

**Tourist Development Council
Pinellas County
September 21, 2022**

The Pinellas County Tourist Development Council (TDC), as created under Pinellas County Ordinance 78-20 pursuant to Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, met in regular session on this date at 9:03 AM in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building, 333 Chestnut Street, Clearwater, Florida.

Present

Charlie Justice, Chairman, Board of County Commissioners (BCC) Chairman
Russ Kimball, Vice-Chairman, Sheraton Sand Key Resort
Julie Ward Bujalski, City of Dunedin Mayor
Phil Henderson, Jr., Starlite Cruises
Frank Hibbard, City of Clearwater Mayor
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry
Kenneth T. Welch, City of St. Petersburg Mayor
Michael Williams, Innisbrook Golf Resort

Not Present

Melinda Pletcher, City of St. Pete Beach Commissioner
Charles Prather, The Birchwood Inn
Clyde Smith, Bilmar Beach Resort

Others Present

Steve Hayes, Visit St. Pete/Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO
Katie Bridges, Senior Advertising Manager
Mackenzie Comerer, Senior Media Relations Manager
Eddie Kirsch, Digital Producer
Michael A. Zas, Managing Assistant County Attorney
Katie Poviones, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk
Other interested individuals

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Justice called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM.

CHAIR COMMENTS – NONE

MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 17, 2022 REGULAR MEETING

Mayor Hibbard made a motion, which was seconded by Ms. Moore and carried unanimously, that the minutes of the August 17 meeting be approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – NONE

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Public Relations Update

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *The Big Festival 2022 Post Campaign Report*, Ms. Comerer provided information regarding a recent consumer activation by VSPC at the event, a family-friendly food and music festival in the United Kingdom. She discussed participation by festival goers, audience demographics, and achievements from the activation, highlighting that the content reached approximately 60,000 people during the three-day festival, and an additional 340,000 connections were made via branded newsletters and social media promotions.

Ms. Comerer announced that this would be her last time presenting to the TDC, as she has accepted a position at a local public relations agency, and noted that she has enjoyed representing VSPC; whereupon, she introduced NJF Vice President of Public Relations Maggie LaCasse and NJF Account Supervisor Alexis Whitley, relating that their company has worked with VSPC for over 10 years. Mses. LaCasse and Whitley referred to a PowerPoint presentation and reported on the following topics for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2022:

- Public relations results
- Coverage highlights
- Publication awards and accolades for the destination
- A program to draw fans of an upcoming novel set in St. Petersburg to the destination
- Partnership with Swoop Airlines to host a press trip to the destination

In response to queries by the members, Ms. LaCasse elaborated on public relations plans through the next fiscal year, NJF's contract with VSPC, and the timeframe for promoting new events and offerings, with input from Mses. Whitley and Comerer. Thereupon, Chairman Justice thanked Ms. Comerer for her work at VSPC and wished her luck in her next endeavor.

Research Presentation of Q2 Visitor Profile and the latest Ad Effectiveness Study

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Visit St. Pete Clearwater Advertising Campaign Awareness & ROI Presentation Fall-Winter 2021/22 Campaign*, Destination Analysts Vice President of Research Myha Gallagher provided an overview of the ad effectiveness study and discussed its research objectives, research methodology, and topline results. She highlighted the following findings:

- The campaign generated 47% awareness among target travelers in key markets, with digital media recording the highest awareness followed by video, radio, out of home, and print media.
- Travelers who were aware of the campaign reported higher consideration for a future trip to the destination compared to those who were not exposed to it.
- Visitors to the destination who were exposed to the campaign spent more in-market compared to those who were unaware of it.
- Per dollar spent on the campaign, approximately \$36 for the local economy and \$1.55 for taxes to local government was generated.

During discussion and in response to queries by the members, Ms. Gallagher provided clarifying comments and indicated that the awareness rates of the campaign are markedly higher than what is typical for other destinations; and that the amounts spent in-market listed in the results do not include money spent to travel to the destination; whereupon, she referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Visit St. Pete/Clearwater VISITOR PROFILE STUDY Report of Findings Q2 2022* and reported on the visitor results from April through June of 2022, including an economic impact analysis of tourism to the destination and visitor details such as their points of origin, demographic profiles, satisfaction, and the planning of their trips. She emphasized the following findings:

- Pinellas County received over 4 million visitors, with the largest segment being day trippers from outside of the surrounding region at 1.3 million visitors.
- Tourism generated \$3.05 billion in economic impact for the County, including \$116.8 million in tax revenues for local governmental entities.
- The average travel party of 2.6 people spent approximately \$316 in-market, equating to \$121.06 per person.
- Of the visitors surveyed, 97% responded that they were satisfied with their trip experience in the destination.

Responding to queries by the members, Ms. Gallagher provided clarifying comments and related that she would separate overnight visitors from day trippers in the next report to better illustrate the length of stay for those staying overnight. Thereupon, Mr. Hayes remarked on the importance of integration as evidenced in the ad effectiveness study and noted that the full Q2 visitor profile report distributed to the members has additional information.

FY 2023 Media Update

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *FY 2023 Marketing Strategy & Oct – March Media Plan*, Ms. Bridges presented VSPC's marketing strategy for FY 2023, discussing its objectives and strategies, research/data sources, considerations, geographic market strategies, demographics and media consumption habits of target audiences, and the media approach. She noted that three new developmental markets were added, including Minneapolis, Detroit, and New York City; whereupon, BVK Vice President Carmen Boyce provided information regarding the media plan for October through March and explained its initiatives in broadcast, print, and out of home media, as well as in influencer marketing and an activation in New York City.

Ms. Boyce emphasized various new media strategies, such as targeted television advertisements based on an individual's digital habits and movie theatre advertisements over the holiday break in northern developmental markets. During discussion and in response to queries by Mayor Hibbard, she provided clarifying comments regarding the geographic targeting of movie theaters to advertise in and how the success of the advertisements will be measured.

Mr. Kirsch referred to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Visit St. Pete Clearwater 22-23 Digital Media Plan* and provided an overview of the plan's strategy and approach, primary objectives, tactics, geographic and audience targeting, and media mix, noting that the plan differs from the previous year by increasing expenditures on the awareness objective and to specifically make niche audiences more aware of VSPC's brand through digital marketing. Thereupon, Miles Partnership Account Director Scott Bacon discussed continuing tactics for always-on digital marketing efforts and winter programs with some new additions including some added features and the incorporation of new platforms.

Mr. Kirsch presented the budget for FY 22-23 and highlighted that VSPC saved approximately \$500,000 of negotiated value through Miles Partnership's efforts with digital media partners. During discussion and in response to queries by the members, Mr. Bacon provided clarifying comments regarding his organization's utilization of the funds provided by VSPC and related that influencers are not necessarily chosen for the

number of followers they have, but rather the engagement they achieve with target audiences in driving desired action.

Department Reports

The item was not addressed.

CAPITAL PROGRAM DISCUSSION

Review of Revamped Guidelines

Mr. Hayes referred to a document titled *Capital Projects Funding Program Guidelines* and indicated that he is seeking the Board's approval on proposed changes to the guidelines as discussed at a previous TDC meeting; that due to a need for additional data, he will provide the finalized attendee and tourist room night requirements for funding as well as rating criteria for projects at next month's TDC meeting; and that the Board will have the opportunity to discuss the revamped guidelines with the BCC at a joint meeting on November 10 before moving forward with the program.

In response to queries by Mr. Henderson, Mr. Hayes related that there is no minimum funding amount that program applicants must request, and discussion ensued regarding the history of capital program funding. Upon the Chairman's call for a motion of consensus, Mayor Bujalski made the motion, which was seconded by Mayor Welch and carried unanimously.

VSPC PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

Finance Report

Mr. Hayes provided an overview of VSPC's August financials, noting that some amounts related to what has been spent per department are not completely up-to-date due to processing time; and that he anticipates VSPC will remain under budget. Thereupon, discussion ensued regarding direct sales efforts for meetings and conventions, and Mr. Hayes indicated that he would follow-up on the distribution of direct sales monies among segments of tourism.

Destination Metrics Review

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation titled *Pinellas County Tourist Development Council Meeting*, Mr. Hayes reviewed the July 2022 statistical data regarding Tourist Development Tax (TDT) collections, including hotel and vacation rental occupancy, average daily rates, and visitation forecasts. He highlighted that TDT collections by city

were included in the presentation per a request by Mayor Hibbard at a previous meeting; that he recently met with Ms. Moore to discuss the vacation rental market; and that metrics related to vacation rentals were incorporated into the presentation to provide for a more complete picture of overall metrics; whereupon, discussion ensued regarding vacation rental metrics and the procurement of the data.

TDC Vacancies

Mr. Hayes indicated that some of the members' terms on the TDC are ending soon; that they should have received a letter about reapplying; and that the deadline to reapply is September 30.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS

In response to queries by Mr. Williams, Mr. Hayes discussed open employment positions at VSPC, noting that he is working with Human Resources to fill the open positions; that there have been a number of qualified applicants; and that VSPC may work with the County to utilize a search firm if there is not a good response for senior level positions. Thereupon, responding to a query by Mr. Kimball, Mr. Hayes provided information regarding VSPC's role in crisis management and communication, emphasizing that its primary function is to work as a conduit to the tourism industry before, during, and after a crisis event.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:39 AM.