

MINUTES  
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
PUTNAM COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
PALATKA, FL  
OCTOBER 7, 2024

**Present:** Chairman L. Harvey, G. Bacon, R. Correa, B. DiCarlo, J. Hodge, M. Myers, D. Jones, and J. Linton staff.

**Absent:** D. Kelly, T. Smith and K. Valentine.

**Others Present:** Cindy Bear, Shelly Bingham, Audrey Wise Davis, Ken Davis, Veronica Glover, Kathy Griffin, Andy Heartz, Erin Hewes, Kay Hope, Jody Lee, Troy Main, Maria McCormick, Scott McCormick, Vito Russo and John Theobald.

**I. Call to Order.** Mayor Correa called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. Chairman L. Harvey was running late due to emergency called BOCC meeting for Hurricane Milton.

**II. Recess.** Mayor Correa recessed the Tourist Development Council meeting at 8:32 am as elected officials had to participate in an Emergency meeting via ZOOM. She apologized to attendees and stated the meeting would be short. Mayor Correa reconvened the meeting of the Tourist Development Council at 9:04 am.

**III. Category B (Cultural Arts) Grant Requests.** D. Jones announced the first two items would come for separate action due to the dates of their events. She also said the applicant for The Crab Pot/Unity Day had requested both applications to be withdrawn.

1. North Florida Folk Network. A request for \$3,000.00 was made for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual NFFN Fall Folk Fest. Cindy Bear spoke about vendors and music at the event.
2. Blue Crab Development. A request was made for the Blue Crab Jam Series (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter). Erin Hewes spoke about using local and out-of-town artists.

Discussion followed.

ACTION: Motion G. Bacon, second J. Hodge to award \$2,000 to North Florida Folk Festival for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual NFFN Fall Folk Festival from Category B, Cultural Arts, FY 2024-2025 budget.

**CARRIED**

ACTION: Motion G. Bacon, second J. Hodge to award \$17,000 to Blue Crab Development for the Blue Crab Jam Series (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter), from Category B, Cultural Arts, FY 2024-2025 budget.

**CARRIED**

#### **IV. Category B (Cultural Arts) Grant Requests.**

1. Blue Crab Development. A request for \$50,000.00 was made for the New Years Eve Celebration (\$25K) and the Blue Crab Jam Series (\$25K) to be held 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter/Spring. Erin Hewes said the event would be family friendly and open to the public.
2. River City Players. A request for \$10,750.00 was made for the 2024 fall and 2025 winter productions. Kay Hope reported these events bring people from out of county.
3. Arts Council of Greater Palatka. A request for \$7,100.00 was made for the October – September 2024/25 Concert Series. D. Jones stated this is to pay for bands.
4. Southside Historical Neighborhood Association. A request for \$10,000.00 was made for the Palatka Porchfest Music Festival. Vito Russo said this was the 6<sup>th</sup> year and last year they had people attending from 45 different zip codes.

Discussion followed.

ACTION: Motion G. Bacon, second J. Hodge to award \$22,000 to Blue Crab Development with the following breakdown: \$11,000 for New Years Celebration and \$11,000 for Blue Crab Jam Series (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter/Spring), \$10,500 to River City Players for 2024 Productions, \$7,000 to the Arts Council of Greater Palatka for the Concert Series and \$9,500 to Southside Historical Neighborhood Association for the Palatka Porchfest Music Festival from Category B, Cultural Arts, FY 2024-2025 budget.

**CARRIED**

#### **V. Category A (Events & Activities) Grant/Sponsorship Requests.**

1. CDCC-Main Street Palatka. A request for \$11,000.00 was made for Datil Fest. Shelly Bingham and Troy Mail spoke about the components of the fest and stated even though it was a one-day festival they would encourage guests to stay overnight.
2. Blue Crab Development. A total of \$75,000.00 was requested for Artist Fest (\$15K), Old Years Day (\$35K) and Blue Crab Boil (\$25K). Erin Hewes gave brief descriptions of the events and mentioned digital advertising for the events.

3. Concerned Citizens of South Putnam. A request for \$5,000.00 was made for the Black History Celebration "Soul Food" Festival. Veronica Glover talked about last year's success and stated that this is a 3-day festival.
4. Revitalize Historic Palatka Inc. A request for \$7,952.00 was made for the 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida Azalea Festival. Jody Lee and Kathy Griffin mentioned partnering with the Chamber and TDC for the Bassmaster Elite. They announced added components to the festival.
5. Rotary Club of Crescent City. A request for \$3,875.00 was submitted for the St. Johns River Catfish Festival. M. Myers reported that last year's event was well attended.
6. Toys Tour. A request for \$10,000.00 was made for the 2024 Toys Tour. Scott and Maria McCormick said this was the 24<sup>th</sup> year and they collected 2,000 toys last year. They announced there would be 500 boaters this year.
7. Heartz Golf. A request for a total of \$45,500.00 was made for the following golf tournaments: \$6,000.00 for North Florida Jr., \$6,000.00 for January US Kids, \$7,500.00 for Jr. Azalea, \$7,500.00 for Sr. Azalea, \$7,500.00 for Azalea, \$5,000.00 for Foundation for Rural Education and \$6,000.00 for April US Kids. Andy Heartz spoke about each tournament and the room nights for each event. He reported that Azalea Tournament alone utilized 800 room nights.
8. St. Johns River State College. A request for a total of \$20,000.00 was made for the following baseball tournaments: \$10,000.00 for the Capital City Bank Classic and \$10,000.00 for the John Tindall Classic. John Theobald talked about the significant hotel stays generated by these baseball tournaments and the live streaming of every game and broadcast of the TDC video several times during each game.
9. Florida B.A.S.S. Nation. A request for \$8,000.00 was made for the Junior/High School Fall & North Regional Qualifiers. D. Jones announced that they would attract 300 anglers with families and bring a substantial economic impact to our community.
10. Major League Fishing. A request of \$2,500.00 was made for the MLF BFL Gator #5 Bass Tournament scheduled for September 2025.

ACTION: Motion M. Myers, second G. Bacon to pull the Major League Fishing MLF BFL Gator #5 Bass Fishing Tournament application from this meeting and put on the agenda for the next meeting for this grant cycle.

**CARRIED**

Discussion followed on the remaining items.

ACTION: Motion M. Myers, second G. Bacon to award \$5,000.00 to CDCC-Main Street Palatka for the Datil Fest, \$2,840.00 to Blue Crab Development to use at their discretion for the Artist Fest, Old Year's Day and Blue Crab Boil, \$4,000.00 to Concerned Citizens of South Putnam for the Black History Celebration "Soul Food" Festival, \$5,000.00 to Revitalize Historic Palatka for the 76<sup>th</sup> Annual Azalea Festival, \$3,875.00 to Rotary Club of Crescent City for the Rotary Club of Crescent City Catfish Festival, \$5,000.00 to Toys Tour for the 2024 Toys Tour, \$21,000.00 to Hertz Golf with the following breakdown: \$3,000.00 for North Florida Jr, \$3,000.00 for January US Kids, \$3,000.00 for Jr. Azalea, \$3,000.00 for Sr. Azalea, \$3,000.00 for Azalea, \$3,000.00 for Foundation for Rural Education and \$3,000.00 for April US Kids, \$10,000.00 to SJRSC with the following breakdown: \$5,000.00 for the Capital City Bank Classic and \$5,000.00 for the John Tindall Classic and \$4,000.00 to Florida B.A.S.S. Nation for the Junior/High School Fall & North Regional Qualifiers from Category A, Activities & Events, FY 2024-25 budget.

**CARRIED**

## **VI. Action Items.**

- A. Minutes.** The minutes of the March 14, 2024 meeting were presented for approval.

ACTION: Motion R. Correa, second J. Hodge to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2024 meeting as presented.

**CARRIED**

- B. Budget.** The budget for FY 2024-2025 was presented for approval.

ACTION: Motion J. Hodge, second M. Myers to approve the FY 2024-2025 Budget as presented.

**CARRIED**

- C. Large Event Opportunities.** D. Jones said BASS had accepted our proposal to host a Bassmaster Elite Series event in 2025. She stated that they are interested in bringing the event back to Palatka February 20-23, 2025. Jones said we would need up to \$75,000 for the host fee and up to \$40,000 for deliverables. Discussion followed.

ACTION: Motion G. Bacon, second B. DiCarlo to approve expenses for Bassmaster Elite of up to \$75,000 for host fee and up to \$40,000 for deliverables from Category C, Promotions & Advertising/ Large Projects, 2024-25 budget.

**CARRIED**

D. Electronic Sign Replacement. D. Jones presented a proposal in the amount of \$44,434.94 from B&S Signs to replace our electronic sign due to increasing expensive repairs with the sign due to age and interference from other sources. Discussion followed.

ACTION: Motion R. Correa, second J. Hodge to accept the proposal from B& S Signs to replace the existing electronic sign from Category C, Promotions & Advertising, 2024-25 budget.

**CARRIED**

E. Approval of Resignation. J. Hodge presented his resignation for approval. D. Jones said he had been on the TDC council since its inception and thanked him for his service.

ACTION: Motion G. Bacon, second B. DiCarlo, with regrets to approve the TDC Council resignation from John Hodge as presented.

**CARRIED.**

F. Approval of Appointments. Chair L. Harvey stated two seats were up for reappointment and with the resignation of J. Hodge we had a third. He said Aashton Hodge, Palatka Coffee Co. had expressed interest in serving.

ACTION: Motion M. Myers, second J. Hodge to recommend the appointment of Aashton Hodge and the reappointment of T.J. Smith and Keith Valentine to the Tourist Development Council.

**CARRIED.**

D. Jones gave an update on bed tax revenues and said we would probably end FY23/24 with over \$800,000 in collections. She then mentioned the current digital and OTT campaigns stating the video completion rates were extremely high. She said the targeted area was Little Rock and Columbus. Jones mentioned the upcoming purchase of Placer AI software that M. Myers discussed earlier in the meeting. This program will capture visitor counts and analytics.

**VII. Adjournment.** Chairman Harvey adjourned the meeting at 10:46 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Linton  
Putnam County Tourist Development Council