



PUNTA GORDA ENGLEWOOD BEACH

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The Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast

Charlotte County Tourist Development Council Meeting Minutes Friday, April 9, 2021

A meeting of the Charlotte County Tourist Development Council was held Friday, April 9, 2021, at Murdock Administration Building, Conference Room B-106, 18500 Murdock Circle., Port Charlotte, FL.

Members Present

Kathy Burnam
Commissioner Christopher Constance
Councilmember Jaha Cummings
David Haynes
Robin Madden
Councilmember Nancy Prafke
Janet Watermeier
Keith Farlow
Kelly Williamson

Staff Present

Sean Doherty, Director of Tourism,
Lena Applegate, Admin Services Coordinator
Maureen Morgenthien, Director of Marketing
Sean Walter, Business Development Director
Charles Bear, Tax Collector's Office
Elie Fischhof, Fiscal Services
Emily Lewis, Deputy County Administrator
Lori Tetreault, Deputy County Attorney

Members Absent

N/A

Guests

Jim Finch, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center
Lois Croft, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association
Kaley Miller, Punta Gorda Airport

1. Call to Order & Welcome – Commissioner Christopher Constance

Commissioner Christopher Constance called the Charlotte County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Roll Call

A quorum was established.

3. Citizens' Input

Jim Finch, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center, reported on bookings through the last six months, October 2020 – March 2021. Finch advised that the numbers reflect a lot of government events, county events and being a current vaccination site. These events are showing numbers close to last year. The Premier Auto Auction was held for the second time in March. This event was the best grossing event that the convention center has ever hosted. Summer expectations are looking somewhat normal.

Lois Croft, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association, provided a few updates to include that the COVID liability protection bill had passed. Croft also continued to advise that staffing concerns continue to be an issue throughout the state.

Kaley Miller, Punta Gorda Airport, reported that the airport is very busy. Miller advised that March numbers were showing 181,000 passengers in and out, which is 20% higher than last year. Ms. Miller proceeded to report that construction on the north side of the airport is moving forward and anticipated to be completed by early 2022.

4. **Approval of TDC Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made by Kathy Burnam, seconded by Councilmember Nancy Prafke, to approve the February 12, 2021 minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

5. **Charles Bear – Tourist Tax Report**

The tax collector report was presented by Charles Bear. Bear reported that collections for January and February 2021 were \$1,269,484.64. There were 530 total suspect accounts on file. There were not any suspect accounts found in the previous quarter and there were no inactive suspects accounts that are now active. Year to date collections from October 2020 through September 2021 is \$2,185,073.50. There are 2985 properties compared to the 2916 from last quarter. This is an increase of 69 properties.

6. **Elie Fischhof – Budget Report – Fiscal Services**

The fiscal report was presented by Elie Fischhof. Fischhof reported that we are now seven months into fiscal year 2021 with a budget of \$3.1 million. A total of \$1,170,611 which represents roughly 55% of the budget has been expended. A large portion of the expenditures are interfund transfers that are completed in the first quarter together with Central/Indirect Services. Fischhof advised that current encumbrances total \$183,617. The encumbrances are mainly against Other Contractual Services and Promotional Activities and Contracted Services account lines. He finalized his report by stating that the current budget to actual review appears to be in order.

7. **Robin Madden – Budget Review**

Robin Madden reported that the budget appeared to be in order.

8. **Epsilon Data Management, LLC Presentation – Howard Tietjen**

Howard Tietjen advised that Epsilon is primarily a media company headquartered in Texas with offices across the country. Tietjen also advised that he primarily works with Florida clients. Tietjen proceeded to explain that Epsilon is one of the world's largest private ad exchange with Google being number one and Amazon being number two. Epsilon is a very large company that works with about 500,000 direct publishers, two million different websites, a million different unique mobile applications, and seventeen of the top exchanges. Tietjen continued to provide information about Epsilon and what they do so that they can reach their database of about 200 million unique individuals. Tietjen continued to explain the process of reaching consumers and the result of Charlotte County's campaign.

9. **Director's Report**

Sean Doherty, Tourism Director, advised the final report regarding the strategic plan has been received. An internal review has been completed and an implementation plan is currently in the works.

Doherty continued to recap the Director's report and provide updates on marketing, sports and meetings sales, public relations, and film.

10. **Citizen's Comments**

There were no Citizen Comments.

11. Council Comments

Janet Watermeier reported that the Visual Art Center is back on track. Watermeier reported they are anticipating by September, which is the start of their season, things should be back to normal.

Kathy Burnam reported that traffic at Fishermen's Village is very brisk and has continued past Easter. A new restaurant, Turtle Bay Café, will be opening soon together with another new addition of a home store. Burnam also reported that the resort suites are doing very well and are receiving positive comments.

Robin Madden reported the island is hopping with rental guests. Madden reported that they are inundated with requests for reservations in June. July, September and October next year are booked.

Keith Farlow reported that various restaurants are doing very well. Farlow also reported that February numbers were flat. March and April numbers seem to be strong. Farlow also stated that finding people to work is a big issue in the restaurant industry, as well as in other businesses.

Kelly Williamson reported that the Tiki Bar is still reporting record numbers. Williamson also reported that the hotel industry is having staffing problems together with below average occupancy rates.

Councilmember Nancy Prafke advised that things have been really busy in Punta Gorda together with plans on obtaining a new digital high-tech Christmas tree for this year's tree lighting.

Councilmember Jaha Cummings backed information provided by Councilmember Nancy Prafke.

David Haynes reported that the rental industry is very busy. Rental pricing has shown a considerable increase. Sales inventory continues to have a lack of inventory.

Commissioner Christopher Constance expressed his pleasure to be serving again as chair for the TDC.

12. Next Scheduled Meeting

The next scheduled TDC meeting is at 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 11, 2021. The meeting will be held in the B-106 Conference Room, Administration Building, 18500 Murdock Circle, Port Charlotte.

13. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:09 a.m.