

Orlando North Seminole County Tourism
Tourist Development Council Meeting
January 21, 2016

TDC members in attendance:

George Speake
Chipp Frame
Bruce Skwarlo
Theo Hollerbach
Commissioner Carlton Henley
Don Dougherty

TDC members absent:

Mayor Jeff Triplett

CALLED TO ORDER: Chairman Theo Hollerbach called meeting to order at 3:04pm
Welcome, introduction of TDC members

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Minutes were reviewed and approved unanimously
Motion made by Bruce Skwarlo, Second by Chipp Frame

CONSENT AGENDA: Agenda was reviewed and approved unanimously
Motion to approve made by Bruce Skwarlo
Second by Chipp Frame

DISCUSSION:

Bruce requested history on the water polo club. Hannah Sedigh shared that this is a new event that involves a partnership with Lake Brantley High School.

Bruce shared his enthusiasm regarding the two Athletix events and the increase in room nights (4,200). David Banner was in attendance (from Athletix) and shared that his room night goal is historically conservative. Athletix plans a build-up to 4,200 nights over two years. Historically this event has shown growth (Myrtle Beach, Kentucky). He is excited about sports complex and believes the fields will do very well. David hopes to continue to be a part of Seminole county sports for years to come.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Theo proposed bi-monthly meetings; Commissioner Henley made a motion to move to bi-monthly meetings, Bruce seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Theo updated the Council regarding the CALNO seat, which had yet to be filled by CALNO.

Theo updated the Council regarding the District 1 seat, previously held by Greg Pflug. Greg recently resigned from the board due to multiple conflicting commitments. The seat should be filled by the District 1 Commissioner in February or March.

Bruce asked about filling vice chair seat, which needs to be filled by an elected official per statute. Bruce asked if we need a special meeting to fill the seat. Tricia said a special meeting is not necessary, that it can wait until the March 17 TDC meeting.

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Tricia Setzer provided an update regarding the tourism office reorganization plan, which will be finalized by the March 17 meeting. She apologized for the confusion around the meeting location change and assured the TDC that the error would be remedied for the next meeting. Tricia also discussed long-term planning regarding ethics training, sales/marketing plan presentations and budget presentations to the TDC in the upcoming months.

Stephanie Hunicke provided an update regarding the recent activities with respect to meetings and leisure events and programs.

Bruce mentioned that he is having issues with the booking system hosted on the Orlando North website. Apparently, both the Westin and Marriot at times have not had a click-through link for the online booking system. He requested the Book It Direct/JackRabbit needs to fix the software.

Stephanie shared that JackRabbit does not provide a strong ROI for tourism, therefore staff is exploring other booking software options. Staff agreed to work with Paradise on both resolving the short-term issue with Book It Direct while also pursuing more long-term options for an online booking software.

Danny Trosset presented a new funding model for sports and special event incentives (pg. 102-103 in packet).

Chipp Frame asked about the logic behind the current funding model and why tourism is moving away from it. Danny shared that, although staff could have just tightened the room night range, the per cost/flat-multiplier makes the most sense for what they County is trying to accomplish with the sports complex.

Commissioner Henley asked if the new model will increase the amount of money tourism will be awarding. Danny said it will not for current events, though tourism will need to increase overall incentive line item in budget for the next fiscal year, as sales are going up. Bruce said that under the current model there are big gaps based on the current scale (cited the funding example for Athletix).

Bruce asked if this will be the funding model for all events or just sports complex. Danny shared that the new model will be utilized for all sports events. He also said that events can only apply for the maximum of the facility fee and, with marketing dollars, anything above \$25k would have to go to BCC for approval.

Commissioner Henley asked if this model applies to Soldiers Creek, to which Danny said it will.

The TDC requested that Danny provide a report at each TDC meeting regarding event sales and incentives, to which Danny agreed.

Theo asked about the process for marketing dollars. Ann Colby said the incentive dollars cover both promotional and operations (facility) dollars. In the upcoming budget year, tourism should have two separate line items (operations and marketing) for incentives. Ann agreed that incentive dollars will need to be increased in the next fiscal year. Ann said "not to exceed" amounts should also be included.

Theo asked when the TDC will receive budget recommendation for incentives and marketing. Danny shared that this information should be provided at the May TDC meeting.

Bruce asked as to why a \$25k cap had not been required in the new funding model (as it was previously). Danny said tourism has given special consideration for events over \$25k. There may be an example of a three week event that a cap was added now. That's why the BCC is required to approve any grants of \$25k or more. Ann agreed that currently any grant over \$25k must go to the BCC. Commissioner Henley asked Ann to provide examples of what can/cannot be spent with grant dollars. Ann said that funding is narrowed to operations fees for publicly owned buildings (sports stadium, auditorium, convention center). There are very narrow operational fee parameters. Promotions can also be covered by incentive dollars as long as the marketing is done outside of Seminole County.

Bruce suggested that any funding request that exceeds \$25k should go to both the TDC and the BCC. Danny shared that adding this requirement may create challenges with the every-other-month schedule (TDC meetings). Brent from CFSC said that there are currently events in the pipeline that are over \$25k and, if tourism pushes them back with additional approvals, there may be issues with event organizers.

George Speake asked if there is a minimum on the scale, to which Danny answered 150 room nights. George asked to know more regarding what marketing dollars are spent. Danny said that any event requesting marketing dollars must provide a marketing plan.

Theo asked how tourism awards marketing dollars. Do we have a % of dollars that are marketing? Danny said no, because the majority of the dollars are for facility rentals. For the upcoming budget we will need to determine line items for marketing and for facility rentals. Ann shared that the contracts are very detailed in terms of marketing, including detailed budget, advertising plans, ad approval, on-air approvals. There are many controls in the contract.

Bruce asked if the new model will negatively impact smaller events. Danny said that is not the case, as events are based on the time of year (higher multiplier in summer, lower in winter). Bruce asked what Paul's event netted in the past versus with new funding model. It had 900 room nights and received \$15k in the past. It will receive \$13,500 moving forward.

Theo called for a motion to approve the new funding process:

Bruce made the motion to approve the new funding scale with a change – that all requests that exceed \$25k would receive TDC approval prior to BCC approval
Chipp Frame seconded the motion

Yeas: Bruce, Chipp

Nays: George, Don, Theo, Commissioner Henley

Commissioner Henley opposed the motion simply because of the time factor. He assured the TDC that the BCC will scrutinize these higher funding requests. Bruce suggested that a special meeting (TDC) be convened to vote on the events that exceed \$25k. Chipp asked the time frame in which these tournaments came to tourism – Brent said in the fall.

Commissioner Henley said he has reviewed the calendar and asked of the events that are programmed, are any over \$25k. Hannah answered that, based on the current calendar, all the events occurring in May/June are under \$25k. Don suggested a scenario that if an event comes up quickly (at the \$25k level) tourism will have to call an emergency meeting. Theo said that it is the TDCs job to approve the budget but not to get into the details of \$15k versus \$25k. The staff and legal counsel should be expected to do their due diligence. Theo said we are streamlining the past processes. If this process is approved (TDC and BCC approve over \$25k) this would be an administrative code change and one only the BCC could change in the future.

George asked if the BCC has seen the proposed model and Danny said yes, at individual meetings.

Theo said that we need to look at the process as something streamlined for event opportunities. That we are eliminating bureaucratic red tape and we don't want to create more red tape. Bruce suggested scheduling special meetings, Commissioner Henley said he understands reason for concern, but he said he doesn't believe this has been an issue in the past and sees no reason why staff cannot bring information forward in a timely manner. Bruce asked what turnaround is for grants. Carlton said that he believes agenda items that require a quick turnaround can be added to a BCC agenda as an add-on item.

Frank Cirrincione shared that any additional dollars would need to be approved to TDC (additional incentive dollars outside of what is currently budgeted).

Theo called for a motion -

Don said he makes a motion to approve funding model as presented

Chipp seconded the motion

Motion passed 5/1

Yeas: Chipp, George, Don, Theo, Commissioner Henley

Nays: Bruce

Mike Malay from CFSC introduced himself as a board member. He shared that John Biz resigned at the beginning of January and he would be happy to address any questions as a member of the executive board. The CFSC appreciates all that Seminole has done to support sports tourism. CFSC staff has not missed a beat and the board is working to fill the executive position. Bruce commented that Brent and his team have done a great job, whomever fills the position should know diamond sports because that's why Seminole signed the (CFSC) deal.

Hannah providing overview of ECNL

We have a final year of the three year deal (2016) and have option to negotiate two, 1-year extensions. Bruce asked why the room count is below last year's count (2887). Hannah said the number of teams decreased in 2015 and two new ECNL programs joined the league that are inside the state of FL. This usually means a shorter time span of stay because they don't have to travel as far. One of the larger hotel properties was unavailable in Seminole Co. In 2014 the room nights were 3,100 (appx) verified nights. Bruce made a comment that the Marriott was full for three days which wouldn't have occurred, otherwise. Bruce said there are more rooms that booked under vacation and Marriott programs that are above and beyond reported as a team rooms (that the Marriott received). Hannah shared that the team is working on new model to better track room nights and audit numbers.

Kristen Murphy provided a marketing and advertising report from Paradise.

Red provided an update regarding hotel occupancy for December. Occupancy for the year was 73.3%. January, 2016 had 78% occupancy (last year was 83%).

Frank asked that partners receive an update every thirty days.

Red shared that TDC attendance is low and feels that tourism needs to do something about communication to let GMs and other folks know about the meetings.

Mayor Charles Lacey from Winter Springs announced that the city is coming off a great success with the Scottish Highland games, with 25k attendees (2/3 of these on Saturday).

Winter Springs would like to consider the potential of growing events in their city by using the Games as a template. As things come up, he'd like us to keep Winter Springs in mind for other events. They are open to any ideas on how we can take this. Chairman Horan said he's throwing out a challenge to staff and the TDC to publicize the city event venue (Central Winds) to other groups and add two new events to Central Winds during the year.

Theo adjourned the meeting at 5:02pm