



# PUNTA GORDA ENGLEWOOD BEACH

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The Charlotte Harbor Gulf Island Coast

## Charlotte County Tourist Development Council Meeting Minutes Friday, April 8, 2022

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A meeting of the Charlotte County Tourist Development Council was held Friday, April 08, 2022, at Murdock Administration Building, Conference Room B-106, 18500 Murdock Circle., Port Charlotte, FL.

### **Members Present**

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

### **Staff Present**

Sean Walter, Business Development Director  
Sales/Sports  
Amy Sharpe, Administrative Services Coordinator  
Lena Applegate, Social Media & Leisure Sales  
Manager  
Jeff Berg, Senior Sales Manager –  
Meetings/Conventions  
Brynja Phipps, Project Coordinator  
Dan Roe, Tax Collector's Office  
Elie Fischhof, Fiscal Services  
Emily Lewis, Deputy County Administrator  
Lori Tetreault, Deputy County Attorney  
Glinda Pruitt, Assistant County Attorney

### **Members Absent**

N/A

### **Guests**

Tanna Horner, Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens  
Lois Croft, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association  
Jim Finch, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center  
John Wright, Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce  
Dave Di Maggio, Aqua Marketing & Communications, Inc.  
Katie Varano, Aqua Marketing & Communications, Inc.  
Commissioner Joseph Tiseo  
Doug Izzo, Englewood Florida Chamber of Commerce

### **I. Call to Order & Pledge of allegiance**

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

**II. Roll Call**

A quorum was established.

**III. Citizens' Input**

Tanna Horner, Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens advised that the gardens held their first international exhibit Zimsculpt. The exhibit has been a tremendous success and has brought in 11,500 visitors as of April 6, 2022, over last year's total of 10,000 visitors to the gardens.

Lois Croft, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association advised that the FRLA will be hosting a fundraiser, the Craft Beer and Wine Festival on April 9, 2022 at Fishermen's Village. The festival is a fundraiser for the culinary and hospitality schools in Charlotte County.

Jim Finch, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center provided an overview of the event type comparison chart and the booking at the events center for the last 6 months over last year.

**IV. Approval of TDC Meeting Minutes**

A motion was made by Kathy Burnam, seconded by Janet Watermeier, to approve the February 11, 2022 minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

**V. Tourist Tax Report – Dan Roe**

The tax collector report was presented by Dan Roe. Roe reported that the totals for January and February were \$1,945,630.14, bringing the overall totals to \$3,314,813.76 for October through September. This is approximately 55.4% higher over this second quarter time period last year. Roe continued to report that there is an increase of about 26 properties. The total properties count is 3033 compared to the last report of 3007.

**VI. Budget Report – Elie Fischhof, Fiscal Services**

The fiscal report was presented by Elie Fischhof. Fischhof reported that we are almost seven months into the fiscal year. Fischhof continued to report that with a budget of \$3.2 million from the first 3 cents, operating expenditures were a little over \$1 million and over \$300,000 in encumbrances. The total budget that has been expended is approximately 63%. A large portion of the expenditures are the interfund transfers and encumbrances are in Other Contractual Services and Promo Activities – Advertising. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> cents Promo Activities budget is \$600,000. Actual expenditures are approximately \$10,000 for Promo Activities General, approximately \$180,000 for Promo Activities Advertising, and total encumbrances of approximately \$650,000.00

**VII. Robin Madden – Budget Review**

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

**VIII. Event Development Program – Funding Application**

John Wright, President of the Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce, provided a verbal presentation in support of Punta Gorda Chamber of Commerce's Event and Festival Application for funding of \$10,000. Wright advised that the Mindi Abair, "I can't wait for Christmas" show is not a repeat of previous shows such as the Wine & Jazz Festival.

Based on the scoring tabulation of 91.4% in favor of the event planning application, the TDC found that the Mindi Abair, "I can't wait for Christmas" show does meet and exceed protocol of 60% for funding eligibility. Councilmember Mark Kuharski made a motion to approve funding for the full \$10,000, which was seconded by Janet Watermeier. The motion carried unanimously

**IX. Aqua Marketing & Communications New Creative Campaign Presentation**

Katie Varano, Aqua Marketing & Communications, Inc. provided presentation on the new creative campaign. Dave Di Maggio, President/CEO of Aqua Marketing & Communications spoke about the new direction of the campaign with the new slogan Find Your Outside.

**X. Director/Staff Report – Sean Walter**

Sean Walter, Business Development Director Sales/Sports provided a recap of the Director/Staff Report. Walters introduced the tourism departments new employee Amy Sharpe, Administrative Services Coordinator.

Walters provided an overview of the draft the PicklePlex Marketing Agreement as this will be an item that will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners for a vote. The PicklePlex has signed the agreement. A motion to recommend the agreement to be brought to the Board of County Commissioners was made by Councilmember Jaha Cummings and seconded by Councilmember Mark Kuharski. The motion passed with unanimous consent.

**XI. Citizen's Comments**

Doug Izzo, Executive Director of Englewood Chamber of Commerce, advised that workforce housing is a current priority. Izzo also advised that the Chamber met with Sarasota County Commissioners, Charlotte County Commissioners, and other key players in the community to create a game plan through advocacy and education to get affordable housing.

**XII. Council Comments**

David Haynes reported January numbers were a record high. Haynes reported that guests are arriving earlier than in previous years and rates for room nights are going up.

Councilmember Jaha Cummings advised May is looking to be a big Tarpon fishing month. Councilmember Cummings also advised that May 14 will be a day of Celtic Music at Fisherman's Village.

Keith Farlow advised that the food service industry has been doing well.

Kelly Williamson reported that the first quarter was busy. Williamson also reported that the TT's Tiki Bar is still under construction. The new tiki bar will be bigger and will be able to accommodate private parties and weddings.

Councilmember Mark Kuharski provided an update on the marketplace property in downtown Punta Gorda. Councilmember Kuharski advised that a new developer has shown interest.

Janet Watermeier reported that the Visual Arts Center is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Visual Arts Center is hosting the National Art Exhibit until April 16, 2022.

Kathy Burnam advised that business is going strong at Fishermen's Village with record numbers for all the vendors except for one or two with supply issues.

Robin Madden reported that year over year rentals were up 31%. Madden also reported the rentals are bringing in more money for the owners right now since prices have increased over the normal 10% year to year. Madden reported the rental business is still up and growing; visitors are trying to book rentals for 2024 and 2025. Real estate inventory remains low. Madden reminded everyone about the Southwest Florida YMCA Tropical Nights event that is coming up on the barrier island.

Deputy County Administrator Emily Lewis advised March was spring training month for the Tampa Bay Rays at Charlotte Sports Park. Lewis reported that the county had a four-day notice from the time the lock out ended to start up spring training. Lewis reported the stadium held nine games for spring training and over 24,000 people attended games. A final economic impact report is still forthcoming.

Commissioner Constance advised that the Tampa Bay Rays spring training attendance was better than it has been for the last two years on a per game basis, even with the schedule shift.

**XIII. Next Scheduled Meeting**

The next scheduled TDC meeting is at 9:00 a.m. Friday, June 10, 2022. The meeting will be held in the B-106 Conference Room, Administration Building, 18500 Murdock Circle, Port Charlotte.

**XIV. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.