



Manatee County Tourist Development Council Meeting Minutes

April 15, 2024

Roll Call

Present

- Ray Turner
- Mayor Gene Brown
- Mayor Shirley Groover Bryant
- Norma Kennedy
- Dave Wick
- Jiten Patel
- Rahul Patel
- Eric Cairns
- Ed Chiles

Pledge of Allegiance, Invocation

Pledge of Allegiance; Invocation by Pastor Chad Tvenstrup, Christ Presbyterian Church

TDC Member Introductions

TDC Members introduced themselves.

Minutes

A motion was made by Dave Wick, seconded by Mayor Bryant, to approve the January 22, 2024, TDC Meeting Minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Tourism Tax Levy - Sixth Penny

Elliott Falcione, Executive Director, CVB

Elliott Falcione asked the TDC to recommend a levy of an additional penny to the tourism tax.

The County met the criteria from the Florida Department of Revenue to ask for an additional 1% by exceeding \$600 million in revenue and collecting over \$30 million in tourism tax in 2023.

The additional penny would bring the tourism tax in Manatee County to 6%. Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Sarasota counties currently levy 6% tourism tax. (short term rentals – 6 months or less)

The additional tax would help fund beach renourishment, arts and culture, sports venues, piers/docks, transportation services (water ferry service) and special event facilities. The tourism tax would help support assets that appeal to visitors but would also be utilized by our residents, at no cost to the residents.

Recommendation by Mayor Brown, seconded by Jiten Patel to bring the additional 1% tax levy to the Board of County Commissioners for approval at the April 23, 2024, meeting. Recommendation passes unanimously

Introduction/National Tourism Week Celebration

Keenan Singleton, Communications Manager, CVB

- Keenan is from Cincinnati (he was a sports broadcaster), has been with the CVB for about 3 months
- Invited TDC and industry partners to the Tourism Week Celebration luncheon on May 15, 2024, at the Powel Crosley Estate.
- Hurricane Seminar May 8th for all hospitality partners

Water Ferry Update

Elliott Falcione, Executive Director, CVB

Trisha Rodriguez, President, Gulf Coast Water Ferry

- Started January 12, 2024, running Friday – Sunday; currently running Wednesday through Sunday through the month of May
- Goal to run 7 days a week starting February 1, 2025.
- Adding Coquina Beach stop – south boat ramp, and working on bringing the ferry to Palmetto and the Town of Longboat Key
- 22 days of suspended service to do weather and water conditions (approx. 7000 passengers affected by no service days)
- Would like to investigate purchasing a larger enclosed 3rd water ferry – over a year to manufacture additional indoor boat at an estimated cost of \$2.6 – 2.8 million
- Will be holding a familiarization tour with Sarasota County and the City of Sarasota on the water ferry sometime in May
- **Recommendation by Ed Chiles, seconded by Mayor Brown to move forward on the third vessel – pending funding. Recommendation passes unanimously**

State of Tourism Update

Anne Wittine, Research Data Services

- February 2024 – slight increase in visitors 4.9% from 2023; decrease (1.6%) in overnight commercial lodging – compared to last year
- Economic impact up 6.1% increase over 2023
- Rev/Par up 4.7% from 2023
- Significant growth in visitors from Midwest and Northeast

- Canadian and European visitation lagging – starting to see growth
- Larger party size and shorter length of stay.
- Fiscal year to date – visitation down 5.0%, Economic Impact down 2.4% from last year due
- SRQ up by 9.3% from same time last year
- Occupancy Barometer – properties are looking good for April

Public Comment

- None

New/Old Business

- None

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 10:10 am.

These minutes are in DRAFT form until approved at the June 10, 2024 meeting.