

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Progress Report on the Tourist Development Council (TDC) special Sub Committee meetings

OBJECTIVE: Report to the full TDC on the progress to date of the special TDC Sub Committee.

CONSIDERATIONS: Commissioner Hiller appointed a special subcommittee of the TDC in April, 2011 to review the current funding and marketing efforts to attract visitors to our community. The members of the subcommittee include Commissioner Hiller, Chairman, Councilman Jerry Gibson, Clark Hill, Rick Medwedeff, Bob Miller and Murray Hendel.

The subcommittee has met nine times since April, 2011 to discuss comparative funding of competing Florida destinations, current marketing and media plans and implementations, leisure and group marketing initiatives and possible alternatives for enhancing the ability to market our destination on a more year-round basis. The subcommittee members have identified several important findings:

1. In order to remain competitive, our Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) must find new sources of revenue to support year-round destination advertising and promotion efforts, resulting in more year-round visitation and spending in Collier County.
2. Our destination recorded an average annual occupancy of 63% in 2010 and 66.6% in 2011. That equates to an average unsold accommodations inventory of 33.4%. In our high season that occupancy is near capacity. In the summer and fall, those occupancies drop to about 50%. Filling a larger percentage of rooms would drive more revenue to businesses in our community and sustain year-round employment opportunities.
3. A major drawback to future growth in visitation is our lack of nighttime entertainment options. More group meetings, international visitors and domestic travelers will be attracted to our community if we have more nighttime offerings.
4. Our public transportation system is not visitor friendly. Encouraging more taxi and van service, especially in the later evening hours, will support more visitors to our community.
5. There is a misconception that the tourism industry only supports low paying jobs. A special study could document the true level of wages paid in our largest private sector industry. That same study could document the significant total tax contribution of the tourism industry to Collier County.

6. Our area is lacking in direct air service into Ft. Myers International Airport. At present we have no commercial air service into Naples Municipal Airport. Attracting more air carriers to use these facilities will bring many more year-round group and leisure visitors to our area.
7. Local media coverage and support of the tourism industry in Collier County, the area's largest private sector employer, is lacking. The CVB's Community Relations program should be enhanced to get ongoing information to continually update our local and regional media and the Collier tourism industry with positive news stories and feature story ideas.
8. At this time the economic condition of our community cannot support an increase in the tourist development tax.
9. Additional study on the current allocation of the tourist development tax is needed to identify possible short and long term adjustments that could fund more year-round destination marketing efforts.
10. Additional studies and research has been requested by the subcommittee members for presentation at the February subcommittee meeting.

The subcommittee findings were presented to a group of tourism industry leaders and interested citizens in June. That group was later provided copies of the FY 11 CVB Strategic Marketing Plan, and the proposed budget for FY 12 for all tourist tax functions, and asked to prepare their comments and suggestions for the Sub Committee in July. Those participant comments were recorded and included in the draft of the FY 12 Strategic Plan for Naples, Marco Island and the Everglades.

The draft Strategic Marketing Plan for marketing the destination was presented to the Collier County Lodging & Tourism Alliance on August 31 and to the Tourism Advisory Roundtable in September for review and comment. The suggestions from those meetings were incorporated into the strategic marketing plan and presented to the TDC on September 6. The TDC recommendation was presented to the Board of County Commissioners on October 11, 2011 and was unanimously approved.

FISCAL IMPACT: The Tourism Department proposed FY 12 budget includes the necessary funding to support the current Strategic Marketing Plan for the destination.

RECOMMENDATION: Receive the progress report on the special TDC Sub Committee meetings and preliminary findings.

SUBMITTED BY: Jack Wert, Tourism Director

TDC MEETING DATE: January 23, 2012