

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.”

July 24, 2025 – MINUTES OF MEETING

The Hernando County Tourist Development Council conducted their meeting on Thursday, July 24, 2025, at 2:00 pm. The meeting was held at the Florida's Adventure Coast Visitors Bureau, 205 E. Fort Dade Ave., Brooksville, FL 34601. 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
Yann Milcendeau
Roger King
Catherine Reeves
Therese White

STAFF:

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

EXCUSED: Brian Hawkins, Diane Greenwell, JW McKethan, Christa Tanner

CALL TO ORDER: Roger King called the meeting to order at 2:06 pm, on Thursday, July 24, 2025. The following is a summary of discussions that took place. Due to lack of quorum at the start, no initial votes were taken, but the meeting proceeded with financial and operational discussions until a quorum was reached.

FINANCE REPORT: Tammy Heon

TDT collections for June 2025 are \$274,562, a 24.5% increase over June 2024's total of \$220,503.

TDT collections for July 2025 are \$212,332, a 34.4% increase over July 2024's total of \$157,934.

Fiscal Year to Date TDT total collections are \$2,535,987; an increase of 44% from last year's collection of \$1,762,936; Marketing and Operation Revenues are \$2,028,790; Destination Development Revenues are \$507,197.

Year-to-date Expenditures as of July 21, 2025, are: Personnel and Benefits - \$299,034 with a balance of \$108,490; Operating Expenses - \$647,650 with \$91,970 in Outstanding Encumbrances with a balance of \$894,931; Non-Operating Expenditures is our reserves - \$3,599,307; Transfer to Other Funds includes our health insurance and the Chinsegut Hill Mannor's liability insurance - \$62,720. Our total budget for FY25 is \$5,704,102; we have a remaining balance of \$4,665,448.

There is a budget amendment of \$200,000 moved from this fiscal year's budget and reallocated forward to next fiscal year for the upcoming advertising agency, collateral, and media planning.

Grant funding is fully utilized for the current year, but funds from other line items will be reallocated, if needed, in support of the strategic plan's priority on events.

Lodging Snapshot: Hotels increased to 47% of total collections in June. Vacation rentals continue to dominate at 52% of collections, which include Cabot Citrus Farms' Cottages. ADR is up for both types of lodging. Campground RV Parks are 1% of collections.

Online Travel Agencies (OTA), Short Term Rental Supply: Vacation rentals continue to dominate collections. Supply is rebounding post Hurricane Helene, with 1,533 units now active.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Tammy Heon

Operational Updates:

- ❖ Revisiting the ITI Digital Contract additions and seeking BOCC approval September 9th
 - AI Assistant (Chatbot) Proposal for onsite customer service
 - AI-based GEO search ("blue boxes")
- ❖ Integrated Places and Events in the website module feeds, "Near Me" now cross-promotes both attractions and events, improving the visitors experience.
- ❖ A full website audit is planned to optimize core and supplementary content for AI/GEO Search.
- ❖ Information Kiosk to be installed on the side lawn at Courthouse with a roof and ADA compliant access
- ❖ The Mermaid Tale Trail: five statues remain and will be unveiled individually to ease logistics. Trail map updated annually in print. Digital tools, including websites and passport, will be updated in real time.
- ❖ Tammy attended Destinations International Annual Convention and CDME Classes.

Agency and Data Vendor RFP Updates:

- ❖ Marketing Agency RFP received 24 responses; 20 were qualified. Procurement delays have postponed review meetings due to staff changes, dates to be determined.
- ❖ Data Services RFP is also delayed. Requesting 90-day extensions from current providers.

Destination Updates:

- ❖ Rotary Club is addressing the signage issues at Russell Street Park. The Brooksville Map is delayed. Temporary signage solutions are being explored.
- ❖ Marina Rose received an award from TripAdvisor; ranked in the top 10% of attractions based on customer reviews worldwide.

- ❖ Chinsegut Hill Retreat: The City of Brooksville will relinquish operation to the County as of August 31st. The County is exploring options including an RFP. The museum operations likely to continue under the Tamp Bay History Center.

Catherine Reeves joined the meeting at 2:45 pm.

MINUTES of the June 5, 2025, TDC Meeting: A copy of the minutes of the June 5, 2025, TDC Meeting was included in the meeting packet.

MOTION: A motion was made by Therese White to approve the minutes of the June 5, 2025, TDC Meeting. Motion seconded by Yann Milcendeau. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Revise Mission Statement: Tammy Heon noted that while updating the marketing plan, she realized the mission statement should be updated to align our current priorities and strategic plan.

Current Mission Statement: The Hernando County Tourist Development Council and /or Tourism Department will identify, create, support, and enhance activities, consistent with community assets that increase visitation and provide local economic impact.

There was extensive discussion on revising the mission statement. Reflection included: sustainability, digital conversion, strategic partnerships, economic growth and enhancing the visitor experience.

No final version adopted. Mission Statement revisions will be brought back for review in September.

TDC Grant Funding Application:

Harvest Moon Fun Farm: The Fall Corn Maze and Haunted Nights are multi-day events spanning September, October and November. Based on points earned and the one-third allowance of their budget, the recommended TDC Grant Funding award is \$5,000.00.

MOTION: A motion was made by Yann Milcendeau to approve TDC Grant Funding for Fall Corn Maze and Haunted Nights in the amount of \$5,000.00. Motion seconded by Catherine Reeves. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

Summer Campaign:

Visit Florida: Tammy Heon proposed a summer video retargeting campaign targeting non-Florida, Southeast markets. Campaign to include two 4-week flights utilizing our award-winning commercial. Visit Florida to match at 40%, resulting in a \$20,000 total value for a \$12,000 investment.

MOTION: A motion was made by Mike Dolan to approve the purchase of a summer video retargeting campaign in the amount of \$12,000.00 with Visit Florida. Motion seconded by Yann Milcendeau. Motion passed; all in favor and none opposed.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- TDC Meeting, September 25th
- Christmas in July Carriage Rides, Friday, July 25th
- Front Porch Art Walk, Saturday, August 6th

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Cheryl Kelly introduced photos of large-scale giant trolls made from recycled materials by artist Thomas Dambo.

Discussion ensued.

Yann Milcendeau commented that the giant troll art installations cost approximately \$250,000.00 per piece; they are therefore cost prohibited.

TDC MEMBERS REPORT: None submitted, and nothing to report.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 pm.

Prepared by:
Michelle Rose