

**Outreach Committee Meeting
City of Bonita Springs Official
Meeting Agenda
Bonita Grande Fire Station
27701 Bonita Grande Drive
Bonita Springs, FL 34135
Tuesday, February 23, 2021
6:00 pm**

I. Call to order - Altony Lee

Meeting called to order by Chairman Lee at 6:05 p.m.

Present

Michael Robinson
Lester James
Mel Briceno
Andres Paz
Tony Lee
Juan Romero

Staff

Jesse Purdon, Council
Lora Taylor, Communications Director

Guests

Peter Simmons
Brian Ososky, Lee County Visitor & Convention
Bureau
John D. Meyer, DBA
President, Hodges University

II. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Andres Paz led the Pledge of Allegiance

III. Public Comment

No public comment.

IV. Review and approve minutes from November 23, 2020 and January 26th meeting

Mr. Briceno made a motion to approve the November 23, 2020 meeting minutes, Mr. Paz seconded; motion approved unanimously.

Mr. Robinson made a motion to approve the January 26, 2021 meeting minutes, Committee member seconded; motion approved unanimously.

V. New Business

- Tourism Marketing program – Tamara Pigott presents overview of Visitors Convention Bureau

Mr. Brian Ososki, VCB Marketing Director, presented for the Visitors Convention Bureau. Ms. Pigott was not able to attend the meeting.

Mr. Ososki explained how the VCB office is structured and gave an overview of their destination marketing programs

- The Visitor Convention Bureau is the lead marketing agency for Lee County
- They are funded by the Bed Tax
- Their brand is the Beaches of Fort Myers and Sanibel
- Structure – board department, answer to the County Commissioners
- Ms. Pigott answers to Assistant County Manager
- The Visitors Convention Bureau is organized into five major departments including:
 - Marketing Department – has the largest budget which they use to reinvest those tax collections to bring people to Lee County
 - Overall budget is approximately \$20 million dollars
 - About \$13 million goes to marketing
 - Sales Team
 - Works with travel/trade
 - Meeting planners
 - Wedding planners
 - PR works on earned media, travel writers and journalists
 - Conduct familiarization tours
 - Visitors Services Team
 - They work out at RSW
 - Have four people on staff and over 130 volunteers that work the five visitor kiosks open during the busiest times at the airport.

Mr. Ososki spoke about the value of tourism in Lee County:

- Under 3.4 million visitors spending 2.6 billion dollars
- Jobs
 - One out of five residents are employed by the tourism industry.

Mr. Ososki reviewed where the visitors come from and said they have had increased revenues for the past 10 years straight until they hit 2020. In 2020 they were down 10 percent due to the pandemic. Mr. Ososki explained how the COVID pandemic effected travel.

Mr. Ososki will provide the presentation if the Committee would like to review the numbers.

Tax revenue:

2017 \$ 39.8 million

2018 \$ 42.1 million

2019 \$ 42.7 million

2020 fell off 10.5 percent currently pacing down 7 percent

Mr. Ososki explained that out of \$39 - \$40 billion, the Visitors Convention Bureau gets \$53.6 million:

- Beaches are the biggest asset

- They have a beach and shoreline funding program where municipalities can apply for funding for beach nourishment and maintenance to reinvest into the asset.
 - Dredging
 - Dune crossover
 - Restroom facilities
 - Parking facilities
 - Trams

This program is monitored by the County attorney's office to make sure they are following the appropriate statutes. This program averages \$9 to \$10 million annually.

Mr. Ososki explained the bed tax which includes hotels, Air B&Bs, vacation rental incomes.

Mr. Ososki explained the marketing efforts:

- Destination marketing
- Radio
- Podcasts

Mr. Ososki spoke about their message for the pandemic

- Wait – stay home
- Ready
- Set - stepped up the game
- Go when everyone is free to travel
 - Book now for travel later.
 - How to travel safely
 - How they are committed to safety
 - Approach that connects with people emotionally

They have relationships with Meredith Corporation and advertise in Southern Living and Travel & Leisure. Mr. Ososki explained that their marketing efforts include:

- Print, digital, social across the board

Mr. Ososki shared their consumer website. The new consumer website should be rolling out this fall and they will also be rolling out a new visitor guide in the fall. Their focus will be on islands, beaches, and neighborhoods.

Other projects:

- Sun saver passport, mobile destination experience engine allows visitors and residents to sign up and click a link on their phones and have access to 60 deals, they are going to bump it up to 200.
- Threshold 360 virtual tours, 500 locations no cost to partners. Will be housed on their consumer website.
- Destination podcast called Shellcast. Recent episode was of the Everglades Wonder Gardens
- Guest First – customer service training program focused on fulfilling visitor expectations. They have just under 2000 graduates. Graduates are

allowed to have the letters CGSP (Certified Guest Services Professional). Hotels have supported this program.

How you can help, follow, engage, use the hashtag, keep meetings local.

Mr. Ososki shared the dog beach video they released.

Mr. Ososki will make sure the Committee has a copy of the presentation.

Mr. Lee thanked Mr. Ososki. Mr. Lee stated they have had conversations with the Visitors Bureau trying to figure out how to include Bonita Beach Road into the marketing. Mr. Lee spoke about attracting people from the Miami area.

Mr. Paz asked how much of the tax comes from Bonita Springs. Mr. Ososki said it's broken down by Sanibel, Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach and Lee County unincorporated. Mr. Ososki thinks that we are included in unincorporated Lee County

Mr. James said they want people to know about Bonita Springs like they know about Fort Myers Beach and Sanibel; they want to make sure they are heard.

Mr. Romero would like to see Bonita Springs featured more. Mr. Romero spoke about the Sister City agreement with Isla Mujeres. Mr. Romero said they spoke about establishing a flight between Fort Myers and Cancun to get more people from Mexico and the Caribbean to come and visit. It is a good opportunity to increase international tourists.

Mayor Simmons asked how much the Visitors Bureau is involved with the airlines to determine traffic patterns. Mr. Ososki replied their Deputy Director, Pamela Johnson, works a lot with the port authority on development. There is not a lot of business travel, so they are trying to ramp up leisure travel. The flight still needs to be successful, otherwise you lose it. There are a lot of steps to getting a new flight. They are working with Alaskan air and Louisville and Raleigh. They are always looking for new markets.

Mr. Lee stated this is just the beginning of their relationship with the Visitors Bureau. The Committee is going to get a copy of the presentation and have conversations on what it is they are asking for what they hope to achieve. Mr. Lee thanked Mr. Ososki.

- Dr. John D. Meyer, President Hodges University – Program Overview

Mr. Lee introduced Dr. Meyer, President, Hodges University.

Dr. Meyer provided an overview of who Hodges University is, what they offer and where they are going.

Overview of University Programs and provide the committee with selective demographic data points.

Programs:

- 31 different degree programs
- 15 certificate programs
- ESL programs
- 3 graduate certificates
- Everyone of their programs leads to workforce program.
- They have a number that lead to professional licenses.
- Clinical mental health counseling programs.
- CPA track
- Registered nursing program
- Physical therapist assistant program
- Paramedic program
- Substance abuse and awareness treatment
- Bookkeeping and tax preparation
- EMT 7-week non-credit program on weekends

Coming up:

- New building dedicated to health sciences
- Dental hygiene program.
 - 20-station dental clinic that will be open to the public, very low cost. Dr. Meyer estimates they are about a year to 18 months away from opening this program.

Dr. Meyer reported that the shift to online has accelerated dramatically due to COVID. They probably have fewer than 100 students. Everything is at the Fort Myers campus or virtual:

Commodity degree programs:

- Business administration
- Criminal justice
- MBAs

Non commodity driven programs:

- Certificate on e-discovery and e-litigation (aimed at paralegals)
- Certificate in e-business
- Professional communication, how to write a decent email, how to do a presentation
- Modern marketing and branding traditional education in marketing and digital design
- Graduate certificate in cyber
- Graduate certificate in diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Jurist Master's degree – law degree for non-lawyers.

Hodges Connect – professional education and training:

- Amazon web services
- Professionalism in the workforce

- Online grammar program
- Coming soon – Dental Assistant non-credit program

Dr. Meyer reported that they are in the process of affiliating with Goodwill Industries of South West Florida. They serve the same market as Hodges University. The CEO of Goodwill Industries Southwest Florida, John Nadeau, is building community resource centers into the stores. Hodges University will have learning facilities in these CRCs (Community Resource Centers) with Hodges furniture and computers. The idea is to put Hodges in the community. They will have startup/ribbon cutting in Lehigh Acres towards the end of March. Lehigh Acres has a large Hispanic population and it's right down the street. If an individual qualifies for PEL funding the ESL program will cost zero dollars to the attendee.

Demographics on the Hodges University student

- Median undergraduate family income - \$30,100 (second lowest ICUF in the state)
- PEL grants are awarded to people with financial needs, 86% of their students receive PEL also 2nd in ICUF
- 4 out of 5 of their students are 24 years of age or older is 82%
- 45.4 % is Hispanic
- 65% are female
- 60% go full time
- 13 % are veterans

University's focus:

- Workforce development and human capital development

Dr. Meyer thinks a high degree of people come in with a degree from another country but may not have command of the language so they are working below their ability and if they are working below their ability, how can they effect the economic outlook from that community. That's the human capital.

Dr. Meyer discussed the future of higher education stating they should look at the degrees the employers want.

Mr. Paz asked regarding matching programs with employers, how does that work?

Dr. Meyer, replied, using law enforcement as an example. Most officers major in criminal justice, but most of what they study is an expansion of what is covered at the academy. Some universities give credit. But if you talk to law enforcement officers, they would like psychology skills to help people with mental health issues and sociology skills to help with those issues. Dr. Meyer thinks it should be a degree that has the skill set that the employer is looking for.

Mr. Paz praised Hodges University for their marketing campaigns to minorities. Hodges has been the only higher education institution that has targeted

Hispanics.

Dr. Meyer showed the Hodges University Commercial.

- **Mr. Romero - COMMUNITY CONCERN**

Mr. Romero brought up concerns he has received from parents of students who attend Bonita Middle and Elementary schools regarding safety on the streets. Mr. Romero spoke about a student who was hit by a car in February and they are trying to save his legs. Mr. Romero would like to see how they could provide more safety on the streets for students who walk or ride their bikes to school.

Mr. Lee thanked Mr. Romero from bring this concern up and feels this is something that needs to be addressed in the high-density areas of the City.

The Committee discussed their concerns for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Mr. Paz discussed other ways to educate other than police. Mr. Paz spoke about a program in Colombia where the Mayor thought out of the box and hired mimes to direct traffic safely. Mr. Paz thinks maybe there is another way to educate people.
- Mr. Lee suggested requesting law enforcement to be more visible in high traffic areas.
- Look at walkability for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Mr. Lee stated prayers go out to the family of the child who was hit.

Councilman Purdon spoke saying he spoke to the Sheriff's office and went to the scene after it happened. It was a very sad scenario. Councilman Purdon explained how the City allocates dollars for roadways stating they e do this for pedestrian safety and schools. Councilman Purdon spoke about plans for pedestrian safety in the City.

Mr. Lee appreciates what the City is doing, but believes it must be a larger conversation, which includes all entities, City, County and State. Councilman Purdon suggested making an ask of the MPO.

Ms. Taylor said the City has had a Complete Streets program in mind and this has been one of the City's priorities. The City was in the national spotlight for Smart Growth America and there are countless projects planned. Ms. Taylor will provide information to the Committee and give the Committee more background.

Mr. Briceno said they need to focus on what is happening right now. By 9 a.m. it is packed and all you see is out-of-state plates and our kids are going to school and friends going to work on bikes. Mr. Briceno asked Mr. Purdon if he could speak to the Sheriff's department about traffic while children are going to school and people trying to get to work.

Councilman Purdon asked when that would be. Mr. Romero said between 8:30

to 9:30 and then when school lets out about 4 to 4:45 p.m. on Bonita Drive at the bus stop.

VI. Unfinished Business

Mr. Lee asked Ms. Taylor to give a report on unfinished business.

- **Fiesta Bonita**

Ms. Taylor checked to see if they could send out an RFP for two years instead of annually and they can do that, but it would be contingent upon the annual budget. Once the RFP dates are approved it will go to the legal team and finance for review. They are looking to post the RFP March 1 with a return date of March 24. The final vendor selection would go before Council on April 7 and notice to proceed on April 9. That would be for two years, if Council decides to fund Fiesta Bonita in the budget.

- **MLK Day Trash Pick Up**

Ms. Taylor has spoken with City Management and County staff. The County has just entered a contract with different haulers, which would mean they would have to renegotiate the contract. That request would have to come from Council. Ms. Taylor would like to collect hard numbers and see exactly when the contract date is up and if there is any cost associated with it. Ms. Taylor will come back to the next meeting with the numbers and the Committee can decide if they want to pursue with Council and see if they would support it. Mr. Lee thinks it's worth exploring for the City of Bonita.

- **Monthly Award Program**

Ms. Taylor reported Mr. Lee sent her an email with ideas for a monthly award program. Ms. Taylor asked if this would be for children or children and adults. Mr. Lee replied it would be a citizen award. It could be a child, a member of law enforcement or a first responder as an example. Mr. Lee stated there needs to be a formalized nomination process.

Ms. Taylor asked if the Committee would like a certificate for the candidate under consideration. The Committee responded yes; Ms. Taylor noted they will prepare the certificate offline.

- **Other Business**

Mr. Briceno asked Committee members to respond to Ms. Taylor or Ms. Vallante when they send emails. Mr. Briceno said they have a great group and encouraged the Committee to continue doing all the great work. Mr. Briceno thanked the Committee, former Mayor Simmons, and Ms. Taylor for all their hard work.

VII. Next meeting date

The committee selected the third Tuesday, and **Tuesday, March 16, 2021** for the next meeting date.

VIII. Adjourn

Mr. Lee asked for a motion to adjourn, Mr. Paz so moved, motion passed unanimously, meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

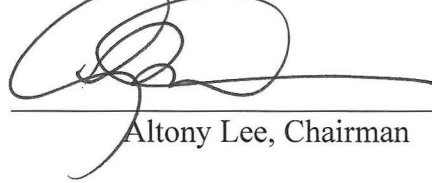
Nadine Chiaramonte

Nadine Chiaramonte,
Office Assistant

APPROVED OUTREACH COMMITTEE:

Date: 03/30/2021

AUTHENTICATED:



Altony Lee, Chairman

NOTE: Two or more members of the Bonita Springs City Council may be present and speaking at the meeting.

ANY PERSON REQUIRING SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS AT ANY OF THE MEETINGS BECAUSE OF A DISABILITY OR PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT SHOULD CONTACT MEG WEISS, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES, AT 239-949-6262, AT LEAST 48 HOURS PRIOR TO THE MEETING. IF A PERSON DECIDES TO APPEAL A DECISION MADE BY THE COUNCIL IN ANY MATTER CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING/HEARING, SUCH PERSON MAY NEED TO ENSURE THAT A VERBATIM RECORD OF THE PROCEEDING IS TO BE MADE, TO INCLUDE THE TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE UPON WHICH ANY SUCH APPEAL IS TO BE BASED.

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