

**MINUTES OF MEETING
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA
September 19, 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
Richard O'Brien, City of St. Augustine Beach Representative
Scott M. Bartosch, District 3
Bill Hughes, District 4
John B. Yanni, District 5
Pam Halterman, Deputy Clerk

Absent: Joseph Boles, Fred E. Cozby, and Jeff Mayers

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

(09/19/11 - 1 - 1:31 p.m.)

1. CALL TO ORDER

Jack Peter called the meeting to order.

(09/19/11 - 1 - 1:31 p.m.)

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Bill Hughes led the Pledge of Allegiance.

(09/19/11 - 1 - 1:32 p.m.)

3. ROLL CALL

Dena Masters called the roll and stated that Joseph Boles, Fred E. Cozby, and Fred Mayers would not be in attendance.

(09/19/11 - 1 - 1:32 p.m.)

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Hastings stated that he would like to add the 450th Celebration update under section ten of his report.

Motion by Hughes, seconded by O'Brien, carried 6/0, with Boles, Cozby, and Mayers absent, to approve the agenda as amended.

(09/19/11 - 1 - 1:33 p.m.)

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

O'Brien noted that he had one correction which had already been submitted in regards to page 5, paragraph 5. He clarified that Hastings' job description request was not a result of any dissatisfaction with Hastings' job performance.

Motion by Bartosch, seconded by Bryan, carried 6/0, with Boles, Cozby, and Mayers absent, to approve the minutes of the August 22, 2011, meeting as corrected.

(09/19/11 - 2 - 1:33 p.m.)

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

(09/19/11 - 2 - 1:34 p.m.)

7. DESTINATION & MARKETING CATEGORY

a. VCB Monthly Report - Richard Goldman

Richard Goldman offered the following in regards to the VCB monthly report:

- ❖ July 2011 bed tax collections increased 3.8%
- ❖ Occupancy up 1%
- ❖ Anastasia Island and St. Augustine Beach down 7%, Ponte Vedra Beach up 3%, St. Augustine-Vilano-North Beach up 9%, St. Augustine Shores and South up 15%, World Golf Village and I-95 corridor down 5%, others down 11%

Hughes questioned whether Goldman could explain the decline or increase in detail for the Council. Goldman responded that one reason for declines involved Hurricane Irene which scared people away from visiting Florida. Yanni asked for a further breakdown involving the Smith Travel report. Goldman said he could obtain upper tier data compared to other destinations to show countywide figures for the Council. He explained that further detailed data would not be appropriate due to the need to remain anonymous for the benefit of hoteliers. Bryan pointed out the decline in City bed tax revenue and questioned whether the oil spill would have caused that particular decline. Goldman affirmed that to be correct with hotel and apartment numbers in decline. He added that condos and motels were up.

Goldman continued to explain the July 2011 figures and offered the following points:

- ❖ Highest July since 2007, up 3% YTD and 6% for a rolling twelve month period
- ❖ Average daily rate up 4% in July, up 3% YTD, and up 2% for a rolling twelve months
- ❖ RevPar up 5% in July, up 6% YTD, and up 8% for a rolling twelve months
- ❖ Demand/rooms sold had a 1% increase, up 4% YTD, and up 7% for a rolling twelve months
- ❖ Revenue was up 5% for July, up 7% YTD, and up 9% for a rolling twelve months
- ❖ Comparison to competitive set St. Johns County in the middle of the pack on occupancy and ADR
- ❖ Only Charleston and St. Johns County showed increases in ADR
- ❖ The County's ADR was \$16 higher than Orlando, \$17 higher than Savannah, \$19 higher than Jacksonville
- ❖ Ft. Walton Beach was SJC's primary competition who had received BP dollars due to the oil spill and had virtually been closed during the summer of 2010
- ❖ The oil spill also had an impact on the website; however, visits to the website had declined since last year but had challenged the agency and website developers to improve the search engine optimization and was in the middle of a redesign
- ❖ International visitors figures were up an average of 25% with Canada doubling compared to July 2010
- ❖ Sales measure for telemarketing calls showed 23% ahead of goal and on pace with lead distribution and generated room nights
- ❖ Communication impressions were up 93%
- ❖ Getting Away program to air in October
- ❖ Sabado Gigante was the largest television show on the entire network of Univision, with 90 million viewers worldwide, would be in the county in October which was part of the Hispanic initiative to increase awareness of the county

- ❖ Started communications with Telemundo and Univision in regards to their new morning magazine shows

(1:48 p.m.) Goldman reviewed the upcoming fall events in the area which included:

- FY2012 Media Plan
- New Gator Bowl Association's Patch Plus
- 2nd Annual Flavors of Florida's Historic Coast
- Participation in the 450th workshop with the City of St. Augustine
- Conducting redesign of FloridasHistoricCoast.com website
- Workshops on receptive tour operators and quinces
- Preparing Bridal and Life Event Expo
- Completing the VCB portion of Visitor Profile
- Weather update site was live and working
- New booking engine for hoteliers was live on website

(1:52 p.m.) Bryan said the online booking revenue and paying taxes due on that booking was a critical issue for the county due to lost revenue. Goldman stated that, after reviewing the law, his company agreed that online businesses should be paying taxes on the entire sale in regards to online purchases. Bryan voiced that the County was missing out on millions of dollars. He noted difficulties obtaining the listening ear of State Legislators on the issue but said he would continue to emphasize the issue for the County.

(09/19/11 - 3 - 1:54 p.m.)

8. ARTS & CULTURAL GATEWAY

- a. St. Johns Cultural Council Update - Bill Coleman

Bill Coleman stated that the search continued for the Executive Director position and the process was down to five applicants which had been scheduled for face-to-face interviews in October.

(09/19/11 - 3 - 1:55 p.m.)

9. LEISURE & RECREATION CATEGORY - Troy Blevins

- a. Funding request - Fellowship of Christian Athletes, FCA Nat'l Scramble

Troy Blevins, Parks and Recreation Director, reviewed the request for \$10,000 from the TDC for the Fellowship Christian Athletes which was the same amount as the previous year. He explained that the recommended amount was \$5,000 for marketing and promotions. He suggested that the Scramble, although small, was a good return on the investment.

(1:56 p.m.) Motion by Hughes, seconded by O'Brien, carried 6/0, with Boles, Cozby, and Mayers absent, to approve the funding request for Fellowship of Christian Athletes Scramble.

Blevins advised that the beach season had ended for the year; therefore, the beaches were only open on weekends for beach driving. He said safety cones would remain on the beach for the purpose of public safety. In response to inquiries, he provided information about the pier condition, noted that the pier would need repairs in the near future, the Amateur program, and condition of the course. O'Brien asked about the beach renourishment timetable. Blevins responded that the beach renourishment issue had been turned over to the County's Engineering Department and pointed out that his role only involved funding. He acknowledged that the three day beach parking pass had worked well during the season and the new handicap pass also worked well for the first year. He noted that the handicap pass was the most successful of all the changes.

(09/19/11 - 4 - 2:02 p.m.)

10. ADMIN & SPECIAL USES CATEGORY - Glenn Hastings

→ Executive Director's Update

Hastings advised that the Online Travel Agency litigation depositions were scheduled for early October in Orlando. He noted that, during the recent meeting of the Florida Lodging and Restaurant Association in Orlando, people had been informed by the leadership of the House and Senate that they would be returning the legislation to the Legislators at the next session. He suggested that Senator Thrasher would be a person of influence in the process. In response to an inquiry from Hughes, Hastings summarized that Leon, St. Johns, Lee, Flagler, and Escambia Counties were involved in the litigation. He said Monroe County had settled approximately 1-1/2 years earlier. Bryan voiced that the State had been collecting the tax; however, not turning the funds over to the respective counties. Discussion ensued between Hastings and Council Members regarding the tax for online purchases and the current situation of attempting to obtain taxes due the County. Bryan voiced that he would be willing to assist as much as he could in Tallahassee in regards to the online tax issue. Goldman noted that he could get a few hoteliers to visit Tallahassee with Bryan.

→ BCC Changes to Tourist Development Plan

(2:12 p.m.) Hastings reviewed the tourist development plan changes for the Council which he said had been presented to and was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners.

→ Executive Director Job Description

(2:14 p.m.) Hastings noted that his job description was created in the late 1990's and had been further defined by policy, that the TDC had passed, and the bylaws of the Visitors & Convention Bureau. He stated that the job description had evolved over the years. He said the County was currently working with Condrey & Associates to complete a study of job classifications and descriptions. He advised that Dr. Condrey was willing to work with the TDC to create a new job description for the Directors' position. He pointed out that he had provided the Council with a two-page description of major tasks he handled on a regular basis and the approximate amount of time for each element. He reiterated that Dr. Condrey offered to assist in the process. Yanni commented that it would be more efficient and democratic to have a member from the TDC and a member from the BCC to talk with Dr. Condrey about the description of the position. Bryan offered to be a participant in a committee and offered a document involving researched information he had completed. Bartosch stated that the existing description was not sufficient any longer but suggested the creation of an ad-hoc committee to review the director's position. Bryan suggested that the Attorney should review the description because the position was supervised by the County Administrator.

(2:20 p.m.) Regina Ross advised that the Council should consider that a sub-committee needed to meet in the sunshine according to Florida Statutes. She said the person in the Director's position would report to the County Administrator. She noted that the entire Council could participate in the discussion. Yanni asked if it was possible for the County Administrator to join the Ad-hoc Committee. Ross affirmed that the County Administrator could attend the TDC meeting and offer input subject to his availability. Peter questioned whether the presented job description was the only one in existence that the County Administrator was currently using. Hastings affirmed that to be correct. Ross explained how the county handled the job classification study completed by Condrey & Associates. Peter suggested that having each Council Member interview with Dr. Condrey would be the best plan instead of creating another committee.

O'Brien stated that members of the Ad-hoc committee could include people from the TDC, VCB, Arts & Culture, Leisure & Recreation, and a person from the Administrators' office. Yanni voiced that he wanted Wanchick included in the process.

(2:27 p.m.) Motion by O'Brien, seconded by Yanni, that an Ad-hoc committee be created and representatives from the following organizations be a member of: TDC, VCB, Arts & Culture community as overseen by the Cultural Council, Leisure and Recreation, and a member of Mike Wanchick's Office.

Hastings asked that the Council consider not including members of the BCC and Cultural Council due to a possible conflict of interest. Yanni explained that executive director of the Tourist Development Council would be a representative of the tourism industry-at-large and answers to the County Administrator and community-at-large. Bartosch stated that the TDC was responsible for developing tourism regardless of who the Director would report to. He suggested that a large number of TDC members be included to retain the intent of the TDC, and not the intent of the groups' manager. Hughes said the TDC members represented the hospitality industry in the County and suggested that Dr. Condrey contact each member to discuss the position. Ross stated that an inherent conflict should be avoided; however, she suggested that the TDC schedule the agencies involved to attend the TDC meeting to discuss the job description. She added that the County Administrator could also be invited to participate in the discussion. In response to an inquiry from Yanni, Hastings said Dr. Condrey had agreed to accelerate the portion relative to the TDC Director's position. Ross explained the TDC's options for discussions with Dr. Condrey concerning the Director's position.

(2:35 p.m.) O'Brien revised his motion to included two members of the TDC. Peter suggested that Dr. Condrey had already been engaged with the County; therefore, he stated that the TDC should take advantage of that and ask Dr. Condrey to attend the TDC meeting. O'Brien voiced that Ad-hoc committees could delve into details more so than individuals. Bryan said the director's position needed to provide oversight. Blevins said the Condrey group was a solid professional group. He asked that he be involved with the discussions of the Director's position. Yanni said he would be happy to serve on the sub-committee. He added that he would like the issue returned to the Council in two months or less.

(2:42 p.m.) O'Brien withdrew his motion. Council consensus was to contact individual parties with a stake in the job description to get their input and bring the issue back to the Council by the next meeting.

(2:43 p.m.) Hastings noted that they had made a presentation to the City Of St. Augustine Commission regarding the 450th celebration. He reviewed for the Council the 450th funding timeline and motions concerning the funding. He noted that Dana Ste. Claire had made a presentation requesting \$1.5 million over a six year period for the event. He offered details of the plan and past discussions the Council had in regards to funding.

(2:49 p.m.) O'Brien asked if Dana Ste. Claire was involved in overseeing the program as director and whether a staff person was included and asked that Ste. Claire make a presentation to the Council. Bryan pointed out that significant dollars were involved and those funds should be protected by obtaining, updating, and clarifying funds being used. Bartosch said he was uncomfortable with the early money going to the 450th program without a solid plan. Yanni noted that the money should not be released until additional funding was found and a plan was provided to the TDC. Peter stated that it was a reoccurring theme when the 450th event was talked about which did not provide him confidence in the 450th program.

(09/19/11 - 6 - 2:55 p.m.)

11. MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS

- ➔ Local Option Tourist Development Tax YTD
- ➔ Cash Flow
- ➔ Departmental YTD Expenditures
- ➔ Visitor Related Expenditures

Hastings said the financial reports were in the Council’s packet for their review.

(09/19/11 - 6 - 2:56 p.m.)

12. COMMENTS BY MEMBERS

Yanni had none.

Bartosch had none.

Hughes had none.

O’Brien spoke about the Beach Renourishment program and thanked the County for their help.

Bryan spoke about the City Of St. Augustine being involved in the Beach Renourishment program.

Peter spoke about the 2012 ballots for the World Golf Hall of Fame being released and noted that Phil Nickelson was the headliner which would be held May 7th, 2012.

(09/19/11 - 6 -2:57 p.m.)

13. ADJOURN

Motion by Bartosch, seconded by Bryan, carried 6/0, with Boles, Cozby, and Mayers absent, to adjourn the meeting.

With there being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

Approved _____, 2011

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: _____
Jack Peter, Chair

ATTEST: CHERYL STRICKLAND, CLERK

By: _____, Deputy Clerk