



**Highlands County Tourist Development Council  
Highlands County Government Center Boardroom  
Regular Meeting  
April 29, 2021 @ 8:15 a.m.**

**Draft Regular Meeting**

**1. The meeting was called to order at 8:15 a.m. by Christine Hatfield.**

**Roll Call**

Council Members Present:

Commissioner Chris Campbell  
Vicki Pontius  
Mark Stewart  
Maria Sutherland  
Christine Hatfield

Cindy Garren  
John Story

Council Members Absent:

Bill Brantley  
Diane Rydecki

Also, Present:

Leah Sauls, Development Services Director  
Casey Hartt, Lead Marketing Consultant  
Chantel Brutus, Tourist Development Administrative Assistant  
Joel Lamp, Airstream Ventures, LLC.  
Daniel Andrews, Heartland Triathlon  
Cliff Woods  
Tenille Drury-Smith, Sebring Chamber  
Paige Cavell, Sebring Chamber  
Gaylin Thomas, HCA  
Becka Kampman, Heartland Triathlon  
Laura Andrews, Heartland Triathlon  
Don Elwell, Heartland Triathlon  
Cherie Bortnick, SPARTAN

Christine Hatfield and Chantel Brutus established that a quorum was present, and the meeting was properly noticed. Christine Hatfield also introduced John Story from Sebring International Raceway as the new attractions member for the TDC.

## **2. Acceptance of TDC Meeting Minutes of January 28, 2021.**

Ms. Hatfield inquired if there were any comments or changes to the minutes of January 28, 2021. Ms. Sutherland made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pontius to approve the meeting minutes. Upon roll call the Council voted aye. The motion passed.

## **3. Financial and Office Reports**

Ms. Hatfield presented the Monthly Expenditure and Revenue Reports year to date ending January 30, 2021, which makes a total up to date of \$344,695.65.

Ms. Garren made a motion, seconded by Mr. Sutherland, to approve the financial reports as presented. Upon roll call the Council voted aye. The motion passed.

## **4. Marketing & Budget Update**

### A. Marketing & Budget Update

Ms. Hartt presented the Marketing & Budget report. Ms. Hartt reported that while advertising allocations were reduced this year due to COVID impacting 2019-2020 collections, the TDC is has focused on making sure digital promotions continue and more engagement on the Visit Sebring website is created via interactive, user generated content and 360 photos. The TDC is also focusing on digital via several mobile passports via a tech platform called Bandwango. The 2020-2021 budget is focused on bringing more sporting events to the area and allocating TDC funds to make that possible. The TDC has also applied for and received multiple Florida Sports grants to help with funding these events.

### B. Internal Communications Update

Ms. Hartt presented the update on the Internal Communications Campaign, which has resulted in 10 community presentations to date. In addition, TDC has done some local media outreach and has been invited to contribute a monthly "Tourism Talks column in the Highlands News Sun plus send information to the local radio station and make guest appearances.

Prior to COVID, TDC had been doing stakeholder meetings and plans to re-convene those meetings this summer.

### C. Sports Event Recap

Mr. Lamp presented a sports event recap on Pro Watercross and Minor League Golf Tour (MLGT). Pro Watercross brought in an estimate economic impact of \$174,623.74 with an estimated 180 room nights. The TDC contributed \$25,000 for TV segments focusing on destination marketing for the area. MLGT brought in an estimated 90 room nights with an estimated \$16,886.02. The TDC did not fund the MLGT event.

#### D. Soda Fest Recap

Ms. Drury-Smith presented the Sebring Soda Fest Recap. The Soda Fest brought in an estimated 33% of attendees from out of county with a total of 5,000-6,000 total attendees for the event. The Soda Fest consisted of 14 food trucks, 38 vendors and 140 NPO volunteers. Given that we are still dealing with a pandemic, the Festival was well received and well attended.

### 5. **Items for Voting**

#### A. SPARTAN Race (Dec 17-18, 2021), presented by Airstream Ventures. New Event Grant requesting \$90,000 for 3 years in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

Cherie Bortnick with SPARTAN presented the SPARTAN Race New Event Grant Request Application.

The SPARTAN event which would bring huge economic impact to the County and around 15,000 participants with around 4,000 room nights. The New Event Grant approves funding for year #1 only: \$20,000 based on scoring; no room night verifications. Opportunity for an additional \$20/room night reimbursement based on verified rooms. Max funding for year #2 & #3: \$10,000 based on scoring; no room night verifications. Opportunity for an additional \$20/room night reimbursement based on verified rooms.

Ms. Garren made a motion, seconded by Ms. Sutherland, to approve up to \$90,000 in funding for 3 years for the SPARTAN Race. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion passed.

#### B. Citrus Golf Trail Open Golf Tournament (Nov 30- Dec 5, 2021) presented by Airstream Ventures. New Event Grant requesting \$35,000.

Joel Lamp presented the Citrus Golf Trail (CGT) Open Golf Tournament New Event Grant Request application.

Mr. Lamp requested that, if he has the opportunity, the TDC provide him the flexibility of using the CGT grant of \$35,000 to help bring the PGA Mayflower Classic to Highlands County instead of the CGT Open and use the PGA Tour as a marketing event for the CGT Open 2022. The New Event Grant approves funding for year #1 only: \$20,000 based on scoring; no room night verifications. Opportunity for an additional \$20/room night reimbursement based on verified rooms. Max funding for year #2 & #3: \$10,000 based on scoring; no room night verifications. Opportunity for an additional \$20/room night reimbursement based on verified rooms.

Mr. Story made a motion, seconded by Mr. Campbell, to approve up to \$35,000 in grant funds to the PGA Mayflower Classic instead of 2021 CGT Open, if the opportunity arises, in funding pending a new application submitted with corrected information along with legal and BOCC approval. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion passed.

#### C. Minor League Golf Tour Visit Sebring Classic Golf Tournament (Nov 1-3, 2021) presented by Airstream Ventures. New Event Grant requesting \$10,000

Mr. Lamp presented the Minor League Golf Tour Visit Sebring Classic Golf Tournament requesting \$10,000, but upon TDC scoring of new events, the event only qualifies for 75 percent of funding making the grant funds \$7,500. The New Event Grant approves funding for year #1 only: \$20,000 based on scoring; no room night verifications. Opportunity for an additional \$20/room night reimbursement based on verified rooms. Max funding for year #2 & #3: \$10,000 based on scoring; no room night verifications. Opportunity for an additional \$20/room night reimbursement based on verified rooms.

Ms. Garren made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pontius, to approve up to \$7,500 in funding for the Minor League Golf Tour Visit Sebring Classic. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion passed

#### D. Bono Bilt Wrestling Date Change from May 14-16, 2021 to July 16-18, 2021

Mr. Lamp presented the request to change the Bono Built date changes from May 14-16, 2021 to July 16-18, 2021 due to another wrestling event nearby also having a tournament on the same weekend and not wanting to compete for participants and spectators.

Ms. Pontius made a motion, seconded by Ms. Sutherland, to approve date changes for the Bono Bilt Wrestling Tournament. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion passed.

#### E. TDC Proposed Budget Amendment

Ms. Hartt reported that the TDC collected more funds in 2019-2020 than was anticipated. She presented the proposed budget amendment allowing an extra \$25,000 to be used in the general marketing funds and that the TDC not use the \$85,000 in Contingency Funds they thought they would need for the current fiscal year.

Ms. Pontius made a motion, seconded by Ms. Sutherland, to approve the Budget Amendment of \$25,000 and not use the TDC's \$85,000 in Contingency Funds at this time. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion passed.

### **6. Old Business/Discussion**

#### A. Fishing Tournament Facility Status Update

Chantel Brutus reported that both Windy Point and Lake Istokpoga Park Grant contracts are fully executed and approved. Work should begin as soon as the departments are able.

#### B. TDC Member Vacancy for Accommodation Interest Position

Ms. Rydecki applied to keep her position on the TDC and members agreed. There were no other applications for the position.

#### C. Heartland Triathlon Request

After some discussion, the Board agreed to allow Mr. Andrews to modify his grant application changing his TDC funded reimbursable expenses from marketing to MOT needs and costs. Mr. Andrews must submit a revised application and the application must be approved by legal and the BOCC.

The TDC decided to vote on this request.

Ms. Pontius made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stewart, to approve the Heartland Triathlon expense modification from marketing to MOT expenses pending a revised application and legal and BOCC approval. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion passed.

**7. Public Input**

**8. Board Member Roundtable**

The TDC asked that there be a list of events that the TDC is funding with an amount to be included in each agenda.

**9. Upcoming Meeting**

A. TDC Board: August 5, 2021 @ 8:15 a.m., Government Center, Boardroom

**9. Adjournment**

Ms. Hatfield adjourned the meeting at 10:43 a.m.

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