

**AT A WORKSHOP OF THE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT  
COUNCIL HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY,  
FLORIDA ON JUNE 7, 2021 AT 4:00 P.M., THE  
FOLLOWING PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

**Present:** Carolyn Ford, Chair-Person of Tourist Interest- arrived late  
Jeff Dubree, Tax Collector  
Brenda Holt, County Commissioner  
Keith Dowdell, Quincy City Commissioner

**Absent:** Peter Patel, Tax Collector  
Linda Dixon, Tax Collector

**Staff Present:** Ed Dixon, County Administrator  
Georgette Daniels, Assistant County Administrator  
Leslie Steele, TDC Director  
Clayton Knowles, Attorney  
Hannah Pope, Deputy Clerk

**Welcome**

Ms. Holt welcomed everyone to the workshop at 4:10 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ROLL CALL**

Ms. Holt asked for a moment of silence and then led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Flag. The following council members were in attendance: Jeff Dubree, Brenda Holt, Keith Dowdell, and Carolyn Ford (arrived late).

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**a. Introduction Overview**

Ms. Steele informed everyone the meeting was properly advertised in the local papers. She introduced Ms. Daniels and Mr. Knowles who would be presenting the following agenda items.

**b. 2021-2022 Financial Outlook**

Ms. Daniels stated in the packet that each council member received the page following the agenda would be her presentation.

**Summary Highlight**

**i. Fund Balance as of 9/30/2020**

Ms. Daniels stated as of 9/30/2020, the Tourist Development Council (TDC) had \$240,670.00 in its fund balance. This is from the financial statements that the auditors were currently working on and they have not issued those statements yet. Ms. Daniels stated that the revenue so far for this year is \$135,799. If the County keeps up the current revenue, which was set for 6 months, it is projected to collect \$124,174. She stated that the revenue has a projected short fall of \$11,625.

Ms. Holt asked if this was the budgeted revenue.

Ms. Daniels stated that the \$240,000 is the budgeted amount. She stated that the \$124,000 was the projected amount that the County may collect. Mr. Dowdell asked what the \$240,000 was again. Ms. Daniels stated that that is the fund balance which is the amount of funds that the TDC currently has. Mr. Dowdell asked was that a precise number or a predicted amount. Ms. Daniels stated that that was a precise number. Ms. Daniels stated that the following figures are used in the budget every year to supplement the Tourist Development Tax Revenue. Each year the TDC uses a portion of the funds and balances them against the expenditures. She stated that this current year the council has used \$40,042. While looking at the financial report Ms. Daniels stated that some years the TDC has used less funds and some years the council has used more. This is to show what has been leftover in the fund balance and how much they use each year to supplement the tax revenue.

*Chair Ford entered the workshop at 4:17 pm.*

Ms. Steele asked Ms. Daniels if there was any idea of what the council may want regarding the fund balance for next year. Ms. Daniels stated not yet, because the budget has not been developed fully at this time. If the council is looking at keeping everything the same there may be some expenditures that the tax revenue may be enough to cover and the council may only need to use a small amount of the fund balance. She stated that it is all based off of the direction that she receives from the council.

Ms. Holt informed Chair Ford that they were going over the second page of the agenda item.

Mr. Dubree stated that he has a spreadsheet that he has created and kept that has the amount of funds that the TDC has collected in Tourism Tax Revenue for the years that he has been on the council. This was so the council members could compare the years and months which can help predict what is coming up in the upcoming months. *(The spreadsheet was passed out among the Council. A copy has not been furnished to the Clerks' Office for the record, even though several requests were made of the PIO via email and voicemail message.)*

Ms. Daniels stated that staff has access to that information as well. Mr. Dubree stated that this is just to help the council members.

Mr. Dubree went over the document table structure with staff at their table while Chair Ford asked Ms. Holt what had been in the presentation thus far.

Once Ms. Ford was brought up to speed, Ms. Holt asked for the numbers to be gone over again for Chair Ford's understanding. Ms. Daniels reviewed the previously stated information. Mr. Dubree asked if that was the funds that was projected or budgeted and not necessarily what was spent. Ms. Daniels answered that that was correct.

ii. 10 Year History of Fund Balance

Ms. Daniels asked if there were any questions regarding the amounts on the handout. There were no questions on these amounts.

iii. Revenue Details

Ms. Daniels stated that the following spreadsheet shows the current budget and what has been collected from the TDC tax fund for the current fiscal year. This also showed the breakdown of all of the different categories of revenue that the council has. She stated this meant that nothing has been from the fund balance. Which means even though \$20,000 has been budgeted it has not been used until it is needed.

Ms. Holt asked so that was for this fiscal year, which is 2021.

Ms. Daniels interjected that the budgeted amount is \$135,799 and so far through April the council has \$72,435 that the council has collected. Chair Ford asked in total the council has \$179,340. Ms. Daniels answered that that is correct because that included the \$40 Thousand to come from the fund balance. She stated that the next couple of pages were the expenditures and these were the different categories that money was spent out of. In total, the TDC has spent \$19,837 and brought in \$72,574.

Ms. Holt asked what pages those numbers where on and what was she stating again. Ms. Daniels stated that they were on the page with the blue on it. She stated that next time they will place page numbers on the document. Then she went back over the amounts TDC has spent so far this fiscal year. Ms. Daniels stated that she was finished with the presentation and asked if there where any questions at this time.

Seeing there was none, Mr. Knowles proceeded with his presentation.

**Uses of Tourist Development Revenues- (Clayton Knowles, County Attorney)**

Mr. Knowles stated that as the council requested, he prepared a memorandum to go over what the County can use the Tourist Development Tax Revenue on. He stated what governed the TDC Budget is Florida Statute 125.0104(5)(a), which list the permitted uses of the Tourist Development Tax Revenues. Mr. Knowles began to read off items from the Florida Statute that were outlined in the memorandum; which stated:

- 1) To acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel, repair, improve, maintain, operate, or promote one or more:
  - a) Publicly owned and operated convention centers, sports stadiums, sports arenas, coliseums, or auditoriums within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied;
  - b) Auditoriums that are publicly owned but are operated by organizations that are exempt from federal taxation pursuant to 26 U.S.C. s. 501(c)(3) and open to the public, within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied; or
  - c) Aquariums or museums that are publicly owned and operated or owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public, within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied.
- 2) To promote zoological parks that are publicly owned and operated or owned and operated by not-for-profit organizations and open to the public;

- 3) To promote and advertise tourism in this state and nationally and internationally; however, if tax revenues are expended for an activity, service, venue, or event, the activity, service, venue, or event must have as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the activity, service, venue, or event to tourists;
- 4) To fund convention bureaus, tourist bureaus, tourist information centers, and news bureaus as county agencies or by contract with the chambers of commerce or similar associations in the county, which may include any indirect administrative costs for services performed by the county on behalf of the promotion agency;
- 5) To finance beach park facilities, or beach, channel, estuary, or lagoon improvement, maintenance, renourishment, restoration, and erosion control, including construction of beach groins and shoreline protection, enhancement, cleanup, or restoration of inland lakes and rivers to which there is public access as those uses relate to the physical preservation of the beach, shoreline, channel, estuary, lagoon, or inland lake or river; or
- 6) To acquire, construct, extend, enlarge, remodel, repair, improve, maintain, operate, or finance public facilities within the boundaries of the county or subcounty special taxing district in which the tax is levied, if the public facilities are needed to increase tourist-related business activities in the county or subcounty special district and are recommended by the county tourist development council created pursuant to paragraph (4)(e). Tax revenues may be used for any related land acquisition, land improvement, design and engineering costs, and all other professional and related costs required to bring the public facilities into service. As used in this subparagraph, the term "public facilities" means major capital improvements that have a life expectancy of 5 or more years, including, but not limited to, transportation, sanitary sewer, solid waste, drainage, potable water, and pedestrian facilities. Tax revenues may be used for these purposes only if the following conditions are satisfied:
  - a) In the county fiscal year immediately preceding the fiscal year in which the tax revenues were initially used for such purposes, at least \$10 million<sup>3</sup> in tourist development tax revenue was received;
  - b) The county governing board approves the use for the proposed public facilities by a vote of at least two-thirds of its membership;
  - c) No more than 70 percent of the cost of the proposed public facilities will be paid for with tourist development tax revenues, and sources of funding for the remaining cost are identified and confirmed by the county governing board;
  - d) At least 40 percent of all tourist development tax revenues collected in the county is spent to promote and advertise tourism as provided by this subsection; and
  - e) An independent professional analysis, performed at the expense of the county tourist development council, demonstrates the positive impact of the infrastructure project on tourist-related businesses in the county.

Mr. Knowles made the following statements while reading off this information. He did not know if they could travel to see how other counties implemented tourist development. There is a Visitor Center on US Highway 98 in Eastpoint that houses information regarding restaurants and other activities for that area. There are shorelines on the lake that use that funding and he asked if there was a park that the county owned on the lake.

Ms. Holt answered that was correct.

Mr. Knowles stated that it was closed due to COVID, but if the council wanted to do some upgrades to it, they could use some of the tax dollars for that. For instance, if they wanted to do park signs or promote that park those dollars could be used. The county does not have to worry about 6(a) because of the financial amount tied to it. If the TDC wanted to make capital improvements they would have to have 6 votes to have a vote that equals two-thirds of the council. For projects regarding capital improvement in 6(c), the proposal would have to go before the Board of County Commissioners then they would have to come up with the remaining 30% of funding. That funding could come from grants or other county avenues. The TDC has to use at least 40% of its budget to promote tourism in the county, so the TDC could not use the whole budget on capital improvements. Mr. Knowles stated they could issue revenue bonds. Staff would work with a bond firm to get the bond issuance, money together, issue the bonds, and make sure all of the work is done regarding the bond. There can not be more than 50% of the budget used to issue those bonds. The State does not want counties to use all of the money for just one thing. Mr. Knowles stated that the TDC does not have to do all of the specifications in the statute, yet these are what the Tourist Tax Revenue can be used on.

Mr. Dubree asked if there was anything in the bylaws that contradicted any of the statute specifications.

Mr. Knowles stated that he did not believe there was anything that contradicted any of the statute specifications. He stated that he could look it up for the TDC and get them that information.

Mr. Dubree stated that at one time the percentages were different than what is stated in the statute, but it may have changed over time to work with the current statutes.

Mr. Knowles proceeded to get the copy of the Gadsden County Code of Ordinances Book to look up that information during the next presentation.

Ms. Holt asked if the TDC could get a definite on the percentages.

Mr. Knowles stated that the percentages come into play with the advertising and the bonds.

Ms. Holt stated that if TDC was looking at how the budget is going to go all of the council members need to have those percentages. Mr. Knowles stated that he can prepare that information before the next TDC meeting so they can have those percentages. Mr. Knowles stated that he was finished with the presentation and asked if there were any questions at this time. Seeing as there was none, Ms. Steele proceeded with her presentation.

**Marketing RFP 19-12/Special Events Press Release- (Leslie D. Steele, Tourist Development Director)**

Ms. Steele stated that before she started her presentation, she had a few announcements. First, during the June 21<sup>st</sup> meeting the TDC will be voting on a new member. There will be a RFP done for Marketing to see if the council wanted to make any changes. The council needs to start thinking about days for the first budget workshop for the Fiscal Year 2021-2022. She asked Ms. Daniels what date would work for the first budget workshop. Ms. Daniels answered that July

19<sup>th</sup> would be a good day to have the workshop. Ms. Holt state that she will call in if she needs to since she will not be able to attend that meeting. That is all granted that they have a quorum present.

Ms. Steele stated that what she has brought before the council is the opening of its 2020-2021 grant application cycle. This is to start getting the county back open. Ms. Steele stated that her recommendation is to open the cycle on June 14<sup>th</sup> through September 1<sup>st</sup>. Her hopes are to have applications in at each meeting to approve since this is starting at the end of the fiscal year. That is the only way that she can see to make this work and make it work for everyone that's involved. Applicants can still get funding even if their advent is after September 1<sup>st</sup> as long as they have the application in before the September 1<sup>st</sup> deadline.

Ms. Holt asked if that includes marketing time. If they get the application in it gives them two maybe three weeks to put together the event.

Ms. Steele said June 14<sup>th</sup> is when the applications open so they can get those applications in to fund the event in September.

Ms. Holt stated that she thought she said September.  
Ms. Steele stated that that's when the application process ends.

Mr. Dubree stated that having such a long-time span does not allow for enough time to market and get tourists here before the end of summer. If the funding application cycle is shorter then there is more time to get people into Gadsden County.

Ms. Steele stated that she will leave that up to the will of the council. She stated this was just recommendations so they can get some events on the calendar.

Mr. Dubree stated that he understands that but it might not help bring in people who are outside of the county to those events. It seemed to him that if you were planning a trip to go somewhere you need more time than what is given to plan a trip.

Mr. Dowdell asked about the timeline if nothing was going to happen after September. Ms. Steele stated that was the end of the funding cycle for the 2020-2021 fiscal year and that a new budget will be voted on at a later date.

Chair Ford stated that she does not have issues with this plan and that she would love to have this done as soon as possible. She stated that folks are waiting on this application cycle so they can get people out of the house.

Ms. Steele stated that she will leave that to the will of the council and that this information will be placed in an announcement that will go out tomorrow.

Ms. Steele stated that the next item was the marketing Request for Qualifications (RFQ) that was requested to return to the council for further discussion. She stated that it is included in the packet each member received. She placed in the names of all of the individual firms that applied for the RFQ as well. The agreement with Paradise was never executed. They won the contract

then quit because they did not want to do business with Gadsden County. Chair Ford asked for them to review the candidates again.

Mr. Knowles asked if she wanted staff to read off the prior candidates. Ms. Steele stated that the following groups applied for the RFQ previously: Medium Four, Kerigan Marketing Associates, The Current Agency, Noise Inc., and Paradise. Mr. Knowles stated that staff had issues with some of the vendors.

Ms. Steele recommended that the council sit down with Mr. Knowles and put out a new RFQ for quotes. She stated if they looked at the contract, there were some breakdowns in what the previous bidder wanted to do and what the council had decided. She stated they could also recommend that Mr. Knowles bring back the contract so they can have a contract ready for the next set of applicants. She stated that she wanted to know what the council would be recommending.

Mr. Dubree asked if applicants were given the TDC budget to use in their quote. Ms. Steele stated that they are being asked for a quote and that they only give them a certain amount of funds for the quote. Mr. Dubree asked if they need a ball park amount. Ms. Steele stated that if you give them the full amounts in the budget, they will ask for that amount even if they can do it at a lower price. Staff puts in the amount that the council is willing to pay and not the full amount of funds. Ms. Steele stated that they can have the RFQ ready by June 21<sup>st</sup> so they can start the application process. Mr. Dubree stated that he is that good to go regarding the RFQ.

Ms. Holt stated that she had a couple of questions. She asked were there any grants regarding tourism that the county could apply for that the county has never applied for. She asked how did the county advertise the grant process because she wants the word to get out and could they possibly do a radio ad. Ms. Steele stated that she can prepare a cumulus radio ad. This would cover a large amount of people because it will be on multiple radio stations. She stated that she could also do a social media ad campaign as well.

Ms. Holt was concerned about how to reach people who do not have internet access.

Ms. Steele stated that she could spend money on paper ads as well in the local papers. She stated that she will include the Tallahassee Democrat because all of the citizens do not just read the Gadsden County papers.

Mr. Dubree asked if the information will be posted on the TDC website and Ms. Steele stated it would.

Ms. Holt stated that nobody looks at the County Facebook page. That if they were placing it on there, they should push it out so more people could see it. Ms. Steele stated she could do a Facebook ad, and when you pay for an ad, it gets hits from a lot of people. Chair Ford asked if that shows up on people's newsfeed.

Ms. Steele answered that was correct. She also stated that the county is friends with the page *What's Going on in the City* and that the county can share on their page as well. Ms. Holt stated

the council needed to be thinking about a plan and having a plan will help this process run smoother. Ms. Steele stated that she found an old TDC plan and will bring it to the next meeting. Ms. Holt stated that the county is not marketing what we really are. She stated that there could be a Patchwork Garden that shows the historic crops of Gadsden County. Chair Ford stated that they wanted to set up a tourism trail at one point. Develop that trail with a marketing firm that could bring the farms and other businesses, like Trulieve, come together to show what makes this county great. She stated that she just wants people to come here and see what is special about this county.

Ms. Holt stated that Trulieve gave the Board of County Commissioners a tour of their facilities. Ms. Steele asked if Trulieve was willing to let the public tour their facilities. Ms. Holt stated that no one has approached them regarding that matter. Ms. Steele stated she will approach them about the marketing and doing tours of the facilities.

Chair Ford stated that we always have a scale of what is the best of the best in the county. She wants businesses who don't mind working with the TDC to do adverts to be a part of tourism. She stated like the pumpkin patch advent at the University of Florida Agricultural center. That would be a great place to start.

Mr. Dubree reviewed the document that he made for the other council members who did not hear his previous statements. It shows the individual income of the Tourist Development Tax Revenue for Gadsden County. It matches the amounts that are on the packet that Ms. Daniels made. He stated that considering events they need to take the economy and months that have lower occupancy into account. During Hurricane Michael, amount of money the county made in just taxes off of the hotels meant that there was over \$6 Million spent in this county. He stated that if you stay in a county, you spend more money in that county.

Ms. Holt stated that with Pat Thomas Police Academy, every dorm is full. Most of them are going to get their stuff from Tallahassee and the county never planned to capture that income. She stated that U.S. 90 is a major highway that has a lot of traffic. They needed to get more restaurants and other businesses that are not in Tallahassee, such as Cheese Cake Factory.

Chair Ford stated that if staff knew that those opportunities were coming they could plan around that. The council and staff need to do things different to increase those assets. Ms. Holt stated they were going to have to eat somewhere, why not Gadsden County.

**4. Next Scheduled Meetings**

Monday, June 21, 2021

Monday, July 19, 2021

Monday, August 16, 2021



Tourist Development Council  
June 7, 2021-Budget Workshop

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE COUNCIL, THE WORKSHOP WAS  
DECLARED ADJOURNED AT 5:19 P.M.**

**GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA**

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**CAROLYN FORD, Chair  
Tourist Development Council**

**ATTEST:**

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**NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk**