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Tourist Development Council

August 27, 2025, at 2:00 PM

Brevard County Government Center, Viera

The Tourist Development Council met on August 27, 2025, at 2:00 PM, at the Brevard County Government Center, Viera. Members present were Chair Rob Feltner, Vice Chair Tom Hermansen, Mayor Andrew Connors, Julie Braga, Alex Litras, John Moran, and Wayne Soard. The staff present were Justin Caron from the County Attorney’s Office, Peter Cranis, John Giantonio, Laura Beebe, Angela Essing, and Juawana Brooks from the Tourism Development Office. The guests present were Catherine Esrock, Brevard Culture Alliance; Mike McGarry, Beaches, Boating, and Waterways Programs Manager; Gaell Francois, Brevard County Budget Office; Dave Berman, Florida Today; and Tamsin Bell, City of Cape Canaveral via Zoom.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Action: Hermansen approved the motion, subject to one amendment to the July 23, 2025, TDC Minutes. The amendment corrects a typographical error on page 3, third paragraph, where the Cocoa Beach Air Show attendance was recorded as “fall below 5,001.” The correct wording should read “fall below 50,001 thresholds”.

Result: Approved

Mover: Tom Hermansen

Second: Andrew Connors

Ayes: Soard, Litras, Mayor Connors, Moran, Vice Chair Hermansen, and Chair Feltner

Nays: None

Absent: Mayor Medina, Larry Jarnes, and Julie Braga.

Brevard Cultural Alliance

(Julie Braga entered the meeting at 2:10 PM)

Esrock stated as Brevard County's designated arts agency, Brevard Cultural Alliance (BCA) strengthens the community by sustaining a vibrant arts and cultural sector. The arts generate more than \$123 million annually in economic impact and supports over 1,500 local jobs. BCA fuels the arts-driven economy by supporting artists, engaging audiences, growing the cultural ecosystem, and advancing arts education to inspire future innovators and creatives.

Art in Public Places (APP): BCA curates rotating exhibitions in public and private spaces such as the Viera Government Complex, City Halls, and Melbourne International Airport. With 900+ artworks displayed across 26 locations, APP reaches 600,000 residents and visitors annually. *2024–25 Goal:* Add three new locations (Emergency Operations Center and Rocket Healthcare in progress). *2025–26 Goal:* Expand to three additional sites.

Education Programs: Through partnerships with Brevard Public Schools, Brevard Schools Foundation, and community organizations, BCA enhances student creativity, academic achievement, and 21st-century skills. Programs such as Next Generation Artist Residencies and Arts Clubs impact 2,000+ students annually and operate in one-third of middle schools. *2024–25 Goal:* Secure \$25,000 for education (achieved with The Young Baum Foundation grant). *2025–26 Goal:* Deliver professional development in 8–10 schools to strengthen teaching and student outcomes.

Connecting Artists & Community: BCA promotes cultural events, maintains artist/venue directories, and provides resources including co-working, media studios, and collaborative opportunities. *2024–25 Goal:* Finalize and launch a reorganized membership program with tailored levels for artists and arts supporters. *2025–26 Goal:* Fully implement the new structure and grow membership by 5%.

Advisory & Advocacy Role: BCA serves as a trusted partner for Brevard County and its municipalities.

2024–25 Highlights: Delivered speaking engagements, expanded board representation, produced seven True Colors on the Space Coast podcast episodes (6,300+ views), hosted grant workshops, promoted artists at public events, and partnered with Commissioners on district projects.

2025–26 Goals: Continue civic engagement, produce 10 podcast episodes highlighting minority artists, maintain newsletters and event calendars, host 12 Grant Office Hours, and present community events such as a Studio Crawl, Arts Resource Fair, and Cultural Summit.

Cranis asked BCA to provide their total expense and revenue budget for the current fiscal year, as well as the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Esrock distributed copies of the Brevard Cultural Alliance fiscal year budget to the committee for review.

Esrock reported that visitor communication efforts are underway through social media campaigns, and a handout has been finalized featuring a map and detailed information about participating studios. These handouts will be distributed to studios and hotels, with a request that they share them with visitors.

Additional outreach opportunities include potential radio promotions, and staff welcomed any further ideas or avenues to expand advertising efforts.

Staff also provided a budget update. For the current fiscal year ending in September, the total income was budgeted at \$360,725. As of July, actual income recorded was \$343,093, approximately \$17,000 under budget; however, this gap is expected to be made up by year-end. Total expenses were projected at \$398,737, with \$332,732 spent as of July, leaving expenditures about \$66,000 under budget.

Action: Brevard Cultural Alliance (BCA) requests \$217,000 in funding from the Tourist Development Council for Fiscal Year 2025–26 to support its cultural programming, community engagement initiatives, and educational outreach.

Result: Approved

Mover: Tom Hermansen

Second: Julie Braga

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

Nays: None

Absent: Mayor Medina and Larry Jarnes.

Director's Report/ Budget Report

Cranis highlighted that, from a Tourist Development Tax collections perspective, the County is experiencing its best summer in more than three years, with anticipated groundbreaking revenues of \$6.2 million, a positive trend for the tourism sector.

Cranis noted that projected revenues for FY 2024-25 are approximately \$26 million and expressed satisfaction with these figures. He further reported that the revenue budget for the next fiscal year is projected at \$27 million. Cranis emphasized that efforts will continue to support revenue growth, with optimism surrounding the addition of new hotel properties expected to strengthen collections. He stated that vacation rentals currently account for roughly one-third of collected funds, while hotels represent about two-thirds. The increase in hotel room inventory is anticipated to serve as a stabilizing factor in sustaining these revenue projections.

Cranis stated that before reviewing each of the fund accounts, he wanted to remind the committee that much of the funding is dictated by state statutes and county ordinance. He explained that the state outlines what the funds may be used for, while the county ordinance establishes how the funds are allocated, including specific percentages of revenue directed to each fund. He further noted that state statutes authorize the collection of administrative and operational costs, which are drawn proportionally from each fund.

Administration Fund 1440

Cranis explained that TDT funds are deposited into separate accounts, with the Administration Fund designated as 1440 and funds 1441 through 1448 contributing into the 1440 account bucket. Each account is comprised of TDT revenue deposits, carry-forward funds, and accrued interest, with the Administration Fund

totaling approximately \$2.3 million. He noted that the display illustrates how these funds are spent, including compensation, benefits, operating costs, and capital expenses.

Beach Improvement Fund 1442

Cranis explained that TDT revenues are allocated into various program funds (“buckets”). The Beach Improvement Fund receives 35% of the first two cents and 65% of the third cent of TDT revenues. For the current fiscal year, the Beach Improvement Fund was allocated \$6.75 million, along with interest and balance forward. A significant portion of the balance forward came from FEMA reimbursements received this past year, though an additional reimbursement is still pending (less the 5% statutory reduction and transfers to the Administration Fund). This brings the total fund amount to approximately \$36 million.

On the expense side, approximately \$13 million is planned for various beach projects. Not all of this will be spent in the current fiscal year, as some funds cover post-expenses from previously completed projects and reserves for future projects. The South Beaches project, estimated at \$11.586 million, will address ongoing issues in that area, where the beaches are narrower compared to others.

Additional funded items include: 1) IRL Grant Programs – not active last fiscal year; however, awards were made this year for the Derelict Vessels Program and Keep Brevard Beautiful, totaling \$247,000. 2) Natural Resources – approximately \$417,000 to support McGarry and his Beaches, Boating, and Waterways Programs team. 3) Lori Wilson Park – approximately \$254,000 for operations, as it falls under the Tourism Office’s responsibility. 4) Reserves – \$10 million, funded in part with FEMA reimbursements. And 5) Tax Collector fees – approximately \$203,000.

These expenditures bring the Beach Improvement Fund balance to approximately \$36 million.

Capital Facilities Fund 1443

Cranis reported on the Capital Facilities Fund (account 1443), which receives 35% of the first two cents of TDT revenues. Projected revenue is slightly under \$3.8 million, with an additional \$95,000 earned in interest. The balance forward is slightly lower than the previous year due to expenditures on prior project commitments; however, several Capital Facilities projects are expected to be completed next year.

On the expense side, allocations include: 1) Available funds for new Capital Projects – approximately \$247,000, 2) Capital Projects in process / designated but not yet started – Brightline award of \$5 million (pending), total of \$9.4 million in designated projects, 3) Debt service for Viera Park Bond – approximately \$560,000, 4) Capital Reserves – \$2 million, and 5) Tax Collector fees – approximately \$113,000.

The total Capital Facilities Fund account stands at approximately \$12.3 million.

Visitor Information Center Fund 1445

Cranis reported on the operation of the Visitor Information Center, which includes staffing and rent, electronic kiosk maintenance, printing and distribution of vacation guides, local media, and website and app maintenance.

Revenue sources include: 1) TDT allocation – 10% of the 3rd cent, approximately \$540,000 and 2) Earned interest and balance forward – approximately \$55,000.

Expenses include: 1) Compensation and benefits – approximately \$89,000, 2) Operating expenses – approximately \$319,000, 3) Chamber of Commerce VICs – approximately \$100,000, and 4) Tax Collector/miscellaneous – approximately \$16,200.

The total Visitor Information Center Fund stands at approximately \$525,000.

Cultural Fund 1446

Cranis reported on the Culture Fund (account 1446).

Revenue sources include: 1) TDT allocation – 10% of the first 2 cents, approximately \$1.1 million, 2) Earned interest – approximately \$3,000, 3) Balance forward – approximately \$100,000, and 4) Transfers – \$250,000 (to Fund 1440 – Administration, and Fund 1441 – Lifeguards).

Expenses include: 1) Brevard Cultural Alliance – approximately \$217,000, 2) MSP Grant Programs – approximately \$500,000, 3) Opportunity funds/lifeguards – approximately \$58,000, and 4) Tax Collector – approximately \$33,000.

The total Culture Fund stands at approximately \$792,000.

Brevard Zoo Fund 1447

Cranis reported on the Brevard Zoo Fund. Revenue sources include: 1) TDT allocation – 25% of the 3rd cent, approximately \$1.3 million, 2) Earned interest – approximately \$3,000, and 3) Balance forward – \$0. Expenses include: 1) Zoo allocation – approximately \$1.1 million and 2) Tax Collector – approximately \$40,000. The total Brevard Zoo Fund stands at approximately \$1.2 million.

Stadium Maintenance Fund 1448

Cranis reported on the Stadium Maintenance Fund. Revenue sources include: 1) TDT allocation – \$600,000 from the 4th cent, totaling approximately \$1.3 million, 2) Earned interest – approximately \$11,400 and 3) Balance forward – \$0. Expenses include: 1) Stadium Maintenance – per ordinance, \$340,000 must remain in the account; current balance is approximately \$352,000 and 2) Tax Collector – approximately \$162,000. The total Stadium Maintenance Fund stands at approximately \$513,000.

Stadium Capital Fund 1450

Cranis reported on the Stadium Capital Fund (account 1450). Revenue includes: 1) Earned interest – approximately \$33,000, 2) Payment from USSA (per contract) – \$250,000, 3) Statutory reduction – approximately \$12,500, and 4) Balance forward – approximately \$2.4 million. He noted that the TDC is no longer required to contribute \$250,000 for the first five years; instead, USSA is obligated to contribute \$250,000 annually for 10 years, beginning this fiscal year. The total Stadium Capital Fund currently stands at approximately \$2.7 million.

Marketing/Advertising Fund 1441

Cranis reported on the Marketing Fund (account 1441), which receives revenues from multiple sources.

Revenue sources include: 1) TDT allocation – 25% of the first 2 cents and 100% of the 5th cent, approximately \$8.1 million, 2) Transfer from Fund 1448 (remainder of 4th cent) – approximately \$4.2 million, 3) Balance forward – approximately \$1.2 million, 4) Earned interest – approximately \$47,500, 5) Transfers – \$648,000 to Fund 1440 (Administration) and approximately \$500,000 from Funds 1443/1446 and 6) Statutory reduction – approximately \$405,000.

The total Marketing Fund stands at approximately \$13 million. With the additional \$1.1 million transferred from Funds 1443 and 1446 for lifeguards, the adjusted total is approximately \$14.13 million.

Expense allocations include: 1) Promotional marketing – approximately \$12 million, 2) Media relations – approximately \$250,000, 3) Software – approximately \$70,000, 4) Sports marketing – approximately \$300,000, 5) Travel expenses – approximately \$32,000, 6) Membership dues – approximately \$30,500, and Tax collector – approximately \$243,000.

Marketing Disaster Fund 1444

Cranis reported on the Budget Fund (1444) – Marketing Disaster Fund Revenue sources include: 1) Earned interest – approximately \$15,000, 2) Statutory reduction – approximately \$750 and 3) Balance forward – approximately \$1.2 million. Expense allocations include Restricted reserve – approximately \$1.4 million. Total fund balance: approximately \$1.4 million.

Chair Feltner asked Cranis how the fund accounts earned interest.

Cranis explained that interest is generated through the County's pooled investment program, where all county funds are invested together to earn returns that are then allocated proportionally to each fund.

The committee discussed the different methods by which the fund accounts accrue interest and ways to maximize earnings within the County's investment policies.

Mayor Connors asked if it was possible to allocate more funds to the Chamber grants in Fund 1445. Cranis stated that it would not be possible this year due to all the funds being allocated, but that it was something that could be looked at in the future if the TDC as a whole wanted that. Braga stated she would be in support of that.

Action: Braga motioned to approve the Tourism Development FY 2025-2026 Budget as presented. Mayor Connors seconded the motion.

Result: Approved

Mover: Julie Braga

Seconder: Mayor Connors

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

Nays: None

Absent: Mayor Medina and Larry Jarnes

Tourism Development Office FY 2025-26 Marketing Plan

Cranis reported on the Marketing Plan, highlighting the recently completed Day Tripper Study. Last year's full visitor study focused heavily on overnight, out-of-county visitors. Since that data is already well established, this year the focus shifted to day visitors.

Day Tripper Study Findings: 1) A typical day visitor spends approximately \$239 per person per day., 2) Average travel party spends approximately \$763 per day with a spending breakdown of 22% – Recreation & entertainment, 19% – Dining & beverages, 15% – Local transportation, 15% – Retail, 13% – Groceries, 9% – Gasoline, and 6% – Miscellaneous.

The future potential includes 76% of day visitors who indicated they would likely stay overnight on their next visit to the Space Coast.

Cranis emphasized the importance of maintaining media spending in the Orlando market. While many Orlando visitors are day trippers, their current spending and future potential as overnight visitors make them a valuable segment.

Space Industry Perceptions Study (online survey of 1,000 respondents): 1) 82% expressed interest in the space industry. 2) Top descriptors: *exciting, futuristic, innovative, visionary*. 3) Strongest associations with space exploration: Cape Canaveral (47%), Houston (28%). 4) Top states associated: Florida, Texas, California, Washington D.C. 5) 76% believe space exploration is important for the future. 6) 58% support private company involvement in space exploration. NASA (20%), SpaceX (17%), and Boeing (12%) had the highest name recognition. 7) 55% would find a space brand collaboration appealing. 8) 61% see space marketing as effective in capturing consumer interest. 9) 62% would be more likely to buy from brands supporting space. And 10) 65% would be more likely to visit a destination that features space in advertising.

Visitor Tracking Study – Rocket Launches

Cranis shared results from the Visitor Tracking Study focused on overnight visitors whose primary reason for travel was a rocket launch. Findings showed: 1) Average stay: 4.8 nights, 2) Average spends per visitor: \$231 per day / \$1,107 per trip, 3) Average spends per party: \$3,101, and 4) Spending breakdown: lodging (26%), dining & beverage (20%), recreation/entertainment (17.7%), retail shopping (16.2%), gas (4.6%), local transportation (2.1%), misc. (2.7%).

A follow-up study this fall will examine visitors attending major launches (e.g., moon launches, cruises) to provide a more complete 360° view of visitor spending and economic impact.

Hotel Inventory and Room Night Demand

Cranis stated that hotel inventory expanded in 2024 with three new properties, and seven additional hotels with over 1,000 rooms are scheduled to open in 2025, bringing the current inventory to 11,269 rooms (as of June 2025). Room night demand totaled 2.55 million in 2023, down from 2.7 million in 2022 due to the International Palms being removed from inventory. Demand rebounded in 2024, reaching 2.66 million—up 4.4% with the added inventory. Further hotel growth is anticipated in 2026 and 2027, with recent demand trends aligning closely with averages in surrounding counties.

Vacation Rentals

Cranis discussed that short-term vacation rental inventory has grown significantly since 2020, increasing from 3,800 units in 2021 to more than 9,000 units currently (6,000 via Airbnb and 3,000 via VRBO). While total revenue in 2024 remained flat compared to 2023, the average daily rate rose 4% and occupancy declined 5%, resulting in a 1% decrease in revenue per available room. Vacation rentals continue to generate roughly one-third of TDT collections.

Cranis noted that overall priorities remain consistent with prior years but highlighted several key points: 1) International Markets: Canadian and German visitation is down, while UK and Ireland remain strong, supported by TUI flights into Melbourne (MLB). The organization continues co-op marketing with TUI to strengthen routes and promote Central Florida as a hub. 2) Meetings & Conventions: Growing hotel interest in group business and the future convention center underscores the need for strategic investment in meetings/conventions marketing. And 3) Marketing Priorities: Continued focus on aligning funds with the most promising markets and remaining flexible to pursue new opportunities as additional funding becomes available.

Creative Overview

Cranis reported on current marketing efforts: 1) Billboards: Heavy campaign for Cocoa Beach (District 2), with additional placements for Melbourne, Titusville, and Palm Bay. 2) Video & Branding: New TV commercials in production for Cocoa Beach and Port Canaveral; a branding project underway for Melbourne/Palm Bay with new digital creative to follow. 3) Affordability Messaging: Campaigns emphasize value-driven travel, positioning the Space Coast as an affordable beach destination. Messaging highlights competitive pricing and budget-friendly experiences through taglines such as “Affordable Affluence,” “See More for Less,” and “Escape Crowds and Embrace Savings.” And 4) Recognition: Last year’s “Countdown” spot received top honors at the Governor’s Conference, where the campaign earned multiple awards.

Visitor Overview

Cranis outlined the visitor profile and target markets: 1) Target Audience: Adults 35–54+, household income \$100K+, families with children, cruise intenders, active retirees, and travelers interested in beaches, space, and nature. 2) Domestic Markets: Florida (Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando, Tampa/St. Pete, West Palm Beach, Jacksonville) and out-of-state (Atlanta, Charlotte, New York, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Chicago). 3) Airline Partnerships: Current partnerships include Allegiant (Allentown) and Sun Country (Minneapolis), with new markets to be announced. 4) International Markets: UK, Ireland, EU, and Canada (possibly paused in

2026). And 5) Recognition: The Space Coast was named one of the Top 25 Destinations to Visit in 2025 worldwide.

Messaging Calendar and Marketing Initiatives

Cranis outlined the marketing strategy, which blends always-on brand awareness, seasonal advertising, and specialty niche campaigns. Key highlights include: 1) Annual Campaigns: ~\$2.4M focused on brand awareness (billboards, airport signage, paid social media). 2) Seasonal Campaigns: ~\$5.6M using layered media (TV/streaming, radio, audio, digital with Fall/Winter: \$1.1M, Spring: \$1.7M, and Summer: \$2.8M). 3) Marketing Support Program (MSP): \$740K to support local events. 4) Campaign Timing: The Fall campaign shifted to a Fall/Winter campaign in FY24–25, boosting January travel. This approach will continue in FY25–26. 5) Digital Tools: The “Space Coast Launches” app has surpassed 300,000 downloads. And 6) Innovation: Exploring AI tools within the marketing technology stack to enhance personalization, optimize campaign performance, and improve data-driven decision-making.

Partnerships and Promotions

Cranis highlighted efforts to expand reach through strategic collaborations, with a budget of approximately \$200,000 for 1) Brand Partnerships: Working with a third-party agency on a Moon Pie promotion in Southeast grocery stores. 2) Port Canaveral: Developing a new TV commercial. 3) Melbourne Orlando International Airport (MLB): Supporting increased air service growth and driving demand from direct-service markets. 4) Chambers of Commerce: Collaborating to educate visitors on local experiences and encourage longer stays. And 5) Sports Tourism: Dedicated \$60,000 to raise awareness of Florida’s Space Coast as a sports destination. Events generating 400+ room nights may qualify for up to \$25,000 in marketing support or expense reimbursement.

Research and Other Budget Items

Cranis noted a \$200,000 research budget to maximize data use and optimize efforts, including: 1) Datafy – measures population movement, event attendance, and points of interest foot traffic. 2) Downs & St. Germain Research – conducts Visitor Economic Impact and sub-segment surveys for agile insights. And 3) STR & Key Data Dashboard – provides hotel and vacation rental market intelligence.

Additional allocations include Travel Expenses (\$32,000), Memberships (\$30,500), and Tax Collector allocation (\$243,000). Cranis also reported that \$700,000 is being held back to offset an anticipated reduction in Carry Forward.

Action: Vice Chair Hermansen motioned to approve the Marketing Plan FY 25-26 Budget as presented. Moran seconded the motion.

Result: Approved

Mover: Vice Chair Hermansen

Second: John Moran

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

Nays: None

Absent: Vice Chair Hermansen, Alex Litras, John Moran

Public Comment

No public comments were made.

Board Reports

Braga stated that, as Chair of the Beach Committee, she wished to note two items. First, the Beach Improvement Committee meeting will be held on October 21, 2025, and will serve as a wrap-up meeting at which Mike McGarry, Beaches, Boating, and Waterways Programs Manager, will provide a beach update report. Second, Braga expressed appreciation for the support of the Brevard Cultural Alliance (BCA) and emphasized the importance of arts and culture to tourism. She noted that while significant effort and resources are spent attracting visitors to Brevard County, providing cultural activities and experiences helps keep tourists in the area longer and encourages them to return.

Cranis asked McGarry to provide insight into the recent offshore storm that occurred the previous week.

McGarry stated that he had already conducted a preliminary assessment of the storm's impact on the beaches. He explained that, because the storm produced long, smooth rolling swells rather than short, choppy wind-driven waves, the effects were less damaging. While the swells moved sand along the shoreline and reached the dunes in a few spots on the south beaches, overall, the storm was not excessively erosive. McGarry noted that, given the offshore distance of the storm, the beaches fared relatively well.

Chair Feltner acknowledged Dave Berman of *Florida Today*, who will be retiring soon. Brevard County had earlier presented Mr. Berman with a plaque in recognition of his more than 26 years of service, which was acknowledged during the TDC Board meeting. Chair Feltner commended Mr. Berman for always being fair and honest in his reporting.

John, representing the Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association, reminded the committee that three days remain to submit Rose Award nominations. He noted this is a valuable opportunity to recognize hospitality employees and invited members to contact him for the nomination link.

Upcoming Meetings

The next Tourist Development Council meeting will be held on September 24, 2025, at 2:00 PM at the Viera Government Center, Building C, 3rd Floor, Florida Room. The next Marketing Committee Meeting will be on September 25th. The next Beach Committee Meeting will be on October 21st.

The meeting adjourned at 3:33 PM.