



**Highlands County Tourist Development Council
Highlands County Government Center Boardroom
Regular Meeting
October 27, 2022 @ 8:15 a.m.**

Draft Regular Meeting

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:41 a.m. by Commissioner Chris Campbell.

The later meeting start time was due to the Tourism Council's Annual Awards Ceremony being held before the beginning of the TDC's regularly scheduled meeting.

Roll Call

Council Members Present:

Commissioner Chris Campbell
Kacey Mee
Mark Stewart
Charles Wilson

Cindy Garren
Maritza Christiansen

Council Members Absent:

Christine Hatfield, Viki Pontius, John Story

Also, Present:

Leah Sauls, Development Services Director
Casey Hartt, Lead Marketing Consultant
Reagan Fultz, Tourist Development Coordinator
D. Matt Raulerson, Assistant County Attorney
Alan Verlander, Airstream Ventures, LLC.
Tenille Drury-Smith, Sebring Chamber of Commerce
Bill Crum, Florida Amateur Wrestling Association
Jennifer Codo-Salisbury, Central Florida Regional Planning Council

Commissioner Campbell and Reagan Fultz established that a quorum was present, and that the meeting was properly noticed. Commissioner Campbell also introduced Ms. Fultz as the new Tourism Development Coordinator.

2. Acceptance of TDC Meeting Minutes of August 11th, 2022.

Commissioner Campbell inquired if there were any comments or changes to the minutes of August 11th, 2022. Mr. Wilson made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stewart to approve the meeting minutes. All Council members voted aye to approve the minutes. The motion carried.

3. Financial and Office Reports

Ms. Sauls presented the revenue reports that showed a balance total for FY 21/22, through July 31, 2022, of \$1,383,160.12. Council members received detailed printouts of financial reports. Council members had no questions on the financial reports.

Ms. Garren made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stewart, to approve the financial reports as presented. All Council members voted aye to approve the financial and office reports. The motion carried.

4. Marketing and Event Updates

A. Marketing and Public Relations Update

Casey Hartt presented the Highlands County Tourist Development Council Marketing update that included her key takeaways from the Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism, PR update, event grant status, and destination management.

1. Third "Henry" Award

Ms. Hartt announced that the Visit Sebring had received a "Henry" Award at the Florida Governor's Conference for the third time, being recognized for excellence in Tourism Marketing for the 2021 Sports Tourism campaign.

B. Sports Events Update from Airstream Ventures

Alan Verlander presented a sports tourism quarterly report. Mr. Verlander provided an update on the sporting events recruited by Airstream Ventures (ASV) for the Highlands County area. He noted that his team has been attending a few sporting conferences the past few months, connecting with a variety of event organizers interested in bringing their events to the Highlands County area. ASV's goal for their next year of annual contract with Visit Sebring (October 2022 – September 2023) is to bring 10 major events to the Highlands County area, 4,500 room nights from event attendees, and an economic impact of \$2.5 million.

5. Items for Voting

A. The Sebring Soda Festival (April 7-8, 2023)

Tenille Drury-Smith presented a request for a High Impact Signature Event grant for the 2023 Sebring Soda Festival in the amount of \$10,000. She presented statistics from the 2022 festival, as well as marketing plans for the 2023 festival.

Ms. Garren made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stewart to recommend approval of the grant with funding up to \$10,000 based on \$0.50/verified attendee. Reimbursable grant funds are to be used marketing outside of Highlands County and entertainment. Funds to come from Cost Center 5305 for Marketing & Events. All Council members voted aye. The motion carried.

B. Citrus Golf Trail Ladies Invitational (December 27th-30, 2022)

Mr. Verlander presented a request for a New Event Grant in the amount of \$16,000/year for 2022 & 2023. Based on the criteria for evaluation of the grant application, the program received a score of 75, making them eligible for 75% of the requested funding; \$12,000.

Ms. Garren made a motion, seconded by Mr. Wilson to approve the grant with funding for years #2 & #3 with funding up to \$12,000 for year #2 (2022) and \$12,000 for year #3 (2023). For 2022 and 2023, applicant will receive \$6,000 for reimbursable expenses after the event and \$20/verified room night up to \$6,000 total. Reimbursable funds are to be used for facility rental, promotional items, marketing (gold genius, social media and Google ads). Funds to come from Cost Center 5305 for Marketing & Events. All council members voted aye. The motion carried.

C. Florida Amateur Wrestling Association (FAWA) Sunshine State Clubs Championship (May 5-7, 2023)

Bill Crum presented a request for a New Event Grant in the amount of \$23,000 for Year #1 (2023); \$13,500 for Year #2 (2024) and \$14,000 for Year #3 (2025). Based on the criteria for evaluation of the grant application, the program received a score of 65, making them eligible for 75% of their requested funding; \$17,250 (Year #1/2023); \$10,125 (Year #2/2024); \$10,500 (year #3/2025).

After some discussion, Mr. Stewart made a motion, seconded by Ms. Garren, to approve the grant request a 3-year New Event Grant with funding up to \$17,250 for Year #1 (2023); \$10,125 for Year #2 (2024); and \$10,500 for Year #3 (2025). For year #1 (2023), applicant will receive \$14,250 for reimbursable expenses after the events + \$20/verified room night up to a \$3,000/year total. For Year #2 (2024), applicant will receive \$6,625 for reimbursable expenses after the event + \$20/room verified room night up to \$3,500/year total. For Year #3, applicant will receive \$6,500 for reimbursable expenses after the event + \$20/room verified room night up to \$4,000/year total. Reimbursable grant funds are to be used for facility rental, event officials, marketing, and event equipment rental. Funds to come from Cost Center 5305 for Marketing & Events. All Council members voted aye. The motion carried.

6. Old Business/Discussion

A. Tourism & Recreational Facility planning Grant Update

Jennifer Codo-Salisbury presented updates for the Community Planning Technical Assistance Grant that Highlands County Received from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to complete a county wide Facility Study for Tourism and Recreation. Ms. Codo-Salisbury stated that the scope of work had been completed and stated that the study will identify strategic opportunities to serve tourism-based recreation while also providing recreation for the county's residents and visitors. The work for the study is scheduled to be completed by 2023 and Ms. Codo-Salisbury noted that TDC will hear more from her team often in the next several months as the work continues.

B. Agritourism Forum Update

Ms. Hartt provided an update from the Agritourism Forum that took place September 13-14, 2022. It was the area's first Agritourism Forum. Day 1 the group completed a Farm Tour and visited Secret Gardens Winery, Sugar Sand Distillery, The PARC and Culina at The PARC. Day 2 speakers and panelists discussing a variety of agritourism topics including agritourism trends, marketing, insurance, and business planning. Post-Event surveys gave positive feedback from the attendees, and many noted desires to attend another Agritourism Forum in the next year, if not sooner.

C. Istokpoga Fishing Tournament Projects Update

Ms. Sauls provided an update on the projects taking place at Istokpoga Park and Windy Point on Lake Istokpoga. Based on findings and discussions at the Fishing Tournament Director Meeting held September 22, 2022, the group suggested prioritizing Istokpoga Park as Tier 1 of the project and developing that one location as the main tournament location, while redirecting all non-tournament fishing to Windy Point. The group advised that Windy Point's higher wind conditions and more residential location makes it less functional as a main tournament location at this time. Windy Point's updates would be tier 2 of the project.

Ms. Hartt noted that another meeting was scheduled for Thursday, September 29th, but due to Hurricane Ian, was cancelled to be rescheduled for an upcoming date yet to be determined and invited any council members to attend.

7. Public Input

Time was made available for Public Input.

8. Board Member Roundtable

Time was made available for board member roundtable discussion.

9. Upcoming Meetings & TDC-Sponsored Events

- A. Art & Culture Stakeholder Meeting – November 1st, @ 10am at Peter Powell Roberts Museum
- B. Visit Sebring Classic Golf Tournament – November 8th – 10th
- C. Citrus Golf Trail Open – November 29th – December 2nd (in conjunction with ING Conference)
- D. Spartan & Spartan Kids World Championship – December 10th – 11th
- E. Citrus Golf Trail Ladies Invitational – December 27th - 30th
- F. TDC Board Meeting – January 26th, 2023

10. Adjournment

Commissioner Campbell adjourned the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

For all backup documents, please contact Highlands County Public Information Office 863-402-6500.

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