

**West Volusia Tourism Advertising Authority
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 15, 2020**

MEETING MINUTES

Present: Doug Little, Cindy Sullivan, Bryn Rawlins-Adams, Susan Elliott, Pete Arney, Dave Wilson, Sara Patel
Staff: Georgia Carter Turner, Executive Director; Kristine Spence, Marketing Manager; David Swanberg, Marketing Coordinator

Also Present: Laura Coleman, Volusia County Assistant County Attorney; Michael Benedict, Greg Otte, Brenda Sidoti, Benedict Advertising; Matt Matousek, Stetson Sports; Lori Campbell Baker, Kate Holcomb and Jennifer Sims, Halifax Area Advertising Authority

Call to Order: Mr. Little called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

Call for Public Participation:

Halifax Area Advertising Authority

Ms. Baker, Executive Director for the Halifax Area Advertising Authority provided an update on their area and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. After reviewing their budget estimates, the Daytona Beach Area CVB laid off one third of their employees after the outbreak. Ms. Baker stated Bike Week was successful (only lost a day and a half) but they are now predicting March occupancy to be at 50%. Twenty properties closed temporarily and the area is currently running about five to 20% occupancy. Several large events were lost including Welcome to Rockville, the National Cheerleading Association and Jeep Beach. Jeep Beach is rescheduling in the Fall. Ms. Baker is hopeful that the NASCAR August race will still happen to welcome race fans back. Right now, the CVB messaging is neutral: "When you are ready to travel, we are ready for to welcome you." The CVB is keeping Volusia County as a Destination on top of mind for when people are ready to travel. Being a drive-market and an area with a variety of outdoor activities should help come back stronger.

Stetson University

Mr. Matousek with Stetson Athletics spoke about their interest in more opportunities to help push more content out on their platforms to feature West Volusia. Ms. Turner thanked him for keeping West Volusia Tourism on their weekly email communications and additional messaging of WVTAA resources available.

February Minutes: Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve, seconded by Ms. Sullivan and approved unanimously.

February and March Financials: Mr. Arney made a motion to approve, seconded by Mr. Wilson and approved unanimously.

Ms. Patel stated a 12.42% increase in December collections with only a slight increase of 0.78% for collections in January and that February will be strong. Ms. Turner stated a \$88,122 check was received for February collections. Ms. Patel noted a \$316 refund received from Sanborn. Ms. Turner stated it was from deposit held for room rental during the Crappie Master tournament.

Mr. Arney posed the question of what is the minimum cash flow needed to operate WVTAA. Ms. Turner and Mr. Little have estimated \$25k per month. Ms. Turner also stated all advertising has been paused. Mr. Little stated he currently estimated being able to cover a year's worth of operating expenses. Campgrounds and RV parks are holding steady and will help contribute to continued revenues during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Mid-year Budget Review and Post COVID 19 Plan:

Ms. Turner provided an update on the status of hotels: Artisan Downtown, Hontoon Landing, Cassadaga Hotel and possibly the Ann Stevens Hotel have temporarily closed. Mr. Wilson stated the Ann Stevens Hotel is permanently closed and is for sale. Several hotels are making decisions to work with hospitals or not. Hampton Inn is working closely with Advent Health. The Orange City Motel, Days Inn, Quality Inn and Holiday Inn Express in Orange City continue to have room nights filled with essential/construction workers. Comfort Inn and Budget Inn report an average of 10-20 rooms per night. Ms. Adams stated business at Highland Park Fish Camp remains slow, mostly local business on the weekends and no cabins booked.

Ms. Turner stated the Wellness initiative working with the area Chambers of Commerce and the Cool Craft Trail concept will be important moving forward in 2020.

Mr. Otte and Mr. Benedict went over the refocus of the budget and that it will be in good shape for when WVTAA is ready to ramp up marketing efforts. Mr. Benedict stated the goal is to remain careful so that WVTAA can maximize opportunities and phase into promotions once people are traveling again. Post production on the "What's Up" video series will resume as well as repurposing existing video content for promotional use. Benedict is continuing to work with staff and tourism partners on a marketing plan for Cool Craft (map, guide). They are also coming up with different versions to be prepared regardless of timing and be ready to take advantage once the area is on the other side of COVID-19.

Mr. Little suggested that Ms. Turner be able to sign checks for regular expenses within budget at this time. Motion made for Ms. Turner to be able to temporarily sign checks up to \$5,000 for 90 days. Ms. Patel approved and seconded by Ms. Sullivan and approved unanimously.

Suspension of the event grant program in the interim motioned by Ms. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Wilson and approved unanimously.

Executive Director's Report:

Ms. Turner reported that WVTAA hired its new Marketing Coordinator David Swanberg on March 9. Welcome David!

The new Visitor Guide and new Wedding Guide have been printed in the last month. WVTAA organized a co-op ad for the new Daytona Beach Visitor Guide which will be printed in June. Staff has also worked with BZ Mailing to get a much better rate to mail our Visitor Guide to requests from AARP and other publications.

Since the last meeting in February, the staff participated in several activities before COVID-19.

Events: Mardi Gras Dog Parade; Enterprise Chili Cookoff; Off the Beaten Path Arts Tour; "Nine to Five" at Athens Theatre; Women's Expo at the Villages.

Meetings: MainStreet DeLand promotions committee; River of Lakes March meeting; Lodging & Hospitality March meeting; DeBary City Commission meeting re: Parks & Recreation; DeLand Sport Aviation Showcase meeting; Tom Tomerlin with City of Deltona; DeLand Bike Rally; West Volusia Chamber Networking on St. Johns River Eco Tours; Perfect Wedding Guide webinar: Navigating Social Media & Marketing.

Other: Guest on "Volusia Today" radio show; Spoke with Dave Martini, WWJB Radio re: Bike Rally; hosted travel writer Pam Wattenbarger, March 8-11. Connected Pam Keene from Florida Currents with Kermit's Key Lime for future story on DeLand and Key West locations. Mr. Swanberg organized and cataloged all the information in the Visitor Center.

After COVID-19 hit, staff spent the first couple of weeks contacting partners to see who was open and closed. They kept up with hotel occupancy with calls and drive-bys.

Staff has attended several County press conferences and many conference calls/video conference meetings including Volusia County PIN, Destinations Florida, VISIT FLORIDA, Superior Small Lodging, Congressman Mike Waltz, State EOC calls, Chambers, FPRA, MainStreet DeLand, DeLand City Council, Volusia County Council, St. Johns River to Sea Summit, Society of American Travel Writers. The staff has also promoted fundraisers for bartenders and wait staff as well as online events like Wine Women & Chocolate Live and Virtually Yours at the Athens Theatre (April 25) and Facebook Live from attractions such as DeBary Hall, Lyonia Environmental Center and Pioneer Settlement.

Since the Visitor Center closed on March 27, Mr. Swanberg has been updating our online media room at Travel Media Press Room and reviewing the web site. Ms. Spence has been keeping current with Quickbooks and all social media outlets as well as assisting the WV Historical Society in her role as a Board Member.

New Business: None

General Discussion: Ms. Sullivan shared social media tips. Ms. Patel inquired about the status of AirBnB. Ms. Baker explained the statewide ban on short-term rentals through April 30.

Adjourn: With no further business; Ms. Patel made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Ellis. The motion passed unanimously at 10:11 a.m.