

## HERNANDO COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

“The Hernando County Tourist Development Council will identify, create, support and enhance activities, consistent with community assets, that increase visitation and provide local economic impact.”

### November 21, 2024 – MINUTES OF MEETING

The Hernando County Tourist Development Council conducted their meeting on Thursday, November 21, 2024, at 2:00 pm. The meeting was held at Cabot Citrus Farms, 17590 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Brooksville, 34614. The meeting had been advertised and the public was invited to attend. The following is an attendance record and summary of discussions that took place at the meeting.

#### MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mike Dolan  
Diane Greenwell  
Yann Milcendeau  
Catherine Reeves  
Therese White

#### STAFF:

Tammy Heon, Tourism Development Manager  
Valerie Pianta, Director of Economic Development  
Michelle Rose, Administrative Assistant II

EXCUSED: Brian Hawkins, David Bailey, Roger King, and Christa Tanner

CALL TO ORDER: Mike Dolan called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm, on Thursday, November 21, 2024. The following is a summary of discussions that took place.

MINUTES of the March 28, 2024, TDC Meeting: A copy of the minutes of the March 28, 2024, TDC Meeting was included in the meeting packet.

MOTION: A motion was made by Yann Milcendeau to approve the minutes of the March 28, 2024, TDC Meeting. Motion seconded by Catherine Reeves. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

The Record of the July 25, 2024, TDC Meeting: A copy of the record of the July 25, 2024, TDC Meeting was included in the meeting packet.

MOTION: A motion was made by Diane Greenwell to approve the record of the July 25, 2024, TDC Meeting. Motion seconded by Yann Milcendeau. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

#### FINANCE REPORT: Tammy Heon

TDT collections for August 2024 are \$215,004; an increase of 24.3% from last year's August collection of \$172,914.

TDT collections for September 2024 are \$224,723; an increase of 12.7% from last year's September collection of \$199,389.

TDT collections for October 2024 are \$172,706; a decrease of 1.0% from last year's October collection of \$174,450.

Fiscal Year 2023-2024 TDT total collection are \$2,735,369; an increase of 4.3% from Fiscal Year 2022-2023 collection of \$2,277,712. FY24 total Marketing and Operations are \$2,188,295. FY24 total Destination Development are \$547,074.

Vacation Rental Homes tax revenues made up 43% of our FY24 collections.

FY2024 Year-end Expenditures are: Personnel and Benefits - \$342,637; Operating Expenses - \$926,588, with outstanding encumbrances of \$74,064; Non-Operating Balance is \$2,258,045, including reserves and equal to a year's worth of expenditures. Transfers to Other Funds - \$69,481; looks like we are waiting for the CareATC transfer. Our total budget for the FY24 was \$4,214,374; we have a balance of \$2,864,785 that will roll forward as balance cash forward.

FY2024 Year-end Destination Development Expenditures are: Operating Expenses Outstanding Encumbrances of \$110,317 for design of the Weekiwachee Preserve Project; leaving an available balance of \$1,104,061.

FY25 Year-to-date TDT collections are \$156,168; an increase of 19.9% from last year's collection of \$130,213.

FY25 Year-to-date Expenditures as of November 19, 2024, are: Personnel and Benefits - \$45,478; Operating Expenses - \$36,791 with \$92,633 in Outstanding Encumbrances; Non-Operating Expenditures, including reserves - \$2,954,458; Transfer to Other Funds is our health insurance and Chinsegut Hill insurance - \$62,720. Our total budget for FY25 is \$4,986,853; we have a remaining balance of \$4,811,950.

**Lodging Comparisons by Lodging Type:** Vacation Rental Homes are now down to 35% of our lodging collections. We have had a decline in VRH properties registered in our Key Data of 611 properties, of which correlates with how many properties were either on a Hernando Beach canal or on the Weeki Wachee River or canal. On a positive note, all of the hotels are full; however, many of the hotel guests are displaced residents.

October may be the month where we see a decline of TDT collections.

The County has signed an agreement with Vrbo to start collecting the TDT. The current ratio is Airbnb 908 units; Vrbo 414 units. However, some VRH may advertise on both platforms. We are now collecting from both platforms. Every County has had to sign their own agreements with Airbnb and Vrbo. The State has not signed any collective agreement for VRH.

**MANAGER'S REPORT:** Tammy Heon

**Recovery and Reopening:** Post Hurricanes Helene and Milton, John Athanason has been shooting videos in Hernando Beach as partners reopen. The videos are posted on our Social Media and our YouTube Channel. Also, in the first week of the recovery phase, Diane Bedard of NatureCoaster.com committed to four weeks of covering businesses reopening in Hernando Beach and throughout the County. Additionally, the e-magazine is posting our recovery/reopening videos.

**ABC Action News, Sean Daly:** John Athanason successfully arranged a visit to Hernando Beach by Sean Daly. We had three live promotional segments and interviews with five business owners. At 6:30 am they went live at Brian's Place; at 7:30 am the Silver Dolphin Restaurant; and at 9:30 am Hernando Beach Tropical Grille inside of Hernando Beach Marina with the Marina Rose docked in the background.

**The Mermaid Tale Trail Phase 2:** Two sponsors were forced to back out of their sponsorships due to hurricane damages. We have a couple of artists that were displaced from their homes and had to find a new places to paint their mermaids. We are currently at ten mermaid sponsorships, and we are planning to unveil on Saturday, January 11, 2025, at Weeki Wachee Springs State Park from 11:00 am until 1:00 pm.

**Missing Mermaids:** That little nine-second video clip of Mermaid Nova majestically floating down the Weeki Wachee River has gone viral! Tammy reported that she has received numerous phone calls from people all across the Nation who have seen the “Riverdaddy2” videos of the missing mermaid. The mermaid statue, “The Rebel” from The Hernando Beach Motel was found, with the help of a drone, in the Weekiwachee Preserve. Tammy reported that she has received in excess of one-hundred text messages reporting to her of the two mermaid statues on Renata’s front porch that were undergoing repairs, implying they were of the missing mermaids. The publicity and social media frenzy have been amazing.

**Kegs, Casks and Corks Digital Passport:** This will be a paid passport, offering tasting flights from the local businesses. The vendor will handle all the financial transactions, for a small fee deducted from the sale of the passports. Bandwango will onboard our local partners and handle the setup.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

#### **TDC Grant Funding Applications:** Approvals

These three TDC Grant Funding Applications would have been heard at the September 26<sup>th</sup> TDC Meeting, however, the meeting was canceled due to Hurricane Helene.

- ❖ Brooksville Main Street for the Veteran’s Music Festival - November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024; \$2,250.00
- ❖ Hernando Historic Museum Association - New Brochure Production and Printing; \$500.00
- ❖ Foggy Longbottom Music Festival at Florida Sand Ranch - November 7-9<sup>th</sup>; \$200.00

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Yann Milcendeau to approve these three TDC Grant Funding Applications. Motion seconded by Catherine Reeves. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

The BOCC approved these three TDC Grant Applications during their meeting on October 22, 2024.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **TDC Grant Funding Applications:**

**Discraft Supreme Flight Open** is the inaugural disc golf tournament of the professional disc golf tournament season. The season opener event will include the Professional Disk Golf Association Annual Summit as well as the Professional Tournament and Amateur Competitions. The tournament will be played here in Hernando County at the beautiful Olympus Disc Golf Course, formerly Gran Canyon Disc Golf Course. It is now owned by PDGA World Champion Paul McBeth and Dylan Cease, pitcher for the San Diego Padres. The event is scheduled for February 28<sup>th</sup> through March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025. They are requesting a \$25,000.00 sponsorship.

Additionally, they are requesting a Marketing Co-op for CBS Sports broadcasting, including logo integration and IG videos for \$10,000.00. We will be the presenting sponsor. Tammy does not expect to see ROI this year, in great part because we may not be able to house all their visitors in our lodging. Tammy feels that this is an event that will grow both as a stand-alone event and as a driver of disc golf play on Florida’s Adventure Coast. This will have very significant impact on our destination. If we meet their requests for this year, they will guarantee the event is played here again next year. Disc golf is one of the fastest growing sports in the Country. In 2013 there were 20,000 professional players, and in 2023 there were 136,600 professional players. Additionally, disc golfers are known to travel to play signature courses. Olympus is a highly regarded course and will be a course that players will travel to; a great addition to our tourism offerings.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Yann Milcendeau to approve the grant for \$25,000.00 and \$10,000.00 in Co-op advertising. Motion seconded by Therese White. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

**CroomFest**, sponsored by Swamp Mountain Bike Club, is an annual three-day event at Silver Lake Campground in the Withlacoochee State Forest. The event is scheduled for February 6<sup>th</sup> through February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Activities include mountain biking, paved trail riding, and paddling. In the past we have sponsored the organization rather than the event; this year we will sponsor the event. Based on the points they have earned and total budget, Tammy recommends \$1,500.00.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Therese White to approve the grant for \$1,500.00. Motion seconded by Catherine Reeves. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

**DeafStock Music and Arts Festival** is an annual charity event with three days and nights of music, games, and art for the hearing impaired. The event is scheduled for February 28<sup>th</sup> through March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025, at Florida Classic Park. Based on the points they have earned, the number of attendees, projected hotel rooms and campsites, and total budget, Tammy recommends \$2,500.00.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Diane Greenwell to approve the grant for \$2,500.00. Motion seconded by Yann Milcendeau. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

**Fall Media:** We are in a position where our agency is not yet onboard, and we need to advertise. Tammy presented three campaigns.

**Hurricane Recovery Campaign:** Due to the lack of visitors, we need to support our restaurants and attractions with a local campaign. The campaign will promote supporting your local businesses and shopping local for the holidays. It will be an all-digital local geo-targeted campaign with Google search, Google display ads, Facebook, and Instagram. We are also going to try Nextdoor advertising for a hyperlocal campaign. Tammy recommends \$30,000.00 for a three-month campaign that will promote the entire county.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Therese White to approve \$30,000.00 for the Hurricane Recovery Campaign. Motion seconded by Catherine Reeves. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

**BrandUSA Canadian Campaign:** We would have heard this in September, however, that meeting was canceled due to Hurricane Helene. Tammy recommends \$30,000.00 to run the same campaign as last year, targeting the Canadian Market in a year-round campaign with display ads, native ads, and social media pre-roll video.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Catherine Reeves to spend \$30,000.00 on the BrandUSA Canadian Campaign. Motion seconded by Diane Greenwell. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

**Florida Golf Alliance Co-op with Cabot Citrus Farms:** Florida Golf Alliance is a marketing and advertising firm focusing on golf in Florida. They print their own guide, have a website, and email newsletters. They host five Canadian golf shows from which we receive leads. We also send our materials to the shows. We partnered with Cabot in a co-op purchase for FY2024; they have asked us to renew the agreement for FY2025. Tammy recommends renewing for another year. Our portion would be \$13,900.00, and Cabot would contribute \$5,000.00.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Catherine Reeves to spend \$13,900.00 on the Florida Golf Alliance Co-op. Motion seconded by Yann Milcendeau. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

**Transfer Advertising Dollars:** Tammy Heon requested the approval to transfer advertising dollars of \$83,900.00 from the Marketing Agency budget line item into the appropriate budget line items which includes: Internet Advertising, Multi-media Advertising, and TV Advertising.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Therese White to approve the transfer of advertising dollars, \$83,900, into the appropriate budget lines. Motion seconded by Catherine Reeves. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

**Website Refresh:** Tammy Heon requested a \$29,000.00 expenditure to do a refresh of the website. We have an amazing website with fantastic content; one of the challenges we have is the navigation. Plus, it is starting to look dated. It is popular to use hamburger menus now and not words across the top of the website. It is difficult to add a page or section to the website because there is no place to put the navigation. Revamping the navigation would allow us to continue to add content without rebuilding the website. The funds are in the overall budget.

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Diane Greenwell to approve the website refresh for \$29,000.00. Motion seconded by Yann Milcendeau. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

**Important Dates to Note:**

- ❖ TDC Meeting January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 - Tentatively scheduled to be held at Lead Foot City
- ❖ Lead Foot City - Soft Opening November 23<sup>rd</sup>; 12-6:00 pm
- ❖ Lighting of the Christmas Tree in Downtown Brooksville - December 5<sup>th</sup>
- ❖ Christmas Parade and Weeki Wachee Boat Parade - December 14<sup>th</sup>
- ❖ Winter Waterland at Weeki Wachee Springs State Park - December 13-14<sup>th</sup> and 20-21<sup>st</sup>
- ❖ Lead Foot City - Grand Opening December 21<sup>st</sup>; 12-6:00 pm

**TDC MEMBERS REPORTS:**

Diane Greenwell reported that there will a Front Porch Art Walk in Hernando Beach on December 7<sup>th</sup>.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None submitted, and nothing to report.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm.

Prepared by:  
Michelle Rose