

**MOTIONS PASSED AT THE COMBINED BOARD MEETING, Tuesday, March 11, 2025**

Approved Feb 11, 2025, Minutes

**Mr. Walsingham Moved; Seconded by Mr. Johns**

Approved Consent Agenda

**Mr. Johns Moved; Seconded by Mr. DiBenedictis**

Approved Action Items

**A. Mr. Walsingham Moved; Seconded by Mr. DiBenedictis**

COMBINED BOARD MEETING  
Bay County Tourist Development Council  
Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.  
Panama City Beach

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

09:00 a.m.

Council Room, PCB City Hall

**I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chairman Pease called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Board Members:

Jeff DiBenedictis

Reggie Johns (Vice Chair)

Clair Pease (Chairman)

Andy Phillips

Ethan Register

Gary Walsingham

Six Members Present at the time of Roll Call.

Mike Jarman, Mike Jansen, and Yonnie Patronis were absent

- A. Invocation  
Mr. Johns
- B. Pledge of Allegiance  
Ms. Pease
- C. Approve Feb 11, 2025, Minutes (CVB/TDC)  
**Mr. Walsingham Moved; Seconded by Mr. Johns to approve**  
**Motion passed unanimously**

**III. REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE BOARD ON AGENDA ITEMS (3 Minutes)**

Several members of the public spoke in support of the CVB/TDC's involvement with the sinking of the SS United States to ensure proximity for local use as an artificial reef.

No members of the public spoke against the project.

**IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

A. Approve and recommend to the Bay County Board of County Commissioners to reimburse the Bay County Sheriff's Office and City of PCB Police Department for certain public safety expenditures related to increased tourism on Panama City Beach (TDC)

**Mr. Johns Moved; Seconded by Mr. DiBenedictis to approve**

**Motion passed unanimously**

**V. PRESENTATIONS**

A. Publix Sports Park Update. Mr. Chris O'Brien, Ms. Marissa Guarneiri, Mr. Richard Sanders (CVB) Mr. O'Brien presented the sports parks' recent events, awards, and activities, as well as the progress of capital projects. He also discussed future events and budget position. He answered questions from the board. Mr. Rowe stated that the 13<sup>th</sup> field will be changed to parking under another project but it will be expedited. Mr. Sanders discussed the progress of the turf field conversion. He said the permitting process is underway and he is in communication with the turf company. He also discussed the sponsorship program including his concept to establish a legacy sponsorship program. Mr. Rowe stated that the number of pickleball courts is currently unknown, but the engineering process is being done to determine that number. Ms. Pease asked to discuss golf carts being donated and the staff driving those to shuttle park visitors. Mr. Rowe stated that there is adequate staff

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to drive them, and the park is open to such donations. Ms. Pease also asked if there's talent scouting events. Mr. O'Brien said there are scouts present at certain events.

## **VI. ACTION ITEMS**

A. Discuss and consider assisting in the deployment of the SS United States, which will create the world's largest artificial reef, and the development of content promoting its deployment. Mr. Dan Rowe (CVB) Mr. Rowe discussed the CVB/TDC's partnership with Okaloosa and Walton County for artificial reef deployments. He presented the locations of past projects in the gulf. He discussed the SS United States history and the possible locations for its sinking. He discussed the benefit of working with Okaloosa to sink it in an area known as LARS B, which is six miles from the Deep STIM reef and accessible to our diving and fishing community. Mr. Rowe discussed the possibility of mapping the reef for educational and scientific study. He discussed the museum Okaloosa is planning for the SS United States and our ability to produce marketing materials to tell this ship's story.

Mr. Rowe stated that he is asking the board to allow the collaboration between our organization and the Okaloosa County TDC, to expend up to three million dollars for the deployment of the SS United States and the development of the marketing materials needed to tell its story. He stated that this will showcase and highlight the ship. He said just sinking the ship isn't enough. He said telling the story to drive awareness and visitation. He asked the board to approve the expenditure of funds this year for the creation of marketing materials, and the funds to go toward the sinking of the ship which will take place in 2026. Three million dollars will be expended in two fiscal years. He said that his estimate is that two million dollars will go towards the sinking next fiscal year and one million dollars will go towards the development of marketing materials this fiscal year. He further discussed the proposed location and that he is in communication with Okaloosa TDC regarding the project. He said the funds are budgeted and available in the Tourism Development department.

Ms. Pease asked if the area in the Gulf could be enlarged. Mr. Rowe said changing the LARS area couldn't be done in time for this project, but he can pursue the enlargement for future projects. The board also discussed the need for an artificial reef coordinator. Mr. Rowe discussed our engineering firm's involvement and the other counties' collaboration. He said the county having that position would be greatly useful for future projects.

**Mr. Walsingham Moved; Seconded by Mr. DiBenedictis to approve  
Motion passed unanimously**

## **VII. PRESIDENTS REPORT**

Mr. Rowe stated that UNwineD is upcoming. He said the TDT report will be provided at a later time due to the change in software causing a delay. He also said that staff are working on some cutting edge ideas to communicate with our audience and will create more co-op opportunities. This will be presented to the board in the near future. He said these ideas will set us apart from other destination marketing organizations.

## **VIII. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Ms. Pease thanked the fishing and dive community for coming out to support the sinking of the SS United States. She also recognized the new name of Thomas Drive to Navy Drive by the navy base.

## **IX. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**

A member of the public spoke regarding the Corps of Engineers and the labeling of seafood from Florida. He stated the labeling is currently in a bill with the legislature and asked for its support.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon Cook, Recording Secretary