



Tourist Development Council

March 26, 2025, at 2:00 PM

Brevard County Government Center, Viera

The Tourist Development Council met on March 26, 2025, at 2:00 PM, at the Brevard County Government Center, Viera. Members present were Chair Rob Feltner, Vice Chair Tom Hermansen, Julie Braga, Alex Litras, Mayor Andrew Connors, Larry Jarnes, Wayne Soard, and Mayor Rob Medina. Staff present were Justin Caron, County Attorney's Office, Peter Cranis, Laura Beebe, Deborah Webster, Juawana Brooks from the Tourism Development Office, and Mike McGarry, Beaches, Boating, and Waterways Programs Manager.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Approval of Minutes

Action: The Board approved the February 26, 2025, Tourist Development Council Minutes.

Result: Approved

Mover: Vice Chair Hermansen

Seconder: Larry Jarnes

Ayes: Mayor Connors, Braga, Soard, Jarnes, Mayor Medina, Litras, Vice Chair Hermansen, and Chair Feltner

Nays: None

Absent: none

STR Report/ Tourist Tax Revenue Report

Cranis presented the committee with the 2024 Tourism Journal and highlighted several articles about tourism, including pieces on beach nourishment and stories from Marketing Director Laura Beebe.

Cranis pointed out the TDT had a record-high month in January. The numbers were surprising due to initially low expectations based on community input. The increase may be attributed to vacation rentals rising to approximately 37% TDT revenue, compared to 33% in previous years. This could be related to seasonal trends, with snowbirds extending their stays. Fall marketing efforts focusing on winter travel appeared to have yielded positive results.

Budget Report

Cranis updated the committee on the budget report. February marked the start of the spring marketing campaign, which involved significant expenditures. The summer marketing campaign will commence in May and continue through August, and it will also require a large budget.

Cranis briefed the committee on the FEMA reimbursements of the beach projects. Specifically, south beaches project was expected to receive approximately \$4 million, with additional reimbursement anticipated from FEMA.

Marketing Support Program Criteria for Fiscal Year 2025-26

(subject to final County Attorney review and minor staff edits)

Cranis introduced Deborah Webster to walk through the Marketing Support Program (MSP) Criteria. He clarified that the existing text appeared in black and proposed changes is in blue text. The committee would review each section for potential modifications.

Cranis stated that, overall, the MSP was considered a strong program. The TDO has begun to contract and manage marketing support for several groups.

Webster reviewed updates, edits, and changes section by section.

Braga requested clarification on the reimbursement each group could qualify for versus marketing funds.

Webster explained the funding options:

Organizations could allocate some or all awarded funds to marketing support (TDO would manage the campaign for them).

Organizations could use some or all awarded funds for reimbursement of expenses related to events or year-round programming

Each County district office had \$20,000 (\$100,000 total) available to award up to two organizations.

Braga asked if the operations would create a heavy workload for the TDO.

Cranis responded that this year was a learning experience for the marketing team. Since not all applicants opted for marketing support, the workload was manageable. The ad agency was also available for backup support. On the reimbursement side, Deborah Webster's expertise ensured no issues.

Braga expressed support for the flexibility offered in the MSP Criteria.

Cranis added that during the MSP Workshop, many applicants requested reimbursement flexibility and not just marketing support.

Beebe noted that many applicants lacked marketing expertise. While most managed reimbursement well, TDO could focus its support on smaller applicants.

Webster emphasized the importance of flexibility, explaining that each applicant was briefed on the funding options.

Chair Feltner inquired about the verbiage related to district office fund allocation.

Cranis explained that Section 1.0 Introduction & Background permitted each County commission district office to allocate funds to organizations that didn't meet minimum attendance. Awards could not exceed thresholds in Section 6.0 #6 Available Funds. Each district should award funds to at least two organizations, with approval from the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners. Similar language appeared in two other sections. Chair Feltner suggested the language say "up to two events rather than "at least".

Webster continued detailing the MSP Criteria section by section, including dates and clerical updates. Section 5.0 Eligibility, item #7 sparked discussion as it was newly added.

Cranis commented on section 5.0 Eligibility, item # 7, explaining it gave the TDO flexibility to manage events potentially relocating out of the county, such as concerns surrounding the Wizard of Oz Museum.

Cranis stated under section 6.0 Available Funds, we're currently still working through the budget for the next fiscal year, but I started looking at the Culture Budget. Last year we had approximately \$600,000 available funds. We spent some of that budget in the Cultural Funds so we reduced our budget down to \$500,000 and we will pair that with \$240,000 from the Marketing Funds which will give us a total of \$740,000 available funds to work with. When we started looking at the number of last year's award recipients we had to make some adjustments to the funding levels.

MSP Tier Chart:

# of Out-of-County attendees (as determined by cellular data)	Funding (up to)	Program
District Office Awards	Up to \$20,000	Marketing Support Program
5,001 – 10,000	\$12,500	Marketing Support Program
10,001 – 25,000	\$17,500	Marketing Support Program
25,001 – 50,000	\$22,500	Marketing Support Program

50,001+	\$45,000	Marketing Support Program
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Cranis added that \$100,000 (\$20,000 per district office) was reserved to support worthwhile events that didn't meet the 5,000-attendee threshold.

Cranis introduced a new funding model for sports events, calculated at \$15 per room night. Awards would be based on actual room night generation, with a minimum of 250 room nights and a maximum award of \$25,000. Room night counts would be determined using historical data and TDO analysis.

Chair Feltner asked for clarification on the \$20,000 per district office.

Cranis reiterated that the Brevard County Commission Offices each had \$20,000 to allocate, with no more than \$10,000 per event for two events. For instance, the commission office could award two events at \$10,000 each. The \$10,000 cap avoided overlap with the higher tier funding.

Chair Feltner gave an example of the Melbourne Art Show at Wickham Park, which didn't require marketing support but benefited from funding for operational needs such as paying for security and art fees. He suggested a \$20,000 cap to the district awards.

Board members discussed allocating the \$100,000 in uncommitted funds to support community events that didn't meet standard criteria.

Braga supported this approach, noting that community benefits often translated to tourism benefits. It's a win-win.

Chair Feltner credited Commissioner Altman from District 5 for funding the Field Manor and Green Gables events, even though they weren't in his district.

Action: The Board agreed to change the chart to allow up to \$20,000 and up to two events per District Office Awards.

Vice Chair Hermansen asked if the MSP Workshop was a Commission Workshop.

Cranis confirmed it was, with strong participation. Many of the prior year's applicants attended and provided feedback.

Chair Feltner noted that over forty groups participated, sharing challenges including marketing needs and event costs.

Cranis raised another discussion point: an organization with multiple events (e.g. Downtown Melbourne, Downtown Cocoa Beach). TDO limited support to three events per fiscal year. On the sports side, event data was thoroughly analyzed to determine room nights and award levels.

Webster concluded the section-by-section review of the MSP Criteria Packet.

Action: Braga moved to approve all changes/edits to the MSP Criteria

(subject to final County Attorney review and minor staff edits)

Result: Approved

Mover: Julia Braga

Second: Mayor Medina

Ayes: Mayor Connors, Braga, Soard, Jarnes, Mayor Medina, Litras, Vice Chair Hermansen, and Chair Feltner

Nays: None

Absent: none

Marketing Support Applicant FY25-26

Webster reviewed minor changes to dates and wording on the MSP Application.

Cranis explained that an expense report section was added based on feedback from Commissioner's office.

Action: Mayor Connors moved to approve all changes and edits to the MSP Criteria Applicant (subject to final County Attorney review and minor staff edits).

Result: Approved

Mover: Mayor Connors

Second: Mayor Medina

Ayes: Mayor Connors, Braga, Soard, Jarnes, Mayor Medina, Litras, Vice Chair Hermansen, and Chair Feltner

Nays: None

Absent: none

Board Reports

Braga shared that the Restaurant & Lodging Association was in Tallahassee advocating for legislation affecting tourism.

Cranis noted that John Giantonio from TDO was representing the office in Tallahassee.

Braga announced that the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association would host the 5th annual Space Coast Rose Award on September 11, 2025, at the Courtyard Marriott by Cocoa Beach. The award honors frontline tourism professionals. She encouraged nominations and support for the event.

Mayor Connors reported returning from Tourism Day in Tallahassee. The City of Titusville was organizing a city-wide event, and the Titusville Playhouse was launching its capital campaign.

Mayor Medina congratulated Mayor Connors and reminded the group about the Sacrifice Park ribbon-cutting on March 28, 2025, at 9:00 AM.

Cranis stated that the next meeting will be on April 23, 2025. The Marketing and Beach Committees would begin meeting in April.

Chair Feltner thanked the TDO staff for their efforts in updating the committee on the packet.

Cranis noted that the MSP Criteria will be brought to the second Board meeting in April and the application process would commence over the summer. Applications would return to the TDC for review.

Vice Chair Hermansen requested updates on the Capital Projects.

Cranis reported the following:

Valliant Air Command was under construction

Veteran Memorial Park in Merritt Island had begun the groundwork for the amphitheater,

The Aquarium project was awaiting a groundbreaking update.

Brightline was still seeking federal funding.

The Lighthouse project was underway, and updates would be provided at the next meeting.

Public Comment

No public comments were made.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 PM.