

**MINUTES OF MEETING  
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA  
JUNE 20, 2011  
(1:30 P.M.)**

Proceedings of a regular meeting of the Tourist Development Council of St. Johns County, Florida, held in the auditorium at the County Administration Building, 500 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, Florida.

Present: Jack Peter, Chairman  
J. Ken Bryan, BCC Representative  
Joseph Boles, City of St. Augustine Representative  
Scott M. Bartosch, District 3  
Jeffrey Mayers, District 4  
John B. Yanni, District 5  
Pam Halterman, Deputy Clerk

Absent: Richard O'Brien, Fred Cozby, and Bill Hughes

Also present: Glenn Hastings, Dena Masters, Carrie Horn, and Regina Ross, Assistant County Attorney

(06/20/11 - 1 - 1:35 p.m.)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Jack Peter called the meeting to order.

(06/20/11 - 1 - 1:35 p.m.)

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

John Yanni led the Pledge of Allegiance.

(06/20/11 - 1 - 1:35 p.m.)

3. ROLL CALL

Dena Masters called the roll and stated that O'Brien, Cozby, and Hughes would not be in attendance.

(06/20/11 - 1 - 1:36 p.m.)

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Motion by Bartosch, seconded by Boles, carried 6/0, to approve the Agenda.**

(06/20/11 - 1 - 1:36 p.m.)

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**Motion by Mayers, seconded by Bartosch, carried 6/0, to approve the minutes for the May 16, 2011, meeting.**

(06/20/11 - 1 - 1:36 p.m.)

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

(06/20/11 - 2 - 1:36 p.m.)

7. ADMINISTRATION & SPECIAL USES

a. Presentation from North Florida Land Trust

Hastings introduced Bonnie Barnes, Executive Director for The North Florida Land Trust. Barnes pointed out that the Trust covered land conservation areas in north Florida and its job was to permanently protect lands within their seven Florida counties. She reviewed that the Land Trust was a 501c3 corporation, partnered with local governments, environmental organizations, and land owners in order to help preserve land. She stated that they have been in existence since 1999 in St. Johns County and had protected approximately 41 acres called Gilts Preserve, located at the northeast corner of A1A and Mickler Road in Ponte Vedra. She noted that the Land Trust had placed a conservation easement on 15 of the Fish Island area on Anastasia Island. She added that they had helped protect two acres of critical turtle land at Summerhaven, currently owned by the University of Florida. She articulated that on SR 16, east of the County utility building, they had helped protect 28 acres which would be used for a private school. She pointed out three acres, which had a restaurant on the property about seven years earlier, in which the Trust would like to construct the Conservation Resource Center building. She noted that the land was located adjacent to the Guana Park and one-half mile from Mickler's Landing. She explained the Land Trust's conceptual plans and ecotourism opportunities to be offered in St. Johns County. She expanded that they would renovate the existing 1,800 square foot building and would place a kayak outfitter vendor on the property. She voiced that the center would attract corporate groups, weddings, special events, educational seminars, and the School District. She pointed out that the closest outdoor activity was located at least 20 miles from the area. She said approximately 6,000 guided kayak tours through Guana Park had been reported by one single outfitter. She stated that the new Nocatee Preserve as well as the Gilts Preserve they currently owned could also be served by the Center. She advised that their reports had shown that tourists desired nature-based activities in the area. She continued to speak about the Visit Florida website and new marketing opportunities for the area. She described that the Trust would like to request between \$240,000.00 and \$250,000.00, from the Special Uses Category, to help fund their plans for the Conservation Resource Center. She specified that the Trust had already raised \$275,000.00 for mitigation, \$ 75,000.00 from a sponsor, and \$50,000.00 in donations. She suggested that ecotourism would increase business for motels, hotels, and restaurants and would provide outdoor activity for local residents. She said the Center would provide another access to one of only 27 national estuarine research reserves.

(1:48 p.m.) Peter thanked Barnes and voiced that the presentation was good and the Trust's proposed plans were admirable and worth considering. He noted that ecotourism, such as kayaking, was part of the destination master plan. Hastings asked the TDC for direction regarding the North Florida Land Trust proposed plans for the Center. He affirmed that ecotourism was included in the destination master plan. He noted that the budget currently did not have the entire amount specified by Barnes. Bryan said he had visited the site and had taken a kayak tour of the area. He agreed that the project was worth the TDC's consideration. He stated that he was looking for a return on investment and suggested that the project could qualify for funding. In response to an inquiry from Boles, Barnes noted that the numbers included a kayak rental place on Anastasia Island. She affirmed that the Trust would become a landlord and rent the property to an outfitter vendor and restaurant in the future, as well as an office for the Trust and a community room for the public. Yanni asked for the purchase price of the property which Barnes noted was close to \$650,000.00, which included closing costs. She said the entire development would cost approximately \$2.5 million and the first phase renovations would cost \$650,000.00. She explained that the Trust had the property under contract with an appraisal of \$ 800,000.00; however, allowing the contract to expire was in their best interest. She added that the right to first refusal had also expired in May 2011; therefore, allowing the Trust to obtain a better financial deal. Mayers agreed that many opportunities existed in order to market the area to

tourists and the TDC should review the business plan. Bartosch agreed with Mayers, and suggested that kayak tours would generate a younger ecotourism market. Peter thanked Barnes for her presentation. Hastings said the matter would return to the TDC during their July meeting.

b. FY2012 Requested Budget - Revenue & Expenses

(1:57 p.m.) Hastings reviewed the FY 2012 budget worksheet and pointed out that higher than normal professional fees of \$122,000.00 existed in the Special Uses budget update, which was attributed to the cost of the County attorney reviewing and creating the proposed contract. In response to an inquiry of Mayers, he noted that each penny generated approximately \$1.7 million. He reviewed tax collections for the month of April 2011, which he said indicated an increase of 6.1%. Bryan asked for the total bed tax collected by surrounding counties. Mayers inquired about the gross collections and difference between 2010 and 2011 total bed tax figures. Hastings responded that the figure would be an increase of approximately 8.2%. Bartosh questioned whether the money for the Florida Land Trust would be distributed over a period of time and not one-lump sum. Hastings affirmed that funds could be handled in that manner; however, the issue needed additional review. He added that 4% had been targeted for the shortfall reserve which was in addition to the 5% State mandated funds.

(2:09 p.m.) In response to an inquiry from Mayers, Richard Coleman said he saw about 4.5% to 6.5% increases for the following year through Smith Travel and PKF Consulting but was hoping for 7% plus.

(06/20/11 - 3 - 2:09 p.m.)

8. ARTS & CULTURAL CATEGORY

a. TDC/SJCCC Contract Update

Hastings advised that the proposed contract would be presented to the BCC the following day. Yanni stated that he had met with the Funding Panel twice and had reviewed only one-half of the 61 applications totaling \$1.2 million in which the TDC had allocated \$450,000.00 to those events. He noted that the TDC would fund at approximately the same level as the previous year. Due to misinformation and rumor, Bryan clarified that the expenditures of the funds were not used until particular tasks were performed.

b. Funding Panel Meeting Update

(2:12 p.m.) Hastings noted that he had reviewed numerous issues with the Funding Panel which included matching funds. He said additional steps had been implemented to review applications in order to be more secure in how the funds were handled. He voiced that he would provide a type of audit on those who obtained funding. He noted that on June 23, 2011, the Funding Panel planned to finish the application review.

(06/20/11 - 3 - 2:17 p.m.)

9. DESTINATION MARKETING

a. VCB Report

Richard Goldman reported on data for the month of April 2011. He pointed out that he had just received May 2011 figures which showed an increase from April 2011 and a larger increase for a rolling twelve-month time period. He stated that visits to the website were up 60% in May. He described that BP had provided \$30 million for the Gulf Coast for the sole purpose of advertising, a requirement initiated by the oil spill event in the Gulf. He said total impressions involved in the communications measures were up 67% and telemarketing calls were up 28%. He offered the following for the

TDC: a new Ipad application had been deployed; twelve on-air radio promotional spots in Orlando and Tampa during April; executed six live events in Orlando and Tampa; participated in the National Illustrated/FFCG promotion; and conducted the second annual VCB State of the Tourism Industry report at the Renaissance Resort WGV.

(2:26 p.m.) In response to an inquiry from Mayers, Goldman reported that the impacts due to fires and smoke had yet to affect tourism; however, he had not experienced hoteliers or other businesses specify that they had lost business or customers due to the smoke or fires in the area. Peter voiced that two local golf courses had been affected by the smoke with numerous reservation cancellations. Mayers affirmed that he had not seen any cancellations due to the smoke at the hotel. Hastings stated that fireworks would not be allowed due to the dry conditions; and local hotels and motels had been notified to be cautious and about the fireworks ban. He articulated that the Arizona fires had lessened the media headline reports regarding Florida fires.

(06/20/11 - 4 - 2:31 p.m.)

10. LEISURE & RECREATION

a. Update on Upcoming Events

Troy Blevins agreed that he had seen several golf reservation cancellations during the month of May 2011 due to smoke. He noted that rates at the County golf course had been lowered to help with cancellations. He said upcoming events included the Children's triathlon, youth Lacrosse event, Matanzas 5k, and St. Augustine Amateur Golf Tournament. He pointed out that the County would incur expenses because of necessary pier repairs; however, he added that the pier was safe for residents and visitors to use.

(06/20/11 - 4 - 2:36 p.m.)

11. FINANCIAL REPORTS

- YTD Bed Tax Collections
- YTD Cash Flow Worksheet
- Visitor Related Expenditures
- Monthly Detail Expenses by Department

Hastings said he was available for any questions regarding the reports.

(06/20/11 - 4 - 2:36 p.m.)

12. COMMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mayers said he had no comment.

Bartosch said he had no comment.

Bryan commented that he had attended the Vetts on the Village Corvettes show, and it was a great event.

Peter commented that their Community Day was held and many people showed for the event.

Boles said he had no comment.

(06/20/11 - 5 - 2:37 p.m.)

13. ADJOURN

With there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

Approved July 18, 2011

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: Jack Peter  
Jack Peter, Chair

ATTEST: CHERYL STRICKLAND, CLERK

By: Pam Halterman  
Deputy Clerk