



**Highlands County Tourist Development Council
Highlands County Government Center Boardroom
Regular Meeting
January 28, 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
Diane Rydecki
Christine Hatfield

Bill Brantley

Council Members Absent:

Cindy Garren

Also, Present:

Leah Sauls, Development Services Director
Casey Hartt, Lead Marketing Consultant
Chantel Brutus, Tourist Development Administrative Assistant
Joel Lamp, Airstream Ventures, LLC.
Alan Verlander, Airstream Ventures, LLC.
Cliff Woods
John Story, Sebring International Raceway

Christine Hatfield and Chantel Brutus established that a quorum was present, and the meeting was properly noticed. Christine Hatfield also introduced Commissioner Campbell as the new BOCC liaison for the TDC taking the place of Commissioner Brooks.

2. Acceptance of TDC Meeting Minutes of October 29, 2020.

Ms. Hatfield inquired if there were any comments or changes to the minutes of October 29, 2020. 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. Brutus presented the Monthly Expenditure and Revenue Reports year to date ending October 30, 2020, which makes a total up to date of \$76,975.97.

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 Update

A. End of Year Recap

Mrs. Hartt presented the End of Year Recap. Ms. Hartt went over 2019-2020 TDC accomplishments, TDC collection comparisons, and projects the TDC has started and planned in the future.

B. Marketing & Budget Update

Ms. Hartt presented her Marketing & Budget report. Ms. Hartt noted that the month of October & November have increased in comparison to last years. The TDC is starting to focus more on bringing sports events to the area since due to COVID-19 people are looking for more outside events to attend.

C. Airstream Ventures Introduction

Joel Lamp and Alan Verlander with Airstream Ventures came to the TDC meeting to introduce Airstream Ventures. Airstream Ventures has been in business for 26 years bringing events to areas. Airstream Ventures currently works with Clay County which is similar to the Sebring Area. Airstream is planning on bringing 7 events to Highlands County that will total around 20 days, approximately \$3.3 million in economic impact, 4,500+ hotel stays, and 3,500+ participants to the Sebring area.

5. Items for Voting

A. TDC Chair

TDC voted that Christine Hatfield take the place of TDC chair in the place of Commissioner Brooks.

Mr. Stewart made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rydecki, to approve Christine Hatfield as TDC Chair. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion passed.

B. Bono Bilt Wrestling Tournament (May 14-16, 2021) presented by Airstream Ventures. New Event Grant Request for \$20,000.

Joel Lamp and Alan Verlander presented the Bono Bilt Wrestling Tournament New Event Grant Request application.

The Bono Bilt Wrestling Tournament is a large youth event which would bring great economic impact and around 300. 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.

Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye except for Mr. Brantley who voted nay. The motion carried 6-1.

C. TDC Board Member Vacancy

Tenille Drury-Smith resigned from the TDC Board as of January 2021. This resignation left a vacancy position open for Tourism Interest. Ms. Brutus properly advertised the open position within the TDC Board. One (1) application was received by John Story with Sebring International Raceway.

Ms. Sutherland made a motion, seconded by Ms. Pontius, to appoint John Story with Sebring International Raceway to the TDC Tourism Interest position. Upon roll call, all Council members on the call voted aye. The motion carried.

6. Old Business/Discussion

A. TDC Lead Marketing Consultant Contract

The contract for Casey Hartt, Lead Marketing Consultant is up next year. The TDC was to discuss on whether they preferred to recommend to the BOCC to keep contracting out a consultant for the TDC or hire in-house as a County Employee. During this discussion Casey Hartt was asked to leave so the TDC could feel comfortable talking open and freely during this time. The TDC Board all unanimously agreed that they would recommend keeping Casey Hartt as the Lead Marketing Consultant for the TDC dba Visit Sebring. All Board Members agreed that Casey has done a wonderful job in helping market the Sebring area and believe that she has brought amazing events to the area and they would like to allow her to continue her work and keep the TDC going in the same direction.

B. Internal Communication Plan

Mrs. Hartt presented the 2021 Internal Communication plan that is already in place and also presented the goals for 2021-2022.

C. Fishing Tournament Facility Status Update

Chantel Brutus reported that both Windy Point and Lake Istokpoga Park Grant contracts are still making their way through the FWC departments internally. Nickie Stickler, with FWC, has informed us that the process is still delayed due to COVID-19 and FWC still plans on pushing the Lake Istokpoga improvement grants out in the first batch.

D. Soda Fest Update

The Sebring Soda Festival has typically been a first weekend in April event; however, the final day of the event would fall on Easter this year. Keeping these dates would pose many challenges, on top of an already uncertain year with COVID. The Sebring Chamber has decided the best course of action for a successful event is to move the date to later in April and are considering April 23-25. In doing this, it would remain a 3-day event, which includes two days for the Soda Festival and a Soda Festival inspired family event on Friday by the Sebring CRA. This would also give more opportunity for the COVID vaccine to be distributed, giving attendees more peace of mind with attending the event.

The entertainment scheduled for the Saturday night's after-party has already agreed to move the dates with no penalty, and the Sebring Chamber is proposing the new dates for approval to Sebring City Council on February 2. As soon as that is approved, the Chamber will move forward with promoting the event.

The Blueberry Festival is also scheduled that same weekend on April 24 in Avon Park. The Sebring Chamber reported that they have reached out to the organizers to discuss how the two events can work together to cross promote, in hopes to entice more out-of-town, overnight travelers.

There will be a plan in place for COVID precautions as well as social distancing during all aspects of the event.

Ms. Sutherland expressed great concern with the new proposed dates stating that it would greatly affect the Blueberry Festival and Avon Park has no other events scheduled for the year due to COVID and they could use this event to help Avon Park.

E. TDC Board Meeting July 29, 2021 @ 8:15 a.m.- Needs to be rescheduled to either July 15th or August 5th, 2021.

The Board agreed to reschedule to TDC meeting for August 5, 2021 due to people usually taking vacations during July when kids are out of school.

6. Public Input

7. Board Member Roundtable

8. Upcoming Meeting

A. TDC Board: April 29, 2021 @ 8:15 a.m., Government Center, Boardroom

9. Adjournment

Ms. Hatfield adjourned the meeting at 10:04 a.m.

**TDC held an open meeting with Airstream Ventures directly after the TDC meeting.

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