



**Highlands County Tourist Development Council
Highlands County Government Center Boardroom
Regular Meeting
August 19, 2021 @ 8:15 a.m.**

Draft Regular Meeting

1. The meeting was called to order at 8:17 a.m. by Vicki Pontius.

Roll Call

Council Members Present:

Commissioner Chris Campbell

John Story

Vicki Pontius

Mark Stewart

Maria Sutherland

Diane Rydecki

Council Members Absent:

Bill Brantley

Christine Hatfield

Cindy Garren

Also, Present:

Andy Kesling, Citrus Golf Trail/ Sun 'N Lake Golf Club

Leah Sauls, Development Services Director

Casey Hartt, Lead Marketing Consultant

Chantel Brutus, Legal Assistant/Fill in for vacant TDC assistant position

Joel Lamp, Airstream Ventures, LLC.

Cliff Woods

Rachel Barry, Zoning Supervisor

Matt Raulerson, Assistant County Attorney

Vicki Pontius and Chantel Brutus established that a quorum was present, and the meeting was properly noticed.

2. Acceptance of TDC Meeting Minutes of June 10, 2021.

Ms. Pontius inquired if there were any comments or changes to the minutes of June 10, 2021. Ms. Pontius made a motion, seconded by Ms. Sutherland to approve the meeting minutes. Upon roll call the Council voted aye. The motion passed.

3. Financial and Office Reports

Ms. Pontius presented the Monthly Expenditure and Revenue Reports year to date ending May 30, 2021, which makes a total up to date of \$848,033.94.

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

4. Marketing & Event Updates

A. Marketing Update

Ms. Hartt presented her Marketing report. Ms. Hartt updated the TDC and public that TDC staff and Airstream Ventures has focused on bringing 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. Ms. Rydecki has stated her hotel has been full the last few months and numbers are looking good for accommodations, which we should see in the updated revenues when the financial department releases them.

TDC staff has resumed their community outreach and presentations with local stakeholders. These meetings generate a lot of useful feedback from the local community.

Lunker Louie has been secured as Visit Sebring's Fishing Ambassador. Lunker Louie fishes locally and posts on social media to attract fisherman to the area through his large following on social media.

B. Sports Events Update

Mr. Lamp presented an update on the sports events that TDC and Airstream Ventures has worked to bring to the Sebring Area. Mr. Lamp states that they have secured 8 sporting events. TDC staff and Airstream also held a County-wide meeting in April regarding Pickleball with nearly 40 people in attendance to discuss the sport and interest in Highlands County.

5. Items for Voting

A. GFNY Grant Amendment Request

The Board agreed to allow Ms. Fluhme to modify her grant application changing TDC funded expenses from marketing to MOT.

Ms. Pontius made a motion, seconded by Mr. Story, to approve the grant modification to allow MOT services. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion passed.

B. Highlands County Golf

Mr. Wood brought a Highlands County Golf Tourism Sales Proposal to the TDC asking them to spend \$183,200 on recruiting a professional salesperson with digital sales/marketing experience, provide a budget to develop leads, develop sales literature, produce a video to be used as a sales aid, adjust the CGT website to include a focus on golf groups, and incidental sales/marketing expenses.

None of the TDC members were in agreeance with the proposal and the item was dropped.

C. Event Grant Program Proposed Changes

Ms. Hartt presented the proposed changes to the TDC Event Grant Program Applications.

Ms. Sutherland made a motion, seconded by Mr. Story to approve the Grant Application changes. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion passed

D. 2021-2022 Marketing Plan and Budget

Ms. Hartt presented her 2021-2022 Marketing Plan and Budget to the TDC board. Ms. Hartt's proposed preliminary budget would allocate \$675,000 to marketing and promotions.

Mr. Story made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stewart, to approve the 2021-2022 Marketing Plan and Budget. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion passed.

E. TDC Alternate Members

TDC members decided to drop this item and bring it back at a later date if they decided they needed alternate members to be added since it was brought to TDC's attention that it was decided by Legal that Commissioner Campbell can vote per FL. Statue.

6. Old Business/Discussion

A. RFP Update

Ms. Sauls reported that Gray Dog Publishing ranked highest in the BID process and an offer was made. The TDC had a discussion asking Ms. Sauls to please bring their recommendation of Gray Dog to the Board of County Commissioners attention so they are aware of how pleased they are with the work Gray Dog has been doing and would like to continue in the same direction.

B. Tourism Insights Awards Update

Ms. Hartt stated that TDC staff has secured Brain London as a guest speaker for the event and it will be held on September 29, 2021 at 2p.m. in the Government Center, Board Room.

C. Stakeholder Meetings

Ms. Hartt informed the TDC that staff has continued their community outreach by having stakeholder meetings again after being put on hold due to COVID-19.

TDC Staff held a stakeholders meeting day and met with owners/ representatives from Arts & Culture, Agritourism, and Restaurant & Hotels.

D. TDT Letter

Ms. Sauls informed the TDC that the TDT informational letter has been put on hold until further direction from Administration.

7. Public Input

8. Board Member Roundtable

The TDC requested that the Fl. Statue that makes up the Tourism Development be included in the next meetings agenda for them to review and have a copy of. They also asked that legal take a look at the statue and ordinance and make revisions as they see fit.

9. Upcoming Meeting

A. Agritourism Forum, TBD

B. Tourism Insights Awards September 29, 2021 @ 2 p.m., Government Center, Boardroom

C. TDC Board Meeting October 28, 2021 @ 8:15 a.m., Government Center, Boardroom

D. AdventureEDU Program November 4-5, 2021, Inn on the Lakes

9. Adjournment

Ms. Pontius adjourned the meeting at 10:32 a.m.

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