

TDC Board of Directors
January 7, 2016
Milton, Florida

Board members Present:

Vernon Compton (Chairman)
Liz Horton
Alan Lowery
Norm Crowder
Laurie Gallup
Jack Sanborn
Rob Williamson

Attendees:

Meridith South
Julie Morgan
Al Wilson
Nicole Dees
Debbie Peaden
Amanda Pierce
Searcy Sledge
Chanda Ryan
Bob Miller
Kaycee Lagarde
Rob Johnson

8:30 a.m. Call to order

Williamson moved approval without objection of the agenda.

Williamson moved approval without objection of the December 17, 2015 minutes.

Beach Restoration Discussion

Gallup said the southend committee discussed the timing of beach restoration and the impact on businesses. She said the southend committee wrote a letter which was sent to the Board of Commissioners. Gallup said she is bringing this before this board to get approval to encourage the Board of Commissioners to change this plan.

Horton said she agrees with Gallup. She said this will heavily impact bed tax collections.

Williamson asked for the bed tax collection numbers from the 2005-2007 beach re-nourishment project to compare the impact. Gallup said this is not a good comparison because of hurricanes during that time. Williamson said he would like to see these numbers. He said the contract has been awarded. Williamson said the possible loss of funding from FEMA is another consideration. He said there is a deadline on grant awards. Williamson said there is never a good time to do this project.

Sanborn asked if it is possible to change the starting point of the project so there is less impact on rental units. Williamson said that is a good suggestion. Horton said if the contractor is already delayed on Pensacola Beach, the placement and timing are unpredictable. She said this will be negative to the economy on the beach. Horton said she feels the project timing should be after Labor Day. Gallup said the good time to do this project is during the off season.

Williamson said he has worked hard to get state funding for this project. He said the critically eroded beach needs to be re-nourished.

Compton asked if this is a 6 month contract. Williamson said yes.

Lowery asked if the time of the project is changed, will it change the FEMA funding. R. Williamson said his understanding is yes.

Gallup moved approval for the TDC to endorse a letter to the Board of Commissioners, asking beach restoration be postponed to the off season. Horton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

DMO PROZ Proposal Discussion

Williamson asked if the intent is to enter into an agreement with this company. Compton said yes. Williamson said local companies can also provide expertise. He said he feels it is important to do a RFQ (Request For Qualifications) for this project. Williamson said he does not feel comfortable awarding this without a competitive bid.

Gallup said this company has done plans for Okaloosa and Escambia Counties.

Crowder moved approval to open this project for bids and have staff develop an RFQ. Gallup seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Santa Rosa Arts & Culture Foundation Grant

Morgan said the cutoff date for the grant was August 31, 2015. She said she has emailed the organizations that applied for this grant in the past. Morgan said the northend committee voted to fund \$3,000.00 for the Riverwalk Festival but she feels this sets a precedent and is unfair to organizations that met the deadline. She said unless there are extraordinary circumstances, she does not feel the plans and deadlines need to be deviated. Gallup asked if this is an annually funded event. Compton said yes.

Lowery said he is not sure that the applicant knows what these funds can be spent on. Morgan said the application clearly explains the allowable uses for these funds. Lowery said he believes there was a change in leadership during this time. Morgan said the application was submitted late, because of a change of leadership.

Williamson said the integrity of the annual grant award process, needs to be maintained. He said there is now a special event permit.

Lowery said the Board of County Commissioners just agreed to give \$110,000.00 to Tough Mudder and this is a \$3,000.00 request. Williamson said he stands behind the Tough Mudder decision. He said some of the most vocal proponents of the Tough

Mudder event were not in attendance at the Board of Commission meeting to discuss the Tough Mudder allocation. Williamson said the bed tax dollars need to be protected.

Amendment:

****Williamson said he understands some of the most vocal proponents against the allocation of the Tough Mudder funding were not in attendance at the last meeting. ****

Sanborn said at the November meeting, this board voted to give \$30,000.00, not \$80,000.00 to Tough Mudder. He said this board had already voted, that is why he did not attend the Board of Commission meeting. Sanborn said his biggest concern were the figures submitted by Tough Mudder. Williamson said if members of this board have an issue with a decision that is coming before the Board of Commissioners, instead of going to the press, they can be brought before the Board of Commissioners. Sanborn said he raised these issues to the Tough Mudder representative and the reporter was in the audience.

Gallup moved approval of the \$3,000.00 grant as requested. Sanborn seconded, and the motion passed with Compton, Gallup, Sanborn, Lowery and Horton in favor. R. Williamson opposed.

Visit Florida/ Destimetrics Lodging Inventory Study

Morgan said this study is an effort to assist the state, in achieving the goal of 120 million visitors by 2020. She said the county will be working in cooperation with Visit Florida and Destimetrics to conduct a comprehensive study of non-hotel transient inventory bed base.

Gallup said there needs to be an effort to count Rental by Owner's. Morgan said this can be done at a county staff level.

Debbie Peaden (Finance Department) said her office is supposed to try to find people who are not paying their tourist tax. She said it has been done in the past but she does not have as much time to work on this, as she needs.

Gallup said it is easy to find this information online. Sanborn discussed specific websites with this information. Peaden said she has been on these sites. She said this information can sometimes be tracked down by leases. Peaden said the management companies do not provide her a list of units.

Williamson said the action can be for this board to submit a letter the Clerk of Court to encourage him to look further into this to make sure the appropriate tax dollars are being collected.

Sanborn moved approval without objection.

Lodging Tax Update

Morgan said there was \$79,679.58 collected in November. She said this is a 24.14% increase over last November.

DSBP Update- Meridith South

South said the homeschool spring break idea is progressing. She said she would like to try to achieve a 2-3 week, specific period as the homeschool spring break. South said one thing that can be done for beach re-nourishment is producing a small mesh bag and a shell guide to be handed to children as they check into vacation rentals. She said she would also like to provide a Frequently Asked Question card to provide to renters who may have concerns or complaints about beach renourishment.

Williamson asked South to work with the Public Information Officer to engage with other counties regarding homeschool spring break.

South said she will have a proposal, regarding prism clusters, of who to target from a marketing standpoint. Sanborn asked South to discuss content marketing. South said there are 22 new youtube video exchanges that will have 15 and 30 second clips.

Gallup asked if South feels she needs to scale back on advertising due to beach renourishment. South said she feels the worst case scenario is that a customer may not come back next year. Gallup said she has to be honest with her customers about what they will experience. South said she thinks notifying the guest by email will be sufficient. Williamson said the renourishment will not be performed at night. He said people who are coming to visit will simply have to move their chair during restoration. Williamson said this will not shut the beach down. South asked when the specific date will be known. Williamson said it depends on when Escambia County's project is finished. He said he will try to get a date certain, to provide the lodging partners.

Compton asked how long this project will take. Williamson said 3-4 months. Gallup said the project will shut down because of sea turtles. Williamson said this will not close the beach. He said when a guest comes here they will still have the opportunity to walk on some of the most beautiful beaches in the world.

South said she has spoken with Tough Mudder about the advertising grant. She said the funds will be in the correct target market, focusing on bringing people to the county. R. Williamson said the county funds going toward Tough Mudder are being allocated to this specific event.

North End requests – None

South End requests-None

Williamson asked how the structure of these committees is determined. Compton said the structure was set up to have a good representation of the tourism industry and all bed tax collectors are automatically members. Williamson asked if the committee structure can be further looked into at the next meeting. Compton said he feels the committee system has been a benefit for county tourism because it allows for a broad level of input and engagement. Williamson said he feels the committees should be governed by this board.

Other business

Cross Fit Navarre Beach Event Update:

Morgan said this event was submitted to the county. She said the proper procedures have been followed to have an event on Navarre Beach. Morgan said this will be in the pier parking lot April 2nd & 3rd. She said there is no funding being requested for this event.

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the board at this time, the meeting adjourned.