

**Tourist Development Council
Pinellas County
May 20, 2026 Meeting Minutes**

The Pinellas County Tourist Development Council (TDC), created under Pinellas County Ordinance 78-20 pursuant to Section 125.0104, Florida Statutes, met in regular session on this date at 9:05 AM in the Palm Room at the Pinellas County Communications Building, 333 Chestnut Street, Clearwater, Florida.

Present

Dave Eggers, Chair, County Commissioner
Russ Kimball, Vice-Chair, Sheraton Sand Key Resort
Copley Gerdes, City of St. Petersburg Councilmember
Dylan Hubbard, Hubbard's Marina
Chris Latvala, County Commissioner (non-voting)
Chuck Prather, The Birchwood Inn
Bruce Rector, City of Clearwater Mayor
Trisha Rodriguez, Clearwater Ferry
Clyde Smith, Bilmar Beach Resort

Not Present

Katie Gannon, City of Oldsmar Mayor
Dave Gattis, City of Belleair Beach Mayor
Phil M. Henderson, Jr., StarLite Cruises
Doreen Moore, Travel Resort Services, Inc.

Others Present

Amanda Coffey, Managing Assistant County Attorney
Brian Lowack, Visit St. Pete-Clearwater (VSPC) President and CEO
Eddie Kirsch, Director of Digital and Data, VSPC
Jessica Oakes, Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk
Other interested individuals

All documents provided to the Clerk's Office have been filed and made a part of the record.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chair Eggers called the meeting to order. At his request, Mr. Hubbard led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Eggers then indicated that a motion is needed to allow Mr. Gerdes to appear virtually; whereupon, Mr. Hubbard made a motion, which was seconded by Mayor Rector and carried unanimously.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Chair Eggers and Mayor Rector provided brief comments regarding a recent trip to Ireland with Global Tampa Bay.

APPROVAL OF TDC MINUTES – MARCH 18, 2026

Mr. Smith made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Hubbard and carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No one responded to the Chair's call for public comment.

PRESENTATIONS

Tampa International Airport Update

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Tampa International Airport CEO Michael Stephens provided information regarding new nonstop flight destinations and the Airport's strategic plan to expand international service; whereupon, he displayed a video illustrating the planned Airside D terminal and described its scope, features, and anticipated economic impact. He also provided details regarding the Airport's vision for a regional multimodal transportation network, which would utilize electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft, and discussed the associated potential economic benefits.

Responding to comments and queries by the members, Mr. Stephens provided additional information regarding potential eVTOL routes, the Airport's social media efforts, and regional collaboration related to transportation planning.

Destination Metrics

Mr. Kirsch referred to a PowerPoint presentation and reviewed metrics for March 2026 and Fiscal Year 2026, including statistical data and year-over-year comparisons of hotel and vacation rental performance, Tourist Development Tax (TDT) collections, and top origin markets; whereupon, he provided details related to the pace of hotel and vacation rental bookings for April through August and briefly discussed survey data reported in the "The State of the American Traveler" Study.

Responding to queries and comments by Messrs. Hubbard and Smith, Mr. Kirsch also provided information related to geo-mobile location data collected by Placer.ai.

Film Update

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Caputo reviewed statistics related to local film projects produced thus far in Fiscal Year 2026 and discussed industry tradeshow that Film Commission staff attended this year or plan to attend soon. He also provided updates regarding VSPC's Screen Industry Incentive Program and reported that the number of applications received has increased by 125% since program enhancements were implemented in October; and that he anticipates that the Film Commission will allocate nearly \$1,000,000.00 in incentive funds for this Fiscal Year.

Mr. Caputo also provided details regarding two films recently produced in Pinellas County, *Mermaid* and *The Statement*, and briefly discussed the Film Commission's role in the 21st annual Sunscreen Film Festival; whereupon, responding to a query by Mr. Prather, Mr. Caputo described his expectations for future growth of the Screen Industry Incentive Program, emphasizing a strategic focus on attracting larger, higher-impact productions.

Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Budget

Mr. Lowack introduced the item and indicated that while he will be presenting a condensed overview of VSPC's budget, the members should have a copy of the full budget in the agenda packet. He also noted that, following today's discussion, he will request that the members make a recommendation regarding the budget, which will then be presented to the BCC.

Referring to a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Lowack described actions taken to achieve a flat budget for the third year in a row, including reduced promotional activities and memberships, and provided a breakdown of expenditures compared to the previous fiscal year. He also provided details regarding incentive and funding programs and explained that staff did not include statistics related to capital funding since annual amounts vary; whereupon, Mr. Lowack outlined next steps in the budget review and approval process and also noted that staff has discussed the potential use of capital TDT funds to support two Public Works positions that are responsible for administering beach nourishment projects.

Responding to comments and queries by the members, Mr. Lowack provided clarifying information regarding various topics, including beach nourishment funding and historical TDT collections and operating budget expenditures; whereupon, brief discussion ensued, with input from Mr. Lowack, regarding opportunities to strengthen collaboration between tourism and economic development initiatives.

Upon Mr. Lowack's request for a recommendation from the Board with regard to the budget, Mr. Gerdes made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Mr. Smith and carried unanimously.

VSPC VICE PRESIDENT AND CEO UPDATE

Mr. Lowack provided information regarding the following updates:

- The BCC, City of Clearwater, and Philadelphia Phillies have come to an agreement regarding a term sheet which will extend the Phillies' Spring Training agreement for the next 22 years. The agreement includes annual advertising and marketing benefits for VSPC.
- The City of St. Petersburg has released a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a convention center feasibility study, which the County will support through a 50/50 cost share funded by TDT dollars.
- Staff continues to advance the Toytown redevelopment project. Subsurface investigations identified no unexpected conditions, and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection is finalizing mitigation strategies and acceptable construction methods, with a recommendation anticipated by the end of the year.
- He and Commissioner Brian Scott recently attended the U.S. Travel Association's IPW trade show in Ft. Lauderdale. To capitalize on the event's location being in Florida, VSPC hosted more than 25 tour operators and media professionals in Pinellas County to promote the destination.
- VSPC currently has one Sports Commission Manager position that is being advertised while staff is evaluating the responsibilities of a vacant Director of International Leisure Sales position prior to initiating recruitment.
- The members are invited to attend a kickoff event on June 12 for the 2027 Ocean Race.
- Mr. Smith was named the Tourism Person of the Year by the Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce.

Responding to a query by Commissioner Latvala, Mr. Lowack indicated that while certain aspects of the convention center feasibility study will be specific to the proposed St. Petersburg site, many of the market analyses and operational considerations will be broadly applicable to potential convention center sites throughout Pinellas County.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS/DISCUSSIONS

The members discussed various topics, including beach nourishment efforts, the Philadelphia Phillies' Spring Training agreement, and recognition of VSPC staff for their work related to the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 AM.