

Tourist Development Council
September 25,2024 at 2:00 PM
Brevard County Government Center, Viera

The Tourist Development Council met on September 25, 2024 at 2 PM at the Brevard County Government Center, Viera. Members present were Chair Jason Steele, Vice Chair Tom Hermansen, Julie Braga, Keith Winsten, Wayne Soard, and Andrea Young. Staff present were Alexander Esseesse, County Attorney's Office; Peter Cranis, Laura Beebe, and Angela Essing from the Tourism Development Office.

Director's Report

Cranis gave the committee FY 23-24 budget updates. Final report for the budget will be provided in November 2024. At the last commissioner meeting the Board of County Commissioners approved a Marketing Support Program, replacing the Cultural Support Grant Program and Sports Grant Program, combining them into one program. The Marketing Support Program is based on out-of-county attendance or room nights and each Grantee may qualify for some levels of marketing support such as digital advertising, TV, radio, etc.

Winsten asked Cranis: What the total amount collected for the Marketing Support Program.

Cranis replied: \$240,000 was taken from Sport Funds which comes out of the Marketing Budget and \$600,000 from the Cultural Fund, for a total of \$840,000.

Winsten asked: Will that amount be enough for all the qualified candidates in the program?

Cranis explained: We did a preliminary study and we should be fine with the \$840,000 amount for awards unless something changes at the Board level.

Braga asked Cranis: Does that mean that the committees stay in place, or what is the status of the committees?

Cranis expounded: That will be a discussion for the new TDC when they meet in January 2025. There are no more committee meetings this year.

Cranis updated the council that funds from TDT were reallocated for lifeguards: \$710,000 from the Capital Facilities Fund which were the remaining funds in that account; \$300,000 from the Cultural Fund which leaves about \$250,000 in that fund; and \$556,000 out of the Marketing Fund.

Chair Steele asked Cranis: What the total amount allocated for the Lifeguard Program.

Cranis stated: The total amount was \$1.56 million out of TDT Funds for one year of Lifeguard Funding FY 24-25.

Chair Steele added: That was in addition to funding by cities and County general funds.

Chair Steele asked for roll call to verify we have a quorum for the meeting.

Roll Call

Committee member Andrea Young entered the meeting 2:15 PM to complete a quorum.

Chair Steele updated the TDC that the Board of County Commissioners discussed how to fund lifeguards. The County had put out a recommendation to the surrounding cities, requesting that each city pay up to 50% of the lifeguard fees. Steele felt it was unlikely they would agree and that's what happened, leaving a gap in funding. His concern was that if we had unguarded beaches, it could create a public relations issue for the area. Last year the Board of County Commissioners used \$935,000 to fund lifeguards from the Cultural Funds. As a result of the budget timing, quick decisions were necessary and unfortunately, there was no time to bring the issue back to the TDC for recommendations.

Chair Steel said he spoke with the County Attorney and he stated it was not necessary to have a recommendation from the TDC. In the end, the Board decided to use the \$1.56 million from TDT as described.

Vice Chair Hermansen: Voiced his concerns with whether it is in accordance with the law to pay for lifeguards out of TDT funds. Previous years' lifeguards were funded appropriately from a life safety budget. Hermansen stated that out of 67 Counties in the State of Florida, he only knew of one that funds the lifeguards using TDT funds due to a change to the state statute that was made by that county and it only applied to counties with up to 350,000 residents. He stated he would like to request the County Attorney's office seek an opinion from the State Attorney General to inquire whether the specific use of TDT funds is legal.

Action: Hermansen moved to request the Board of County Commissioners to direct the County Attorney's Office to seek an opinion from the State of Florida Attorney General as to whether it is legal to use Tourist Development Tax funds to pay for lifeguards. Braga seconded the motion.

Chair Steele: Explained that this request must be approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

Hermansen: Clarified that in the state statute it says that if the TDC believes there is an illegal use of funds, they can seek an opinion from the Department of Revenue, but usually this matter is for the Attorney General.

Chair Steele: Asked Assistant Attorney Alexander Esesse to clarify.

Esesse: Stated the statute outlines what the process is. First you must notify the governing board which is the Board of County Commissioners and then they can direct the County Attorney's Office to seek an opinion from the State Attorney General.

Winsten: Questioned for the future if there was a way to incorporate lifeguards into the budget for life safety.

Chair Steele stated: There are a lot of different ways to potentially fund this. One of the ways to pay for lifeguards would be to have the County beaches charge for parking.

Vice Chair Hermansen stated: That was a very good point and he agreed completely.

Soard asked: If the lifeguards would be funded in the interim while waiting for the Attorney General's opinion and the answer came back yes.

Braga stated: She wanted to explain why she's in support of Vice Chair Hermansen's motion. She stated that because in the past few years she had seen TDT funds being used for various different things and that it was changing what the money was intended for which was tourism related items. She stated the TDT funds were there to help make the hospitality industry more successful. She is very concerned that we will lose focus on what the TDT funds are designated for. She thanked Chair Steele for his leadership.

Winsten stated: Lifeguards are a core lifesaving function that serves citizens as well as tourists and there was no reason to change paying for lifeguards out of the General Fund.

Action: With the previous motion on the table and a second, the Chair called the vote and the motion was approved 5-1 with Hermansen, Braga, Winsten, Soard and Young voting positive and Chair Steele voting negative.

Approval of Minutes

Action: Hermansen moved to approve the August 28, 2024, Tourist Development Council Minutes. Young seconded the motion. The motion was approved. unanimously 6-0.

Chair Steele: Asked Cranis when the next meeting is.

Cranis answered: The next meeting is October 23, 2024, at 1:00 PM

Marketing Committee Report

Cranis stated: There were no further Marketing Committee meetings.

Cranis mentioned: Due to removing \$556,000 out of the Marketing budget, there would be some cuts to the previously approved plan, but it wouldn't materially impact the program overall. The Fall Marketing Campaign will begin right after the elections in November 2024.

Culture and Sport Committee Report

Cranis mentioned: There were previously scheduled meeting for the Cultural and Sports Committees, however due to the new Marketing Support Program being created, those meetings were now cancelled and there were no other committee meetings scheduled for the remainder of the year.

Chair Steele stated: His last meeting for the TDC will be October 23, 2024. He thanked each member and appreciated everyone's comments.

Public Comment

Chair Steele asked for public comment.

Keith Winsten updated the committee that kids are free at the Zoo until September 30, 2024. Boo at the Zoo happens on Saturdays and Sundays in October. Jazzoo happens November 2, 2024.

Wayne Soard updated the committee that the Space Bar at the Courtyard Titusville has been asked to be on a TV show called World's Greatest for the best Rooftop Bar.

Action: Hermansen moved to approve adjourn the meeting. Young seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously 6-0.

Meeting adjourned at 2:59 PM.