

**AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE TOURIST  
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL HELD IN AND FOR  
GADSDEN COUNTY, FL, ON MAY 18, 2020 AT  
4:00 P.M., THE FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS  
HAD, VIZ:**

**Present:** Carolyn Ford, Vice-Chair  
Brenda Holt, Commissioner Dist. 4  
Cathy Johnson, Havana Council Member  
Peter Patel, Bed Tax Collector  
John Garcia, Bed Tax Collector

**Absent:** Jeff Dubree, Bed Tax Collector  
Keith Dowdell, Quincy City Commissioner  
Linda Dixon, Tax Collector

**Staff Present:** Beth Bruner, Deputy Clerk  
Jeff Price, Sr. Mgmt. Budget Analyst

**This meeting was had over audio/conference call during the COVID-19 shutdown.**

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

Deputy Clerk, Beth Bruner started with roll call, followed by Commissioner Holt leading in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag.

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

**MS. JOHNSON MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE WITH A SECOND BY COMMISSIONER FORD.  
THE BOARD VOTED 4-0 BY ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE.**

**VICE-CHAIR FORD- Y  
COMMISSIONER HOLT- Y  
MS. JOHNSON- Y  
MR. PATEL -Y  
MR. GARCIA- NO RESPONSE**

**3. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

- a. July 22,2019 Regular Meeting
- b. October 21,2019 Regular Meeting – Corrected to be re-approved.
- c. March 30, 2020 Regular Meeting
- d. April 20, 2020 Regular Meeting

**MS. JOHNSON MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE MEETING MINUTES WITH A SECOND BY VICE-  
CHAIR FORD. THE BOARD VOTED 5-0 BY ROLL CALL VOTE TO APPROVE.**

**MS. FORD- Y  
COMMISSIONER HOLT- Y**

**MS. JOHNSON- Y**  
**MR. PATEL- Y**  
**MR. GARCIA- Y**

Mr. Brown welcomed Leslie Steele, the new Public Information Officer for Gadsden County. Ms. Steele introduced herself to the TDC and said she was looking forward to working with them.

4. **Presentations**

None were had.

5. **Citizens Requesting to be Heard on Non-Agenda Items (3-Minute Limit)**

None were had.

6. **General Business**

a. **Financial Reports**

- i. March 2020
- ii. April 2020

Mr. Brown stated the Financial Reports were forwarded to all of the TDC members and Jeff Price was on the line to answer any questions.

Commissioner Holt said they were on the phone and asked how everyone could look at the financial report at the same time. She asked for questions to be extended and they could send financial questions anyone had because they could not look at them while speaking. She stated questions and answers could be asked and answered after the meeting via email.

Mr. Garcia stated he could not see the Financial report in his email. He asked if the revenue from the Airbnb's in Gadsden County was included in the financial report.

Mr. Price said yes and that he had talked to the State Representative of the TDC from FL and was told they do include the Airbnb's in those numbers.

Mr. Brown said March and April were in the packet and May would be available at the next meeting.

Mr. Garcia asked if the state broke down Bed and Breakfast, Hotels and Airbnb's.

Mr. Price said they may break it down on their side but the TDC received one check.

Commissioner Holt asked Mr. Price to check with the State and ask if the Department of Revenue broke it down and get back to the TDC. Mr. Price said he would.

Mr. Price gave totals stating the last 2 months were average for collections, \$11,000-\$12,000. He stated expenses had been way down, and not much money was spent. There was a couple thousand dollars spent in March and about \$3,000 in April. The balance was increasing because there was not much spent yet. He further stated the TDC was looking good for whatever they wanted to do in the future, like a marketing firm or plan, there was plenty of money for that this year.

Ms. Ford had no questions

Mr. Garcia asked for someone to explain why there was \$213,000 in the bank while there were proposals for people doing tourism work, development work, grant needs and other things. He wanted to know why there was so much money in the budget instead of spending it.

Commissioner Holt said the TDC usually did plan activities, hire, and market but because of the virus, things were on hold. She stated usually this was the time to go through applications for Grants. There was county-wide activity and there had been fishing tournaments and other things that did not happen this time because of the virus.

Mr. Garcia said the TDC had expected expenditures coming up in the next six months and asked if those expenditures were reflected in this report, or did the money just sit there until there was a bill or the TDC picked a marketing company.

Commissioner Holt said the TDC would makes decisions on the Grant, people request money for activities and the TDC had to decide who will/will not be approved. If the TDC contracted with any vendors (Marketing Firm) the decision had to be made as a Board and then those amounts would spend out. She further stated they would not be spent until the TDC made the decisions and the TDC may have to extend the time to apply for Grants for activities.

Mr. Brown said the Grant dollars in the current 19-20 budget were allocated last fiscal year for this fiscal year. Pre-COVID, if someone had a fishing tournament and were awarded \$5,000 from the TDC, with the proper amount of expenses and documentation, when that paperwork was submitted, they would get reimbursed the \$5,000 out of the coffers. He further stated the TDC was preparing for a similar process for 20-21. (Next fiscal year)  
Speaking on the marketing contract, Mr. Brown said there was a \$90,000 allocation for a Marketing service. (\$30,000 in services and \$60,000 for Media) As of the last meeting, he stated the Council asked to table the Marketing discussion until June, so right now those funds were on hold. He said before Mr. Brown, the TDC was trying to engage with a marketing firm.

**b. Updates**

**i. Tourist Development Grant Funding**

Mr. Brown said a lot of things were off with COVID. Mr. Price was bringing a budget to the BOCC on July 21, 2020. He stated the TDC would have something to bring to Mr. Price to make sure the Grant Fees were successful for a certain pot, but did not know what that pot was just yet, as Mr. Price was looking at those numbers to figure that out. In the past, there was a grant process that was about to go on the street, hopefully by next week, time would be given to get those applications back. At some point before the July meeting, applications would be brought back before the TDC, the TDC would approve or not approve and then it would go in the budget and be sent to the BOCC. He asked Mr. Price for the full amount for grant funding. Mr. Price said it was \$20,000. Mr. Brown said it stated in the Grant Application that no grant would be above \$5,000.

Mr. Garcia asked when people apply for the grant, were they required to show the TDC any kind of proof that they increased bed nights.

Ms. Holt answered yes, but the problem was in the Havana area, when they had something, there were no hotels and people rented in Tallahassee. She further stated the application always asked how many bed nights.

Mr. Brown said he had seen in the application there was encouragement to bring bed nights, but had not seen, in the reimbursement process he had been a part of, where there was any kind of specific verification necessary for that in the reimbursement of funds. The application did say it needed to be towards tourism, needed to be sure they were using the Gadsden County Tourism Creative and Collateral for branding purposes, but he had not seen where bed nights were verified for reimbursement.

Commissioner Holt stated the TDC required bed nights, and in the application, it asked how many beds.

ii. Next Scheduled Meetings

- Monday, June 15, 2020 (confirmed)
- Monday, July 20, 2020 (recommended)
- Monday, August 17, 2020 (recommended)

**ALL MEETINGS WERE CONFIRMED BY MEMBERS**

7. **New Business**

Vice-Chair Ford said she thought the TDC was planning a meeting in June to look at the County (just the council) to put objectives together and figure out something to do to promote those areas.

Mr. Brown said he heard that the Marketing Plan was to be put off until June. The Council wanted to do some planning before that time. During that time, he stated he and Ms. Steele would get together and find things to engage the TDC, get feedback and bring those to the June meeting. He stated Leslie may have new ideas.

Mr. Garcia asked for a copy of the Marketing proposal.

Mr. Brown said there was no proposal but he would forward Mr. Garcia notes. He said the Council put it on hold and asked him to wait, but to do planning to clearly communicate.

Mr. Garcia said he wanted to see what Mr. Brown had fine-tuned as Commissioner Holt had told him.

Mr. Brown stated there was no selection or decision made.

Ms. Holt asked for all members to be sent that information on the Marketing Firms for the Workshop.

Ms. Steele asked if the TDC had selected Kerrigan. Mr. Brown stated no selection was made at this point.

Commissioner Holt stated the TDC needed to sit down and make some good decisions and find a good Marketing plan for the County.

Mr. Brown asked if the TDC needed a workshop planned or if they wanted to wait until June.

Commissioner Holt said a Workshop was needed before June. She wanted to look at the County in sections to see what was out there and figure out how to market those areas. She further stated she was waiting to see what the Governor had to say before they had people fill out applications for Grants.

Mr. Brown said he would look at a time to have a workshop before the June meeting. He thought it was a good idea to reengage some Marketing Firms for feedback.

Vice-Chair Ford stated this was a challenge with the virus to see how they would gather people together and what the community could come up with. Commissioner Holt said that was why there needed to be a workshop.

Commissioner Holt stated regarding the Grant application, if they went out next week, she did not want to give the impression that 100 people could show up at an event just to turn around and have the Governor say they were still social distancing.

Mr. Brown stated the Grant application was a submission and was the decision of the TDC to allocate. Gadsden County was a partner in Visit Florida so they could help with what they know looking forward.

8. **Items for Discussion**

9. **Meeting Adjourned**

With a motion by Ms. Johnson and a second by Commissioner Holt, the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 P.M.

**GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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**CAROLYN FORD, Vice-Chair**

**ATTEST:**

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**NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk**