

GREATER FORT LAUDERDALE

Tourism Development Council (TDC) Meeting Minutes
Via Webex due to COVID-19
TDC Meeting – June 23, 2020, 10am

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mayor Dale VC Holness, Dan Atkins, Cate Farmer, Mayor Josh Levy, Ramola Motwani, Tim Petrillo, Mayor Kenneth Thurston, Mayor Dean Trentalis. A quorum was established.

NOT PRESENT –Camasha Cevieux, Casey Karl Koslowski

1. Broward County Mayor Dale V.C. Holness called the meeting to order at 10:03am

Mayor Holness welcomed everyone and acknowledged that Broward County is going through a difficult time with the COVID-19 pandemic and the processes related to it, but he believes Broward is going to recover, in time. He is pleased with the programs the GFLCVB and The Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance are working on to aid the recovery.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to approve the minutes from February 27, 2020 meeting of the TDC was made by Mayor Kenneth Thurston and was seconded by Tim Petrillo. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. **TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX REPORT – Randall Luechauer**

Randall Luechauer, Manager, Tourist Development Tax Section presented the Tourist Development Tax Report.

The GFLCVB portion of the April 2020 reporting period revenue collected by our customers through May 31, 2020 totaled \$527,438.27, a decrease of 90.7% (\$5,130,909.56) when compared to the same month last year.

The GFLCVB portion of FY 2020 revenue collected through May 31, 2020 totaled \$33,017,106.84, a decrease of 17.4% (\$6,971,391.46) when compared to the same period last year.

The top ten hotel April 2020 revenues decreased an average of 98.5% when compared to the same period last year and represented 3.7% of the total revenues collected during the month.

Eighteen new accounts (743 units) were added in April 2020. To date in FY 2020, a total of 304 new accounts (2,528 units) were added.

The collection expense for April 2020 was \$22,484.39. The GFLCVB's portion was

\$16,732.14 which represents 3.2% of the GFLCVB's monthly reporting period revenues. To date in FY 2020, GFLCVB expenses total \$179,135.66 which represents 0.5% of the GFLCVB reporting period revenues collected through May 31, 2020.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT – Mayor Holness

Mayor Holness reported that he had nothing additional to add to his initial welcome statement.

6. PRESIDENT'S REPORT – Stacy Ritter

Ms. Ritter, President & CEO of the Greater Fort Lauderdale CVB, indicated that the CVB is scheduled to present the FY21 Budget to the BOCC at the **August 20th** Budget Workshop. Therefore, the August TDC meeting needs to be rescheduled prior to August 12th to allow the budgeting office time to discuss the TDC's recommendations with the County Administrator and update if necessary.

The position left vacant by the untimely passing of Albert Tucker had not been posted yet due to the pandemic. In the meantime the CVB has created a Multicultural Committee to keep the momentum of this vital division and to temporarily address the short and long-term strategies for this department.

The CVB launched its summer program, LauderDeals with over 100 hotel specials, 44 attractions deals from 36 partners, 34 restaurants and 10 spas.

The CVB has also introduced a partner program encouraging businesses to take a "Clean & Safe Pledge."

7. MARKETING UPDATE – Kara Franker

Kara Franker, Senior Vice President, Marketing & Communications presented the Tourism Marketing Plan Overview.

The latest STR report showed the current hotel occupancy at 53.1% with YTD overall occupancy down 33.9%. The ADR (average daily rate) is \$139.37, which is down 16% for the year. RevPAR (revenue per available room) is \$88.23, down 34.8% YTD. There has been a 33.2% decrease in the number of rooms sold since January at 2.84 million. TDT revenue collections were down 30.3% YTD with \$27.65 Million collected.

When comparing April 2019 to April 2020, Hospitality and Direct Leisure Employment saw a loss of 52,700 jobs in Broward County. The CVB is doing everything it can right

now to try to boost the hospitality industry in any way we can. We continue to promote Broward County.

The CVB has created the *Safe & Clean Pledge* in partnership with the GFL Alliance, FRLA, and both the Greater Hollywood and Greater Fort Lauderdale Chambers of Commerce. The program launched on Friday, yet 80 industry partners have already taken the pledge. The pledge states that as a Proud *SOB* (Supporter of Broward) the business promises to follow CDC protocols, wear masks, practice social distancing, provide hand sanitizer, train staff how to be Safe & Clean, and to work toward contactless payment. When a business takes the Safe & Clean Pledge the CVB sends them a poster to advertise this on their storefront or in their lobby to let guests know they are committed to keeping them safe.

The CVB is already exploring methods for sanitizing the new Convention Center on a regular basis when it opens. Hotels are doing the same.

Data shows there has been an uptick in a desire for people to travel. Google trends show a gradual increase in travel searches starting in May. Hotel demand in Florida is still growing a bit faster than other US destination.

The Visit Lauderdale organic social channel engagement is up from 40-52% with Facebook ranking highest for website referrals.

The messaging in the CVB recovery plan is focusing on the beach and outdoors, the open space and ability to avoid crowds, LauderDeals, assurance of health & safety and the ease of access by concentrating on the drive market.

Individual web pages for each of Broward's 31 cities have been created. The CVB is working with the individual cities for recommended content and points of interest to highlight.

LauderDeals brings all past CVB summer promotions under one umbrella. The program is meant to entice locals and the drive market to stay, play and dine in Greater Fort Lauderdale. There is no fee for partners to participate and we are reaching out to all our municipalities for inclusion. The CVB's PR team has been doing a great job with media coverage of LauderDeals.

The CVB recovery plan has different stages based on how travelers are re-emerging. The CVB is watching GEO location data information to identify and monitor high value markets and is monitoring the air lift at the airport. Marketing will increase in those markets as they become available again.

There was a short discussion regarding how/if to market to the Northeast market when the state is still requiring a 14-day self-quarantine for visitors from that area. Stacy indicated that until the quarantine is lifted, and normal flights return we will only be doing very basic marketing in that area to keep us top of mind. The long-term plan depends on how the pandemic continues to play out.

Ina Lee, of TravelHost asked how LauderDeals is collaborating with the SOB initiative. Stacy explained while the CVB is participating in the SOB program, it cannot use TDT funds to promote it as the program targets locals not tourist. The SOB program can promote LauderDeals, however, and is doing so.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Regarding the Air Show, Tortuga, Caribbean Heritage Month; Stacy Ritter reported that all events to which the TDC had recommended financial support have been canceled or postponed. In addition, the CVB has made a policy stating it will not support any large group gatherings for the rest of this fiscal year, which ends September 30th. Additionally, the CVB is not comfortable supporting the rescheduled Air Show or Tortuga due to the concerns that these large gatherings could become possible super-spreaders of COVID-19. It would be socially and/or fiscally irresponsible. The CVB will be withholding funds for all large events until the future becomes clearer and the new budget is finalized. Discussion ensued.

9. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS & DISCUSSION OF NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Josh Levy asked what trends Hotels were seeing over the past weeks. Cate Farmer, GM of Margaritaville Hollywood Beach Resort, responded that they opened on June 1st at a 50% occupancy limit. Margaritaville has been seeing a decent interest from the tri-county area. Their transient visitor base is about the same as it was last year for July and August travel. Customers are interested in what you're doing to keep them safe. Since the very recent uptick, they have seen a slowdown for the previous week. Additional discussion ensued.

Ina Lee, TravelHost asked if there was an update on the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show. Mayor Holness said the event is still planning to move forward as scheduled at the end of October, but they are looking at different ways to manage crowding. The CVB has been asked to support it. A decision has not yet been made on the level of financial support. Discussion ensued.

A second mention of the need to reschedule the August meeting came up. The CVB is going to send out a note to the TDT with a proposed new date.

10. MOTION TO ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Ramola Motwani. The motion was seconded by Tim Petrillo. The meeting was adjourned at 10:00am.

**NOTE: There were some technical difficulties with this meeting. The CVB is working on perfecting the use of a different virtual platform that will allow for a more seamless remote meeting experience next time.*