



TDC Meeting Minutes
May 13, 2021

Commissioner Brian Hamman, chair, called the Lee County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Council members in attendance

Commissioner Brian Hamman, Pamela Cronin, Rexann Hosafros, Tony Lapi, Jon McLain, Bill Waichulis and Robert Wells III.

Colleen DePasquale, Brian Kramer and Fran Myers were excused.

Lapi made a motion to approve the April 8, 2021 meeting minutes. McLain seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Public to be heard

None to be heard.

Municipalities to be heard

Sanibel Mayor Holly Smith said that the May 10 visit from Gov. Ron DeSantis to discuss water quality was very well received. She also thanked Sanibel City Manager Judi Zimomra for her service as she will be retiring in September.

Report of the executive director

Tamara Pigott, VCB executive director, reported preliminary resort tax collected for March 2021 was \$8,522,826, a 45.7% increase over March 2020 preliminary collections of \$5,846,844. Fiscal year-to-date preliminary tourist tax collections are \$27,668,396, an increase of 0.7% year-over-year.

Pigott also reported that the average hotel occupancy rate in March 2021 was 81.1%, which is up 49.9% from March 2020 (54.1%). The average daily rate for March 2021 was \$224.99, up 0.5% from March 2020 (\$223.86) and RevPAR for March 2021 was \$182.47, up 50.7% from March 2020 (\$121.12).

For vacation rentals, the average occupancy rate in March 2021 was 82%, which is up 22.4% from March 2020 (67%). The average daily rate for March 2021 was \$316, which is up 10.1% from March 2020 (\$287) and RevPAR for March 2021 was \$257, which is up 33.2% from March 2020 (\$193).

During March 2021, 1,162,342 passengers traveled through Southwest Florida International Airport, an increase of 35% compared to March 2020. Year-to-date, passenger traffic is down 20.4% from the same period last year.

January – March research report

Joseph St. Germain, Downs & St. Germain Research, offered a first-quarter tourism snapshot. Visitation declined by 16.3%, room nights decreased by 2.8% and direct visitor expenditures decreased 7% to \$1 billion. He reported that consumer sentiment research indicates nearly 3 in 4 consumers feel it is safe to

vacation again, which is a significant increase from February. Additionally, 9 in 10 consumers have at least one vacation planned. [See the full report here.](#)

New business

The Tourist Development Council (TDC) unanimously approved the second-quarter budget reports.

TDC approves funding for beach & shoreline projects

The TDC unanimously approved funding recommendations for fiscal year 2021-22, allocating \$10,284,410 for 25 projects throughout Lee County. These projects will be considered for final approval by the Lee Board of County Commissioners as part of the FY 2021-22 budget. [View the requests here.](#)

Legislative findings:

2 – City of Sanibel – beach erosion monitoring – Motion was made by Hosafros, seconded by Cronin, which carried unanimously.

3 – Town of Fort Myer Beach – beach erosion monitoring – Motion was made by Lapi, seconded by Hosafros, which carried unanimously.

8 – Town of Fort Myer Beach – beach & shoreline maintenance – Motion was made by Hosafros, seconded by McLain, which carried unanimously.

10 – Barrier Island Park Society – Port Boca Grande Lighthouse Beach maintenance & enhancement – Motion was made by Wells, seconded by McLain, which passed unanimously.

14 – Lovers Key State Park – beach park maintenance – Motion was made by Hosafros, seconded by Wells, which carried unanimously.

18 – City of Sanibel – Bowman’s Beach access bridge replacement project – Motion was made by Cronin, seconded by Lapi, which carried unanimously.

19 – City of Sanibel – changing room rehab at Bowman’s Beach Park – Motion was made by Wells, seconded by Lapi, which carried unanimously.

21 – Lee County Facilities Construction & Management – Motion was made by McLain, seconded by Hosafros, which carried unanimously.

22 – Lee County Facilities Construction & Management – Motion was made by Cronin, seconded by Lapi, which carried unanimously.

23 – Gasparilla Island Park Administration – Motion was made by Lapi, seconded by Hosafros, which carried unanimously.

24 – Koreshan State Park – Motion was made by McLain, seconded by Hosafros, which carried unanimously.

27 – Lee County Transit – Motion was made by Hosafros, seconded by McLain, which carried unanimously.

TDC member items

McLain thanked the TDC and county for collaborating with the Village of Estero on the potential American Idol hometown visit for Casey Bishop if she makes the top three.

Waichulis said the Captains for Clean Water joined Gov. DeSantis in a meeting with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in regard to concerns over water quality and Lake Okeechobee releases. Additionally, the City of Sanibel and Lee County are working on letters to send to the Army Corps about their concerns on the Lake Okeechobee System Operation Manual (LOSOM) which will determine how the lake is managed moving forward.

Wells is concerned about workforce as Lee County properties are expecting a busy summer.

Lapi said that ‘Tween Waters Island Resort & Spa will be having a concert on the beach Saturday, May 15 with Sheena Brook performing.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:58 a.m.

Next TDC meeting

The next TDC meeting is scheduled for **2 p.m., Thursday, June 10, 2021** at the Lee County Administration East Building, 2201 Second St., Room 118, Fort Myers. To view a complete tax collections report, visit www.LeeVCB.com. Contact: Tamara Pigott, TPigott@leegov.com, Lee County VCB, 239-338-3500.