

**West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 15, 2017**

MEETING MINUTES

Present: Dave Wilson, Susan Elliott, Sara Patel, Bryn Rawlins, Cindy Sullivan, Doug Little

Staff: Georgia Carter Turner, Executive Director; Dena Scroggins, Marketing & Projects Mgr.

Also Present: Charles Hargrove, Volusia County Deputy Attorney; Rene Adams, Benedict Advertising & Marketing; Bob Davis, Hotel & Lodging Association of Volusia County

Call to Order: Mr. Little called the meeting to order at 9:01am.

Call for Public Participation: None

February Minutes : Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve the February 15, 2017 minutes, seconded by Ms. Elliott and approved unanimously.

February Financials: Ms. Turner presented the financials due to the resignation of Treasurer Sharon Hughes. Ms. Turner stated that after a meeting with Phyllis Schwarz from the County Budget Office, she discovered that there is more money in the budget than previously thought so the difference would be put in contingency, which is now fully funded. She also stated that the full amount had already been approved by County Council, so she would not need to go before them. Ms. Patel made a motion to approve, seconded by Ms. Rawlins and approved unanimously.

Update from Benedict Advertising: Ms. Adams gave a recent activity recap and stated that the March e-blast had a 45.2% open rate as well as a 10.6% click rate and 263 downloads of the Visitors Guide. Ms. Adams stated the Facebook CPM was in the \$3.00 range last month, but this month it was \$1.48. She also stated that Facebook has rolled out a new ad unit that includes a form to collect data, and she has begun implementing this into the current strategy. Ms. Adams went through a breakdown of current advertising and gave updates on ad performance. Ms. Adams stated that the design team developed a masthead for a tourism newsletter that Ms. Turner would be sending out monthly.

Public relations efforts include a mention of the DeLand Sculpture Walk in the Florida Spotlight. There were also several follow up articles from the Crappie Masters Tournament. Next pitch ideas include eco areas and Florida State Parks.

Benedict Advertising won ADDY awards including Best of Show and Best Out of Home for the Cheese Festival poster.

The Comcast 30-second videos were scheduled to start on 3/13/17. Currently, the agency is drafting co-op program ads for the Official Shriners Program and the Daytona Beach Visitor's Guide.

Executive Directors Report: Ms. Turner stated that she is continuing to meet with area partners including Maggie Ardito of the St. Johns River2Sea Alliance. Ms. Turner stated that she has asked to be a on a planning committee for an upcoming summit that will be held in DeLand later this year. She attended the Wildlife Festival at Lyonia Environmental Preserve, the Enterprise Chili Cook-off, the DeLand Dog Parade and the Florida Beer Tour. She stated that the new tourism newsletter which went out March 4 had a 40% open rate. Ms. Turner stated that she attended a hard hat walk through and the Grand Opening for the new Orange City Racing and Card Club. Ms. Turner was really impressed with the facility and thinks that it's going to be a great asset to our area. Ms. Turner attended the Hot Rods and Reels Fishing Tournament and made a number of good contacts.

Ms. Turner stated that after some difficulties with Regatta, she has decided to go in a different direction and move forward with JackRabbit. She hopes to have the new JackRabbit booking engine active by the end of April. Ms. Turner stated that she attended the County Council meeting and was happy to announce that all Board Members were reappointed along with a new appointment of Pete Arney from the Holiday Inn Express. Ms. Turner also discussed the planning and promotion for the upcoming Shriners Convention. In addition, Ms. Turner was a presenter at a recent workshop for the Department of Transportation and Florida Scenic Highways.

Ms. Turner said the DeLand Bike Rally was a huge success with an estimated 30,000-40,000 bikers in attendance. Ms. Turner stated that she recently hosted the publishers of the Drive I-95 Guide and that DeLand will be included in the future. Yesterday, Ms. Turner attended the Florida Tourism Day in Tallahassee with colleagues from the Daytona Beach CVB. She stated that she would like to become a member of the Florida Association of Destination Marketing Organizations, the lobbying group that helps with legislative issues. Ms. Turner stated that this is important due to recent steps by the Florida House to cut funding to Visit Florida.

Ms. Turner discussed a proposal from Laurie Rowe Communications. She asked the Board to approve agreements to bring in six writers to the area, provide a clipping service, and provide a public relations program including a Travel Media Press Room, a Media Pitch Page and a Group Sales Sheet. Ms. Rawlins made a motion to approve the proposals from Laurie Rowe Communications, seconded by Ms. Elliott and approved unanimously with the exception of Mr. Little, who recused himself from the vote because he is in discussion with Laurie Rowe Communications for his business. Ms. Turner stated that she hopes to have the 2016 Visitor Profile prepared by Mid-Florida Marketing & Research at the next meeting.

Ms. Scroggins stated there is now an additional hotel that has been added to the Occupancy Survey, so there should be no problem hitting the necessary quota from now on. Ms. Scroggins discussed the recent reports on visitor center visits, website visits and Facebook likes. She stated that she is seeing organic likes from the Facebook ads that Benedict Advertising is placing. Ms. Scroggins stated that she has been "digging into" the SEO for the website and is starting to see improvement. This month alone, visits to the website were up by 2,000.

General Discussion: Ms. Elliott stated that there is now an Advisory Group for the DeLand Memorial Hospital Museum. She stated that they are currently closed but will reopen in October. Ms. Sullivan asked that Ms. Turner look into ways to update the Board Room, as it is rather plain. She suggested photos that represent the West Volusia region. Mr. Davis discussed the importance of attending the meetings for the Hotel & Lodging Association of Volusia County. He stated that 41,000 people are employed in Hospitality in Volusia County and the meetings are open to the public to show what tourism means to Volusia County.

Ms. Sullivan stated that the St. Johns Water Management has lowered the mitigation level from 19 to 16, which is not a good thing.

Mr. Little informed the Board of a recent decision regarding the KelliMarks lawsuit. He stated that both sides had agreed to a settlement of \$500 to be paid to WVTAA which will be split into five equal payments of \$100. Ms. Patel made a motion to ratify the approval of a \$500 settlement, seconded by Mr. Wilson and approved unanimously.

New Business: None

Adjourn: With no further business, Mr. Wilson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Patel. The motion passed unanimously at 10:15am.