

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, April 11, 2018**

**1:00 P.M.**

**City Council Conference Room A**

**Suite 425, City Hall**

**117 West Duval Street**

**Attendance**

City Council President Anna Lopez Brosche, Board Chairperson

City Council Vice President Aaron Bowman, Board Vice Chairperson (arr. 1:04, dep. 1:43)

City Council Member Lori N. Boyer, Board Member

Barbara Goodman, Board Member

Steven Grossman, Board Member

Kirit Patidar, Board Member (arr. 1:04)

Craig Smith, Board Member (arr. 1:06)

Dawn Southworth, Board Member

Jeffrey Truhlar, Board Member - Excused

Annette Hastings, TDC Executive Director

Jeff Clements, Chief of Council Research

Kim Taylor, Assistant Council Auditor

Lawsikia Hodges, Deputy General Counsel

**Meeting Convened** 1:02 p.m. **Meeting Adjourned:** 2:23 p.m.

**Call to Order**

Chairwoman Brosche called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. The primary purpose of the meeting is to receive and review the report of the TDC Advisory Committee on Special Event and Convention Grant Guidelines.

**Visit Jacksonville Audit FY 9/3/2017**

Kim Taylor, Assistant Council Auditor, said that her office had reviewed the audit and had discussions with Visit Jacksonville staff regarding several questions. They have no issues with or remaining questions about the audit. The TDC does not need to take any formal action with regard to the audit. TDC Executive Director Annette Hastings will circulate the audit by e-mail to all members.

**TDC Advisory Committee Special Events and Convention Grant Guidelines Report**

The TDC Advisory Committee was charged with providing the Tourist Development Council with guidelines for the Special Events and Convention Grants pursuant to Ordinance 2016-599–E. Council Member Boyer said that the marketing component of the adopted tourist development plan has a floor but no cap on expenditures, with most of the funding intended to go to the City’s CVB for that purpose. She noted that some allocations of TDC funds (i.e. to First Coast of Golf) are for marketing purposes as well, which increases the allocation of available funds to that particular component. The convention sales and service component has both a floor and a cap (until such time as the city builds a new convention center) and a portion of those funds are used for marketing purposes. All of these marketing dollars need to be recognized when making a decision on allocating funds to marketing versus convention and event grants.

**Committee Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1** – **Change the ordinance to expand the venue description to include eligibility for private venues in the county when publicly owned venues are not available or appropriate.** Ms. Boyer said that if this change is made, language needs to be added to restrict use of the funds for private facility events to marketing and promotion purposes pursuant to statutory restrictions. Ms. Boyer will meet with Deputy General Counsel Lawsikia Hodges to craft language for consideration at the next meeting laying out two options, one for public and one for privately owned facilities. Council Member Bowman asked to consider waiver language to permit grants to events expecting attendance of less than 5,000 for good cause. Council Member Boyer alternatively suggested creating new categories for small events. Commissioner Patidar suggested giving Visit Jacksonville a pot of money and authority to make grants to private facilities hosting smaller events. Ms. Boyer said there already is a convention grant allocation in the Visit Jax budget, but TDC must give final approval. She believes that lowering the threshold for private venues opens the door to allocating more funding to conventions and meetings at hotels and therefore less to special events as traditionally understood.

**Recommendation 2** – **Change the ordinance to allow grant awards for 25,000 tourists or 10,000 room nights by adding “and any combination thereof”.** Ms. Boyer felt that the combination of both factors needs to be limited with reduced awards based on each factor (not the full $250,000 for each factor). Commissioner Smith said that the TDC already has the power to approve reduced grants it its discretion. Chairwoman Brosche suggested creating a sliding scale for awards based on combinations of the two factors.

**Recommendation 3** **– Use a points system to evaluate applications using objective quality standards.** Ms. Boyer said that a screening threshold needs to be included to require use of a public venue or to restrict funding for events at private venues to marketing and promotion only. The group discussed the difficulty in determining how many tourists come from out-of-town to attend events. Commissioners were asked to review the categories and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

**Recommendation 4 – Focused category; TDC divide into small groups to review single features (i.e. marketing) in all applications rather than all members reviewing all features of all applications.** Ms. Boyer suggested that the small size of the TDC might make subcommittees difficult, given everyone’s business and travel schedules. Commissioner Grossman suggested possibly having professional staff hired to perform this function.

**Recommendation 5 – Values and Brand Statement.** The group agreed that this is an important need; Visit Jacksonville is working on this task.

**Recommendation 6 – Evaluation For payment to the grant winners**. The committee was unclear what this recommendation was intended to mean; it will be discussed at a future meeting.

**Recommendation 7 – Guidelines For An Application.** The TDC will need to see what happens if the grants are opened up to private facilities for convention and meeting purposes before deciding what to do in this regard.

**Other Topics for TDC Review and Discussion**

2) Equestrian Center grant management: Monica Smith said that events using the Equestrian Center pose a challenge in determining event attendance and room night bookings; for some reason the promoters and hoteliers are not very cooperative in providing those figures. She suggested creating a separate pool for grants to events at that facility with a different set of criteria.

**Tourist Bureau Capital Expenditures/Katie Mitura, Visit Jacksonville**

Katie Mitura of Visit Jacksonville said that the Beaches Visitor Center grand opening will be on April 26th. They request approval of two budget allocations (Beaches Visitor Center Television - estimated cost $600; Signage for Beaches Center - estimated cost $2,000) to finish improvements to the center. Lawsikia Hodges outlined the two alternative methods to achieve the desired end (increase the Visit Jax marketing contract amount and amend their budget to authorize them to procure the items or, if the funds are still in the City’s control, City Procurement could purchase the items).

**Motion** (Goodman/2nd Grossman): approve Visit Jacksonville’s expenditure of $2,600 to procure the television and signage for the Beaches Visitor Center

**Motion** (Patidar/2nd Goodman): approve Visit Jacksonville’s expenditure of $15,000 from its $100,000 marketing budget for capital improvements and amend Visit Jax’s budget to reflect the revised amount

Ms. Goodman **withdrew her motion**; Mr. Patidar **withdrew his motion**.

**Motion** (Grossman/2nd Goodman): authorize the transfer of $100,000 from unallocated funding that resulted from the return of surplus funds from the contract with Visit Jacksonville for fiscal year 2016-17 appropriated via ordinance 2017-850-E to the Tourist Bureau plan component; authorize $2,600 for immediate expenditure on Beaches Visitor Center capital improvements/equipment purchases (television, signage) as presented at the meeting as part of the $100,000; authorize Annette Hastings to work with the Procurement Division to amend the Tourist Bureau contract with Visit Jacksonville to increase the maximum indebtedness by $100,000 to provide funding for capital improvements/ equipment purchases under the contract; direct Visit Jacksonville to obtain future approval from the TDC Board for any purchases made from the $100,000.

Public comment – none

**The Grossman motion was approved 6-0.**

In response to a question from Commissioner Patidar, Ms. Brosche confirmed that the TDC is paying for the services of the attorney in attendance representing the General Counsel’s Office and the auditors representing the Council Auditor’s Office.

**Next Meeting**

TDC Quarterly Meeting – May 17, 2018

The meeting was adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

Posted 4.17.18 4:00 p.m.