

## **Tourist Development Council**

### **Minutes of the September 3, 2015 Meeting**

**Members Present:** Bo Schmitz, Chairman  
Commissioner Bryan Desloge  
Commissioner Nancy Miller  
Marion McGee  
Paresh Master  
Russell Daws  
Chucha Barber

**Members Absent:** Commissioner Scott Maddox  
Leslie Smith  
Dr. Audra Pittman  
Sam McKay

**Staff Present:** Lee Daniel, Tourism Development  
Aundra Bryant, Tourism Development  
Chris Holley, Tourism Development  
Gary Stogner, Tourism Development  
Janet Roach, Tourism Development  
Amanda Heidecker, Tourism Development  
Brian Hickey, Tourism Development  
Andi Ratliff, Tourism Development  
Lauren Pace, Tourism Development

**Guest Present:** Phillip Downs, Kerr & Downs  
Dr. Joseph St. Joseph, Kerr & Downs  
Rose Naff-Red Hills International Horse Trials  
Amanda Lewis, Zimmerman Agency  
Mallory Hartline, Zimmerman Agency  
Rusty Howard, Zimmerman Agency  
Jane Barron-Red Hills International Horse Trials  
Tom Barron-Red Hills International Horse Trials  
Mark Mustian-Word of South Festival  
Allison Rehwinkel-Zimmerman Agency  
Mark Mustian, Word of South Festival  
Amber O'Connell-Tallahassee Museum

Meeting was called to Order at 9:05 am.

**Consent Agenda:** Commissioner Bryan Desloge moved and second by Commissioner Nancy Miller. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Red Hills International Horse Trials** - Jane Barron, Tom Barron and Rose Naff made a presentation before the Tourist Development Council(TDC) requesting signature and capital improvement funding by the TDC through their application, attached letter, and five-year infrastructure plan. In their presentation, all three Red Hills organizers expounded upon their commitment to the future of the event and a Three Year Organizational Restructuring Plan which includes the identification of an Executive Director, for which a private source of funding has been identified but could not be revealed at the current time. Jane Barron reiterated her intent to remain the event's organizer/active advisor for a minimum of three years with the goal to gradually scale back her involvement as the Executive Director gains traction. Red Hills will be positioned to move forward as one of the premier eventing competitions in the United States drawing competitors from around the world.

The progress made in recent years with respect to the infrastructure and capital requirements has the property for the event primed to succeed and it could not have been possible without the community wide support from the Leon County Tourist Development Council, the City of Tallahassee, the Northwest Florida Water Management District and a number of private sponsors. With a three-year agreement between course designers Michael Etherington-Smith, David O'Conner, and Red Hills signed, the event will look to complete the major move of the cross country course, as well as the relocation of the sponsor tent and arenas. Once these have been completed, no additional major construction should be necessary.

Russell Daws moved and second by Commissioner Desloge that Red Hills be approved for \$50,000 for the Signature Event Grant and Commissioner Miller moved and second by Chairman Schmitz that Red Hills Capital Improvements funding be recommended to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. It was unanimously approved.

**Word of South Festival** – Mark Mustian came before the TDC requesting Signature Grant funding for the Festival. Commissioner Miller moved and second by Commissioner Desloge that the Word of South Festival receive funding in FY2016 in the amount of \$37,000. It was unanimously approved.

**Market Days** – Amber O'Connell – Tallahassee Museum came before the TDC requesting Signature Grant funding for the Market Days event in December 2015. Commissioner Miller moved and second by Commissioner Desloge that Market Days be funded at \$25,000. It was unanimously approved. For the record, TDC member Russell Daws recused himself from the vote.

**Special Event Grant Review Committee Report** – Chucha Barber thanked the members of the Special Event Grant Review Committee for their unselfish service and dedication. She also gave special thanks to the TDC Staff for doing such a wonderful job. Chucha Barber had some reservation concerning some of the applicants funding request for lobbying purposes. Lee Daniel stated that we have a little over \$ 17,000 left in the fund. Lee Daniel asked that two applicants be considered for

funding Frontline Skin Cancer Education Conference in the amount of \$1,200 and Department of Juvenile Justice Staff Development and Training Conference in the amount of \$2,400 that were not originally included in the final recommendation by the Grants Review Committee. The total amount of grants funded is \$86,022. Commissioner Desloge moved and second by Chucha Barber to approve the funding recommendation of the Special Event Grants Review Committee to include the two additional grants. It was unanimously approved.

**Sports Council** – Brian Hickey came forward with 49 of 50 recommendations for grant funding for the 1<sup>st</sup> Grant Cycle. He estimates 33, 000 visitors, 12,600 room nights and \$10m in revenue. Russell Daws moved and second by Chucha Barber. The report passed unanimously.

**Kerr & Downs-Third Quarter Visitor Tracking Report** – Dr. Phillip Downs and Dr. Joseph St. Germain made a presentation concerning the activity for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter which appeared to be very impressive. Several members of the TDC expressed some concern about how the visitors are getting the online survey, how are we doing in the area of entertainment, are we collecting bed tax from persons with RV's,? Members of the TDC agreed that we need to do a better job to promote attractions and activities in Tallahassee.

**Zimmerman Agency 2015 -2016 Advertising Initiatives** – Mallory Hartline and Rusty Howard gave a presentation on the new ideas for FY16. Chucha Barber inquired as to how the concept of GEO fences works and it was explained by Mallory Hartline. Lee Daniel commented that we will be testing the “fences” strategy for a few months and monitor its effect on visitors to our city.

## **Staff Reports**

**Market Communications** – Lauren Pace gave a report on the activities pertaining to upcoming events such as the 2016 Visitor’s Guide, Market Rollout, new staff member PR/Marketing Specialist ready to come aboard, Travel Media Showcase, Tour Guide Program and Great Southern Summer.

**Meetings & Conventions** – Janet Roach gave a brief update on activities that she attended such as Meetings Professional International Conference, Florida Society Association Executives Conference, Florida Meeting Showcase, Excite Tradeshow, and worked on E-Pro Newsletter, plus the Customer Service Training Program.

**Visitor’s Services** – Andi Ratliff gave a very exciting report which focused on a significant increase in visitor traffic to the Welcome Center. Andi has made an effort to make sure that the various hotel properties are well stocked with information for their guests. She also informed the TDC that there has been a significant jump in sales within the Welcome Center.

**Sports** – Amanda Heidecker gave a review of several activities that have taken place within the last two months. Jacksonville Storm Showcase, AAU Region 9 Track & Field Qualifier, FSU Invite/Pre-State Meet, ACC Championship Track Meet, FHSASA State Cross Country Championship, the Leon County Parks will be getting the Excellence In Sports Tourism Award in Orlando, Florida.

## **Director’s Report**

**COCA Grants** - Marion McGee gave some comments about the COCA grants process and thanked the County for their support of the grants. She also stated that there are some recipients that are never able to bring in people from out of town to spend the night. Russell Daws said that he thought the staff did an outstanding job this year but the elected officials and business community need to step up and support the plan. Chucha Barber stated that she had some reservation with the goal and role of the Advisory Board. She has observed that some city officials do not support the cultural plan and some of its projects in a positive manner. Commissioner Miller feels that we need to really support the Arts through a marketing plan which can help Tallahassee economically. Lee Daniel announced that the COCA Workshop will be held on September 15, 2015.

**Jet Blue Issue** – Lee Daniel wanted to make a clarification on the issue. The Tallahassee Democrat’s report that the TDC was providing incentives for new service was not completely accurate. We would be providing marketing support in greater Ft. Lauderdale to help drive inbound traffic on Jet Blue.

**County Logo** – The county administrator has approved the logo and it will be presented at the Market Rollout on October 1, 2015.

**Governor’s Conference** – Lee Daniel mentioned about Singularity University, a think tank in California which is funded by NASA has produced some new technology advancements. He was truly amazed about some of the new technology that is being presented across the country and throughout the world.

**Upcoming Concerts** – Lee Daniel announced about the Tallahassee Nights Live Concert on September 25<sup>th</sup> featuring R & B Singer Howard Hewitt and Mama Blue. Lee stated that it has been a real challenge trying to bring top quality entertainers to Tallahassee without having to pay huge amounts of money to help subsidize the event. He is still working with Adam Corey about bringing in a concert for Edison’s grand opening. Commissioner Desloge gave a special thanks to Scott Carswell for his promotion expertise and the City for working hard to develop strict policies for users. Commissioner Miller addressed concerns about the type and number of upcoming events that have been scheduled for the amphitheater which are competing with Lee Daniel’s shows.

**Bed Tax Collection** – Lee Daniel was elated about Tallahassee having a banner year and reaching the 12.5 % increase in bed tax collection for the year.

Adjournment:11:18 a.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, November 5, 2015

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Chairman Bo Schmitz

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Attest: Aundra Bryant