



THE BEACHES OF  
**FORT MYERS  
AND SANIBEL**

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

**TDC Meeting Minutes**

Nov. 9, 2021

Commissioner Brian Hamman, chair, called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. The meeting was held at the Marriott Sanibel Harbour Resort & Spa in advance of the Tourism Outlook Annual Meeting.

**Council members in attendance**

Commissioner Brian Hamman, Darla Bonk, Pamela Cronin, Colleen DePasquale, Brian Kramer, Tony Lapi, Fran Myers, Holly Smith, Bill Waichulis and Robert Wells III.

Smith made a motion to approve the Oct. 14, 2021 meeting minutes. Myers seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

**Public to be heard**

John Naylor, City of Palms Classic executive director, announced that the 48<sup>th</sup> annual City of Palms Classic basketball tournament will take place Dec. 17-22 at the Suncoast Credit Union Arena. Event sales are up 20% from 2019 and pre-season rankings are out. Thirteen of 16 teams are ranked in the Top 50 high school teams in the country. Naylor thanked the TDC and Sports Development for its support. Posters will be hung in Lee County hotels to market the tournament, courtesy of Sports Development. Advertisements will also run at the baggage claims at Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW).

Beth Oliver, Offshore Sailing School vice president, announced that *Offshore High*, a new memoir about Steve and Doris Colgate, written by Herb McCormick, has been published. She also thanked the TDC and VCB for a record-breaking year.

Jack Carver, Florida RV association, applauded our area's beaches.

Kerri Johnson, GOMO Travel founder & CEO, announced that GOMO Travel relocated from Jacksonville to Lee County. GOMO Travel offers solutions to complex assisted travel issues with concierge-style service for people of all ages. She started this business to help make travel accessible.

John Lai, Sanibel & Captiva Islands Chamber of Commerce president & CEO, said the 37<sup>th</sup> annual Luminary Stroll will take place Dec. 3-4.

**Municipalities to be heard**

None to be heard.

**Report of the executive director**

Tamara Pigott, VCB executive director, reported record-breaking bed tax collections of \$53.3 million for FY21, an increase of 39.4% when compared to FY20, and an increase of 24.9% when compared to FY19, which previously held the record for the highest collections. For the month of September 2021, resort tax collected was \$2,412,636, a 31.2% increase over September 2020 collections of \$1,839,289.

Pigott also reported that the average hotel occupancy rate in September 2021 was 56.4%, which is up 27.5% from September 2020 (44.3%). The average daily rate for September 2021 was \$125.97, up 11.3% from September 2020 (\$113.23) and RevPAR for September 2021 was \$71.08, up 41.9% from September 2020 (\$50.10).

For vacation rentals, the average occupancy rate for September 2021 was 25%, which is up 8.7% from September 2020 (23%). The average daily rate for September 2021 was \$172, which is up 17% from September 2020 (\$147). RevPAR for September 2021 was \$43, which is up 30.3% from September 2020 (\$33).

During September 2021, 551,041 passengers traveled through RSW. Figures represent an increase of 115.3% in passenger traffic compared to September 2020. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is up 69.5% from the same period last year.

### **DSG third quarter report**

Phillip Downs, DSG, reported on July- September 2021 and calendar year highlights. Total visitation during the summer months increased 54.5% and visitor expenditures increased 53.3% from 2020 to 2021. In comparison to 2019, total visitation in the summer months increased 5.5% and visitor expenditures increased 39.8%. Domestic travel accounted for 94% of Lee County's total summer visitation. New York, Chicago and Miami-Fort Lauderdale were the top feeder markets. Only 6% of visitors arrived from international markets, the largest share coming from Canada. He added that the vacation planning window is back to pre-pandemic times.

### **New business**

Wells made a motion to approve the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter FY 20/21 budget reports. Bonk seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

### **TDC member items**

Kramer announced that the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association and Greater Fort Myers Chamber of Commerce are hosting a luncheon at Pelican Preserve on Nov. 19. John Talmage, Lee County Economic Development director, is the guest speaker.

Myers said it is great to see the airport so busy, especially with the expansion coming. RSW is bringing in more local vendors to the airport.

Smith, said Lee County Economic Development, Horizon Council and the VCB are hosting Fort Myers Tip-Off Nov. 22-23 at the Suncoast Credit Union Arena. There will be eight teams including Ohio State, Seton Hall, Cal and the University of Florida in the beach division and Southern Utah, Yale, Milwaukee and Bowling Green in the palms division. Tickets are available.

Cronin, wished the council a Happy Thanksgiving. She added the Shell Factory will host a fundraiser for Valerie's House on Nov. 18.

Hamman announced this will likely be his last meeting as chair.

### **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 a.m.

**Next TDC meeting**

The next TDC meeting is at **3 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 8, 2021** at the Lee County Admin East Building, Room 118, 2201 Second St., Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, go to [www.LeeVCB.com](http://www.LeeVCB.com). Contact: Tamara Pigott, [TPigott@leegov.com](mailto:TPigott@leegov.com), Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.