphlet that would fit into a kiosk would be appropriate. He was concerned that a bookmark could be lost.

Mr. Caum spoke regarding the bookmarks and suggested that if someone was in a captive state they could fold a bookmark and hide it away.

Mr. VonKohorn explained he was at the Fairfield Inn in Holiday along the U.S. 19 corridor and felt a softer training for his Staff would be helpful.

Corporal Wilkett felt signs and behaviors were critical and spoke regarding the hotline.

MR. CIACCIO MOVED to receive and file a bookmark submitted by Corporal Wilkett;
COUNCILMAN DAVIS SECONDED.

Vice-Chairman Hernandez called on the motion; the vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

6. Old BUSINESS

Mr. Caum explained Staff was continuing to work with the sports facility advisory on a variety of issues and were currently working on a task order to determine what would be charged for the turf fields and the youth sports league contracts.

7. Tourism Manager's Report

Mr. Caum explained he was asked by the Florida Association of Destination Marketing Organizations to speak to the Appropriations Sub-Committee on transportation, tourism and economic development or the "TED". He was asked specifically to discuss how "Visit Florida" was beneficial to destination marketing organizations and tourism. He felt the presentation was well received and that the committee felt Pasco was emerging in the region. He spoke regarding spring training, the value added from collaborative marketing, the upcoming tourism day in Tallahassee, and the growth in Facebook.

Ms. Marla Chancey, Tourism Marketing Coordinator, said next month she would make a formal presentation regarding their marketing efforts and what was working for them. She noted significant growth had been seen with the new website. She introduced Ms. Shelby Adams, intern, from St. Leo University.

Ms. Shelby Adams said the Office had given her the responsibility to apply things that she had learned and explained she had been working on social media and various applications. She would be here through the semester.

Ms. Chancey noted Ms. Adams contributed 20 hours per week for the semester as well as carried a full course load.

Mr. Caum reviewed on-going community involvements including the Pasco County Fair and noted they were back into festival season.

8. Board Member Comments

Vice-Chairman Hernandez explained Ms. Audrey Howe was leaving the tourism office. She had flowers to present to Ms. Howe and wished to thank her for her efforts.

Mr. Caum stated he would make sure Ms. Howe received the flowers.

Vice-Chairman Hernandez spoke regarding the recent Kumquat Festival and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Councilman Davis said a contract had been signed to re-model the Hacienda Hotel into a three star boutique hotel and that it was anticipated to take up to four years to complete the project. He noted that everything done at the Hacienda Hotel would need to be reviewed by the Historical Preservation Society. A 2.2 million dollar renovation of Sims Park was also planned. He reminded the Council Members the Chasco Fiesta was scheduled in March, with the street parade scheduled for March 21st and the boat parade scheduled for March 28th. He spoke regarding the upcoming Pasco Kids First Kickball Tournament scheduled for May 9th.

Vice-Chairman Hernandez noted the joint workshop was scheduled on March 3rd in Dade City.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 p.m.

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 18, 2015

(SEAL)

Office of Paula S. O'Neil, Clerk & Comptroller

Prepared by: _____
Donalee Schmidt, Operations Lead
Board Records Department