



## **Tourist Development Council**

**May 28, 2025, at 2:00 PM**

**Brevard County Government Center, Viera**

The Tourist Development Council met on May 28, 2025, at 2:00 PM, at the Brevard County Government Center, Viera. Members present were Chair Rob Feltner, Vice Chair Tom Hermansen, Larry Jarnes, Alex Litras, Wayne Soard, and Julie Braga via Zoom. The staff present were Justin Caron from the County Attorney's Office, Peter Cranis, John Giantonio, Juawana Brooks, and Angela Essing from the Tourism Development Office. The guests present were Mike McGarry, Beaches, Boating, and Waterways Programs Manager; Gaell Francois, Brevard County Budget Office; Dave Berman, Florida Today; Sarah Joyner, Brevard Attorney Intern; Sydney Castillo, Brevard County Attorney Intern; Chad Whitaker, Space Coast Cart Rental; and Sandra Sullivan.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

### **Roll Call**

(Mayor Medina entered the meeting at 2:02 PM)

Chair Feltner stated the April meeting minutes needed to be approved.

Vice Chair Hermansen stated that the County Attorney's Office noted that I previously voted "present" on the motion to allocate \$2.5 million in Capital Facilities funds for the Melbourne Fairgrounds. I want to change my vote to "nay."

While I believe the project has merit, it lacked the required background and economic impact studies per Florida Statutes. If those are provided in the future, I may reconsider. For now, I must formally register my vote as "nay."

*The April minutes will be adjusted to reflect Tom Hermansen's change in vote:*

Action: The City of Melbourne requested \$2.5 million in funding support from the TDC to be distributed over 10 years.

Result: Approved

Mover: Chair Feltner

Second: Mayor Medina

Ayes: Braga, Soard, Jarnes, Mayor Medina, Litras, Chair Feltner, and Moran via Zoom.

Nays: Vice Chair Hermansen

Absent: Mayor Connors

Action: The Board approved the April 23, 2025, Tourist Development Council Minutes.

Result: Approved

Mover: Mayor Medina

Seconded: Vice Chair Hermansen

Ayes: Mayor Connors, Soard, Jarnes, Moran, Mayor Medina, Vice Chair Hermansen, Chair Feltner

Nays: None

Absent: Alex Litras and Julie Braga

### **Director's Report**

(Alex Litras entered the meeting at 2:08 PM)

Cranis updated the committee that the March TDT numbers had just been received. Collections were just under \$50,000 below last year's March totals. He noted this is a strong result, especially considering the shift in the Easter holiday, which occurred in April this year versus March last year.

March 2025 ranks as the third-highest month in TDT history, with all the top months being in March, reinforcing it as a peak tourism period. Given that, the slight year-over-year dip is considered a solid outcome.

Looking ahead, while April figures are not yet finalized, internal projections indicate that collections will exceed last year's April totals, which is encouraging.

Cranis added that he typically evaluates March and April together to assess spring performance. If this year's combined totals are close to last fiscal year's, as he expects, it would be a strong result, particularly in light of the economic challenges discussed in previous meetings. Maintaining this level of revenue would be a positive sign for the local tourism economy.

### **Budget Report**

Cranis reported there's not much to note on the budget unless there are specific questions. We're tracking closely with planned expenditures and are currently at about 50% of our marketing spend.

That said, the largest portion of our marketing expenditures typically occurs during the summer months. Our summer campaign just began in early May and is focused on promoting summer travel, so I expect we'll remain on track as we move through the rest of the fiscal year.

Other than that, there are no significant budget updates to report currently.

Vice Chair Hermansen inquired about the typical timeline for the Tax Collector's release of TDT data. He asked when the committee might expect to receive the most recent figures.

Cranis responded that the release of TDT data varies each month but typically arrives between the 6th and 8th of the month following the month of collection. He noted that he expects to have the figures by the end of next week to report to the committee. If the information is received earlier, he will send it out in advance

## **Marketing Committee Report**

Cranis noted that the second Marketing Committee meeting was held May 22, 2025. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: 1) To review recent research data collected during the last fiscal year. This included a study on space tourism, specifically focused on visitors coming for rocket launches, as well as a day tripper study. Cranis shared that both sets of data will be incorporated into the upcoming marketing plan, and the committee was briefed in advance. 2) To gather feedback and discuss ideas related to the marketing plan, which is currently being developed over the summer. The plan will be presented to the committee on July 22 for review. The intention is to bring the plan to the TDC in July and then to the BOCC in August, assuming no major changes are needed.

Additionally, Cranis provided an update on the summer marketing campaign. The campaign began at the end of April and runs through mid-August.

Target audiences include: 1) Millennials and Gen X adults, 2) Families with children, 3) Couples without children, 4) Households with incomes between \$100K–\$250K, and 5) People with interests in Florida travel, beaches, space, nature, and similar topics.

The total marketing budget for this fiscal year is \$3.64 million.

Cranis continued with an update on the summer marketing campaign. Target regions include the East Coast of Florida (Jacksonville to Miami, excluding Brevard), Orlando to Tampa/St. Petersburg, as well as key markets in the Southeast (Georgia, the Carolinas, Tennessee) and Northeast (Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York, Chicago). The focus is on driving overnight stays, rather than day trips.

Messaging continues to highlight beaches and rocket launches, but now also includes an affordability message, such as “Affordable Affluence” and “See More for Less,” as shown on page 19 of the packet.

Digital ads are being tracked with the Adara pixel to measure conversions like hotel bookings. A campaign performance report will be shared once available. PR and social media efforts are also ramping up to support the campaign.

Chair Feltner asked the hoteliers present about the difference between weekday and weekend Average Daily Rates (ADR) during the summer months.

Vice Chair Hermansen responded that the Average Daily Rate (ADR) typically differs by \$50 to \$100 between weekdays and weekends during the summer.

Chair Feltner inquired about the difference in occupancy rates on the beachside between weekends and weekdays during the summer.

Vice Chair Hermansen responded that while he couldn't predict exact occupancy, July is typically the second-best month after March, driven by strong in-state travel. Cocoa Beach often sees occupancy rates over 90% in July, with March reaching the mid-90% range. He noted that August has declined in recent years due to earlier school start dates.

Vice Chair Hermansen expressed support for the campaign and praised staff for their effective, data-driven marketing. He noted strong cruise and launch activity, but shared Howard Schwartz's concern from Kennedy Space Center that frequent launches may be losing their impact.

### **Public Comment**

Sandra Sullivan spoke regarding the Sarno Road land proposal discussed at the previous TDC meeting.

### **Board Reports**

No reports

### **Upcoming Meetings**

Next TDC Meeting:

The next Tourist Development Council meeting will be held on July 23, 2025, at 2:00 PM at the Viera Government Center, Building C, 3rd Floor, Florida Room.

Marketing Committee Meeting Dates are July 22nd and September 25<sup>th</sup>.

The Beach Committee Meeting Date is September 18<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting adjourned at 2:22 PM.