

AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE GADSDEN TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA ON DECEMBER 17, 2018 AT 3:30 P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:

**Present:**

**Carolyn Ford, Vice – Chair - Present**

**Angela Sapp – NP (Keith Dowell was present representing the City unofficially)**

**Linda Dixon - Present**

**Jeff DuBree - Present**

**Brenda Holt - Present**

**Peter Patel – Present – arrived at 3:37 p.m.**

**Cathy Johnson - Present**

**Olivia Smith, TDC Administrator -Present**

**Joe Bouch, 78 Madison - Absent**

**Attorney David Weiss – Present**

**Beryl H. Wood, Deputy Clerk - Present**

**1. Pledge of Allegiance/Roll Call**

Carolyn Ford, Vice-Chairman of the Tourist Development Council (TDC) called the meeting to order at 3:38 p.m. with a quorum present. She then led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag.

The roll was called and recorded as listed above by the deputy clerk.

**2. Amendments to and Approval of the Agenda**

**UPON MOTION BY MS. HOLT AND SECOND BY MRS. JOHNSON, THE COUNCIL VOTED 5 – 0, BY VOICE VOTE, FOR APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AS PRINTED.**

**3. General Business**

**a. 2019 Crappie Tournament Update**

Olivia Smith, Public Information Officer/TDC Administrator addressed the board. She highlighted the following points of discussion:

- 2019 is the third year that the Crappie Tournament has been held at Lake Talquin.

- There are various levels of sponsorship packages in which the county can participate. The TDC chose the \$20,000 two-day tournament with a television package sponsorship in 2018.
- The budget for 2019 set aside \$20,000 again.
- Ms. Smith recommended they select the two-day package without the television package for \$15,000.
- Ms. Smith did not recommend the \$5,000 television package because the county did not get any feedback on how the \$5,000 specifically benefited the event last year, even though it did allow for two 30 minute segments on a fishing channel. Since the county purchased the video last year, she suggested that it could be reused because it was not dated.
- Attorney Weiss recalled that the county approved \$20,000 in the current budget but he was not certain if the board of county commissioners stated a particular package that the money was to be used.
- Commissioner Brenda Holt recalled that the budget only set aside the \$20,000 without restriction as to which package.
- Upon being questioned by Mr. DuBree, Ms. Smith stated that she would like to use part of it to engage the media, but, also to use it to invite more people to attend the Media Day on Friday. Crappie Masters does provide fish dinners for about 50 people on Media Day. She said she would like to invite more community partners so that the county could showcase the Crappie Tournament to the local people. She explained that the promotion that is done by Crappie Masters is primarily for their national exposure.
- Mrs. Ford concurred that some money should be spent to encourage local attendance as well as the out of town attendance.
- Ms. Smith recommended that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board would be a great tool to use their influence to recruit local and regional fisherman to participate in the tournament.
- She noted that the local Bass Pro Shop does not promote the Crappie Tournament. She suggested that the TDC send a letter to the Bass Pro Shop asking them to promote the event from within their store.
- Commissioner Holt stated that she attended the Media Day last year and reported that the only people in attendance were county workers. She agreed that an appeal to local fisherman to participate and to observe professional fisherman in a tournament setting would encourage more fishing.
- It was suggested that some local celebrities could be brought in to participate in the tournament. Participation of celebrities would be news worthy and would attract the media coverage and more locals. Names suggested were Willie Simmons, Dexter Jackson, Billy Dean, Odell Haggins, etc.
- It was also suggested that veterans could be invited and encouraged to attend and fish with professionals.

- It was noted that the video from last year was received as a You Tube video and it did not list Gadsden County as a co-sponsor in its credits.

**UPON MOTION BY COMMISISONER HOLT AND SECOND BY MRS. DIXON, THE COUNCIL VOTED 6-0, BY VOICE VOTE, TO APPROVE PURCHASING THE \$15,000 PROMOTION PACKAGE FROM CRAPPIE MASTERS.**

b. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**UPON MOTION BY MR. DUBREE AND SECOND BY COMMISIONER HOLT, THE COUNCIL VOTED 6 – 0, BY VOICE VOTE, TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER MINUTES AS PRINTED.**

c. **Draft 2019 Strategic Plan Recommendations**

Ms. Smith provided two drafts for the Strategic Plan. She pointed out the first one as being strictly marketing efforts and updates. Additionally, she stated that the document which was placed in their agenda folder, but, not attached contained the guidelines which the plan needs to follow. She said that ideally the documents would be working together with the marketing information being secondary.

Mrs. Ford asked Ms. Smith to go through it and point out the corrections and expansions which she had recommended.

**Mission Statement and Business Statement**

Mrs. Ford suggested language should be added to include encouraging local stakeholders, community partners, etc. to be actively involved in promoting tourism which improves economic development. She stated that the local businesses and the local people are the contacts that will bring people back.

Quincy Commissioner Dowdell asked that some language be added to include setting the direction for the county marketing efforts so as to produce sustainable long term growth and revenue through tourism.

**Executive Summary** – no changes were recommended

**Page 3 – Goal 1 and Strategy 1.1** – Coordinate with local city councils and regional tourist developments councils.

**Strategy 1.2- Performance Measurements and Outreach and Relationship Building with Tourism**

Mr. DuBree called attention to **Goal 1**: “Identify visitor touch points that are ready for tourism promotion.” He questioned whether the marketing company knows what businesses are ready for marketing. For instance, in some of the ads, they haven’t created a link to an action for someone, such as an ad for canoeing. There is no link that tells a person where they can go canoeing. It doesn’t tell people how to see the old homes in Quincy.”

Ms. Smith acknowledged that the communications plan in marketing is outdated. She suggested that some round table discussions or workshops can help them to update their marketing.

County Commissioner Holt stated that now is a good time to budget money to produce a current inventory of the tourism sites and then market them based on that updated inventory along with pertinent information.

Mrs. Ford said they need to revamp the entire marketing plan.

Quincy Commissioner Dowdell pointed out that there was no active kiosk in Gadsden County where a person could get direction to any site. He suggested that one be placed in a central location.

Mrs. Ford asked if there was a welcome center.

Ms. Smith replied that a welcome center is not budgeted, but, they could discuss it. Mr. Dowdell suggested Main Street could serve as a welcome center.

Commissioner Holt suggested that the business people could have a Gadsden County Kiosk on their phone.

Ms. Smith explained that the phone application was funded through Visit Florida. However, because of software updates, it is outdated. She said it would require an additional amount of money to redesign the application and launch it so that it would work as good tourist tool.

County Commissioner Holt inquired as to when the Strategic Plan had to be ready.

Attorney Weiss replied that there is no deadline. He said the current plan has a “footer” that dates it for fiscal year 2017-2018. He went on to say that initially, the idea was that the plan would be updated for each fiscal year. He continued by saying, “We are a few months into the current fiscal year, so, if you are going to call it a fiscal year such as “the 18-19 Strategic Plan,” the longer it takes to adopt it, the less time we have to implement it. It does have to go from recommendation from this board to the County Commission and then the County Commission actually adopts it....Today, we are having a workshop to

get input. Presumably at the next meeting we would be able to have something in front of you that would be for consideration and recommendation. That would take about a month or so. I guess that would be the first or second meeting in February that it would go to the County Commission.

Part of what is in your original agenda package today was sort of presented as the strategic plan, but, to me that is just more of a marketing plan. Your existing strategic plan has the general purpose saying, "Here is what we want to do." What is in your original agenda package today is more like, "Here is how we are going to accomplish our goals." You do that on an annual basis. Obviously, you make the determination in terms of how you are going to use what you put in your budget. But, in terms of the existing Strategic Plan, I think it makes sense to go through this process and say, "Do we still have this goal? Does it still make sense?" But, drilling down to the specifics, I don't think that has to be in your plan, it is more a year to year and how you are going to use your marketing dollars. "

Mrs. Holt said, "We want more local input in a very general statement. Then spell it out in the strategies under that goal as to how you want it done. If we say we want that local flavor in there, then in general terms we get it in there. Then the strategy will tell us what you want under that goal. Anyone want to do that? That is what we keep saying. Everyone keeps saying pretty much the same thing."

Attorney Weiss concluded, "To the extent that it is not addressed in the Strategic Plan, that is certainly something we want to get it there – that there is a little more public participation and public input. I think that may be addressed to some degree, but, maybe we need to beef that up a little bit."

**Page 4:**

Ms. Smith commented, "This first goal here where I made a comment under "Develop a web hub based upon other tourism websites to link to "Dosomethingoriginal.com." Do something original does not make sense for what we are trying to do in promoting Gadsden County. It doesn't even say "Gadsden County." ...I feel like that is OK for a tag line, but, I feel that we need to be strategic about every single instance that Gadsden County could be mentioned, it should say, "Gadsden County." If that is OK with you, we can work with 78 Madison and I want to address it."

Mr. DuBree stated, "My comment with regard to that would be that I totally understand that visitgadsdenfl makes sense. But, most travelers don't usually associate a place with the county. If they are going to Quincy, they are going to Google Quincy. They are not going to Google Gadsden County. They may not even be able to spell it. I will use Tallahassee as an example. If you ask people in the tri-state region what county that Tallahassee is in, the capital of the state, there are a lot of people who could tell you that

it is Leon and that could Google that. So, in our marketing, we need to be more specific to Quincy or Chattahoochee, or Lake Talquin or whatever we are trying to market. Don't just market Gadsden County as a name. I don't think that will be very effective."

County Commissioner Holt asked if there was a way to list more than one locality when a search was performed. Whether you search for Quincy or Havana, it would send you to the same place.

Ms. Smith stated she would bring the Strategic Plan back with the language the Council had proposed and ask 78 Madison to hone in on the Google searches that populate when you search for Quincy or whatever.

### **Strategy 2.2 Market the grant application process to local and regional organizations**

Ms. Smith stated she was unaware of how the marketing funds had been distributed in the past, but, she would at least look toward sending out more press releases about the availability of the money to local businesses that might know of events that bring people into the area.

Mrs. Holt mentioned that when the county has groundbreakings for parks, businesses, etc., and the Tourism Council is never present at them. She explained that many times there are other counties present as well as bank representatives, etc. She stated that she felt like Tourism is missing opportunities for exposure and networking with others by not being there. She pointed out that the Apalachee Regional Planning Council meets at the IFAS Center regularly. She said she would like for the Council to get some exposure by setting up a booth or table at those meetings anytime a group comes into the county from the outside.

Mrs. Ford suggested that there should be a TDC Banner placed prominently at such meetings.

Mr. DuBree suggested that the website would be an obvious place to instruct people how to apply for advertising funds through the council. Those businesses that are successful in obtaining advertisement could help get the word out by adding a testimonial statement of on the website in the same spot where the instructions are given for applications. A press release stating that the TDC has granted "such and such group \$3,000 to help promote their event."

Mr. Ford concurred.

Ms. Smith stated that there is some confusion among groups who are awarded the funds for promotion. She clarified that the funds are distributed on reimbursement basis. The board does not give them a check in advance. The application clearly states that it is

reimbursement funds only. The successful applicants must submit receipts in order to be reimbursed.

Another misconception is that the grant funds require that the ads must list the Gadsden County Tourism Council as a sponsor of the event.

County Commissioner Holt stated, "If they are not willing to put our logo on their advertisements, they should not get funded."

Ms. Smith pledged to do a better job this year to make sure that people know what they have to do in order to get reimbursed, which includes producing their receipts and it must be specifically for marketing.

Mrs. Dixon said they were asking that they provide proof prior to payment.

**Goal 3 – Continue developing marketing components for a continuous tourism rollout.**

Ms. Smith explained, "It is like where every year, it is in this plan to announce a new campaign. Not to just do something original, but something fresh. There is a theme for what we do every year. That is what 78 Madison is supposed to do. We can ask them to do that. We can host a marketing rollout annually if you would like to do that. I just wanted to bring it to your attention that is what that is. I don't know if there is something new presented to you guys every year. Again, that theme would tie into the Facebook promotion. It will tie into what we want to focus on for the year – the different business. There are a lot of different farm to table restaurants that we have here that we do not promote. We have a lot of agriculture that we don't talk about. I will continue to work with 78 Madison on that."

Ms. Ford remarked that she really wants to look at stakeholders in the community. She said that she would like to develop a tour to showcase what is going on here such as the farms. Rocky Comfort Farm, Brown Farms, Organic farms, etc.

Mr. DuBree said you have to have farms that are open to the public that are willing to be interactive with the public.

**Page 5 Strategy 3.2**

Ms. Smith said she would see if writers, bloggers, etc. would come and write about what we offer in specifics.

Mr. DuBree said it might be like New Leaf who does a weeklong event that focuses on local farmers in their region. There are some Gadsden County farmers who are already involved in it.

Mrs. Ford suggested that the FAMU agriculture campus could be part of a tour.

Mr. DuBree said you could set up something on the square.

**Goal 4: Allocation of funds –**

Attorney Weiss stated that they can change the percentages and categories in how the funds are to be used. The Statute does not say that the money must be used on any certain things.

Mr. DuBree asked if some could be used for administrative fees.

Mr. Weiss replied he would do some research to make a determination about using it for administrative costs.

Ms. Smith remarked that a workshop on the application itself might be helpful to explain the funding sources.

**Page 7 – Strategy 4.3**

Ms. Smith stated that the only change she offered was to add “social media.”

**Page 9 – TDC Revenues from the previous years.**

Ms. Smith said the figures that are in the plan before them were 2018 figures. She stated that she would ask Financial Analyst/Budget Manager Jeff Price to update the figures in the final plan when it comes back to the council in its final form.

Mr. DuBree asked if the figures from October were derived from taxes from hotels or if it was when the county received the money from the state. He said that knowing that information would help them see when the peak months occur and when the slow months occur.

Ms. Smith could not answer for certain.

Ms. Smith stated that she was not sure Gadsden County was collecting additional revenue dealing with Air B&B tax.

Mr. Patel said the county is not getting it, but it should. He went on to say they are fighting for it in the Legislature.

Ms. Smith mentioned Alachua County reached out to their B&B to collect taxes.



Mr. Patel stated that it could be placed on the voter ballot during an election.

Ms. Smith said she would survey other counties and bring back information from those that are collecting it.

Ms. Smith then called attention to the notes she placed on some sections. She explained that it encompassed what was already discussed in the meeting. She recommended that they evaluate the magazines advertisements to see where the greater benefit is derived. (Southern Living or Triple A)

Mr. Patel stated that he believes that Triple A would render the greater benefit. Southern Living is not resulting in overnight stays at this point. They are staying in adjacent counties even though they attend local events.

Mrs. Ford said there was no evaluation system. She also questioned whether the county was deriving benefit from the Facebook ads.

Ms. Smith replied that the Facebook ads are working, but, they could do more. She said she would request 78 Madison to get a more specific break down as to what each impression means and where we are getting the clicks from. She agreed that it is confusing how they do their algorithms.

Mrs. Ford asked, "What is the difference in a Facebook ad campaign that he puts on and that the ordinary person puts on?"

Ms. Smith replied, "What he does when he does a campaign is that he sets a budget – an amount of money – say \$200. In that budget, he specifies where he wants to target that ad. For example, he wants to reach people in Georgia or wherever. He can set a parameter for that area. He can set an age. He can set interest as to what people like on their Facebook page – what they click on the most. He can target them in that way. It can set a time frame. So, the beginning of this week to the end of this week, if I spent \$200, how many people in my target range have I connected with? Connected with maybe how many people have clicked on the website. How many people have hovered over our website or gone to our social media page on Facebook. A regular person like me doing it is kind of like an organic reach. I don't spend any money, meaning my post goes viral by themselves. For example, during the hurricane, he didn't spend any money because he didn't need to. Organically, people were looking for that information from Gadsden County about the hurricane. That did us good because people saw Gadsden County. That is what the difference is. Individually is better. However, we don't have a face of the county that makes people visit Gadsden necessarily."

Mr. DuBree remarked, "It comes down to really good content. You want your organic stuff to get people to ask questions about something really interesting. Otherwise, it is just stale."

Ms. Smith said she thought the Google Ads should stay, but that 78 Madison should justify what the county is receiving for the amount of money being spent. She discussed radio ads. She suggested there are peak times of the year that money could be spent on radio ads.

Ms. Smith concluded that she had a better feel for what the council is looking for and she will go back to 78 Madison and make appropriate changes. She encouraged each member to contact her with things that might come to mind as she is working toward a final product.

*Mrs. Holt left at this juncture 4:40 p.m.*

**4. Item of discussion from Council members**

The next meeting was scheduled for January 28, 2019.

**5. Public Comments (3 Minutes) There were no public comments.**

**Adjournment**

**THERE BEING NO ADDITIONAL COMMENTS, THE CHAIR DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:14 P.M.**

GADSDEN COUNTY, FL

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**CAROLYN FORD, VICE -CHAIR  
Tourist Development Council**

**ATTEST:**

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**NICHOLAS THOMAS, CLERK**