

DUVAL COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Thursday, February 23, 2023, 10:00 a.m.

City Hall - Lynwood Roberts Room

TDC Members: City Council President Terrance Freeman (Chair), City Council Vice President Ron Salem (Vice Chair), Jitan Kuverji, Angela Phillips, Dennis Chan, Dennis Thompson, Joe Hindsley, and Mark VanLoh

TDC Staff: Carol Brock (Executive Director), Brett Nolan (Administrator), Phillip Peterson (Auditor), and Reece Wilson (Office of General Counsel)

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Freeman

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Freeman at 10:00 a.m. and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. The Chair announced that Council Member Bowman was unable to attend the meeting due to a work conflict. Chair Freeman welcomed the new TDC Member, Jitan Kuverji. Mr. Kuverji became a TDC Member following the January 24, 2023 City Council meeting, replacing TDC Member, Jeff Truhlar. Mr. Kuverji is a local hotel developer and owner who has lived in Jacksonville for 16 years. He is the owner and operator of the Comfort Inn Orange Park and Comfort Inn and Suites Baymeadows. His family has grown up in Jacksonville and he is eager to serve on this board.

II. Public Comments Including Action Items

Chair Freeman

Greg McGarity with Gator Bowl Sports, Inc. updated the board on the 78th annual TaxSlayer Gator Bowl, which was held on Friday, December 30, 2022. The game featured the Norte Dame Fighting Irish and South Carolina Gamecocks. The attendance was 67,383 people, making this bowl the 5th overall well-attended college game out of the 43 college bowl games in the season. The television rating was 5.76 million in total viewership, which was up +66% year-over-year. It was the 7th overall in viewership and the most-watched Gator Bowl since 2015 season. Using the Nielsen evaluation for the Jacksonville area, the television value was \$34,248; the online value was \$1,565,947; the social value was \$1,200; and the total value was \$1,601,398. More than 75% of ticket purchases came from outside 150 miles of Jacksonville.

III. Approval of Minutes

Chair Freeman

The minutes of the December 8, 2022 TDC meeting were **approved unanimously as distributed**.

IV. TDC Grant Requests

Chair Freeman / Carol Brock

Carol Brock explained the grant requests, highlighting the total tourists, fiscal, and economic impacts should the four grant applications get approved as requested.

A. 2023 FHSAA State Track & Field Championships

Nick Morrow

Ms. Brock introduced Nick Morrow, Director of Athletics at the University of North Florida. Ms. Brock gave a summary of the event, detailing that the University was requesting a multi-year special event grant for the 2023, 2024, and 2025 FHSAA State Track and Field Championships. The grant application received a score of 40 out of 60 points.

Mr. Morrow introduced himself for the record along with Ervin Lewis, Deputy Director of Athletics at UNF, and Ed Thompson, a FHSAA representative. Mr. Morrow updated the board on UNF's current track and field season. He explained that UNF is scheduled to host 11 events that will span 28 days during the months of March through June, making it the University's busiest track and field season. With the support over the years by the TDC, Mr. Morrow explained that UNF is now poised to host even more events as the track and field destination for the east coast.

UNF took on the financial risk for 9 of the 11 events planned for this season. With the TDC already committed to fund the NCAA event, UNF still needs additional funding for the FHSAA State Track and Field Championships. Committed to first year, UNF still needs additional funds to commit to the next two years. FSHAA has long history with UNF and Jacksonville. One thing that has been consistent is the great work that

is done by UNF to host track and field events. These events get more expensive each year with higher costs associated with events. FSHAA would like a longer partnership with UNF.

Dennis Chan asked what the match or other funding mechanisms is for raising dollars to ensure the event will grow every year. Mr. Morrow answered that it costs \$90,000 to host the four-day event. There is a split with ticket sales between UNF and FSHAA to help cover costs. UNF also does marketing work to grow revenue.

Dennis Thompson commented that he is on the fence about this request due to the recent big investments the TDC has granted UNF, though he still remains in support of this investment as it has a good return for the City.

Joe Hindsley explained that these are the types of events the TDC should be involved in and is very optimistic for UNF's track and field program. Mr. Hindsley referenced the estimated room nights, which are derived from the Visit Jacksonville Event Impact Summary, as it appears to indicate Visit Jacksonville is involved in verifying the occupancy performance. With that, Mr. Hindsley would like Visit Jacksonville and the TDC to look at additional tools and resources that are available that can produce performance data that supports the return on investment for TDC grants. He would like Visit Jacksonville to share more information on the data collection of these grant investments.

Mark VanLoh shared that he supports the event but does not like the multi-year contract and would like to see UNF become more self-sufficient.

Angela Phillips supports the grant request and as hotels like hers gets a lot of business from these types of events. Ms. Phillips agreed with Mr. VanLoh's comments, suggesting looking for sponsors instead of TDC Grants in the future.

Council Vice President Salem asked Ms. Brock if the TDC commonly funds multi-year agreements to which Ms. Brock answered in the affirmative. Mr. Salem asked Mr. Morrow how much money has been lost over the years. Mr. Morrow shared that hosting Track and Field events can be expensive, with the athletics department losing up to \$40,000 for certain events. Mr. Salem explained that he is very supportive of the investments into UNF's Track and Field events but would like to see weaning of TDC funding.

Mr. Kuverji understands the multi-year contract but would also like to see weaning of TDC funds.

Council President Freeman shared his excitement on sports tourism for the region and looks forward to seeing UNF's track and field program grow.

Motion (Salem / 2nd Thompson): Approve UNF to receive a 2023-2025 Multiyear Special Event Grant for \$50,000 from FY22-23 Event Grants account plus \$50,000 for 2024 and \$50,000 for 2025 from future FY Event Grants account for FHSAA Track & Field State Championship event. – **approved unanimously**

B. 2023 SandLot Jax Fitness Festival

Jason McCarthy

Carol Brock introduced Jason McCarthy with Sandlot Jax Foundation, Inc. and Ms. Brock gave a summary of the event. She explained that Mr. McCarthy is requesting a marketing grant for \$15,000 and a special event grant for \$70,000. Ms. Brock scored the marketing grant a 44 out of 60 and the special event grant a 43 out of 60. Mr. McCarthy gave a recap on last year's event, detailing that the social media reach garnered about 50 million interactions. He explained there will be a greater emphasis on kid involvement, an expansion on live music performances, additional speakers' series featuring world-class fitness experts, and scavenger hunts which will utilize much of downtown for those with a passion for fitness-related events at the 2023 SandLot Jax Fitness Festival.

Ms. Phillips asked Mr. McCarthy about estimated room nights the 4,669 which is based on Visit Jacksonville Event Impact Summary. Michael Corrigan with Visit Jacksonville said that data comes from applicant which then gets entered into a formula to populate room nights and economic impact. Ms. Phillips asked Joe Hindsley if his downtown property got any engagement during last year's event. Mr. Hindsley did not recall but did share

his support for the downtown activation to see this group grow. Ms. Phillips shared those sentiments and Mr. McCarthy pointed out that the number of participants registering for this year's festival has already exceeded the number of registrations from last year.

Mr. VanLoh expressed his excitement and likes that SandLot Jax is working to be more self-sufficient with the reduced funding request from the prior year.

Dennis Thompson also expressed excitement and said he supports this event. However, Mr. Thompson would like to see stronger data collection to determine how well events like this perform. In response, Ms. Brock clarified the structure for applicants applying for grants and verified that Mr. McCarthy did meet necessary data requirements in order to have been reimbursed for the previous year's festival.

Council President Freeman asked how many registered for the event and Mr. McCarthy answered that 3,000 people have already signed up.

Motion (Salem / 2nd Hindsley): Approve Sandlot Jax Foundation, Inc. to receive a Marketing Grant for \$15,000 from FY 22-23 Event Grants account and a Special Event Grant for \$70,000 from FY 22-23 Event Grants account for 2023 Sandlot Jax Fitness Festival. – **approved unanimously**

C. 2023 Springing the Blues

Kenedy Grayson

Carol Brock introduced Kenedy Grayson with Airstream Ventures, LLC and Ms. Brock gave a summary of the event. Ms. Brock explained that Airstream Ventures applied for a special event grant at \$45,000, scoring the request a 44 out of 60. Ms. Grayson explained that this event is the largest blues festival in the southeast but COVID had to cancel the event in 2020 and 2021. Following the pandemic, the numbers were very high and Airstream is hopeful that they won't have to come back to TDC to ask for money in the future. Ms. Grayson explained that social media ads were critical in helping drive people into Duval County and most of this money will help bring additional tourists into the city outside of the 150-mile radius.

Motion (Salem/ 2nd Thompson): Approve Airstream Ventures, LLC to receive 2023 Special Event Grant for \$45,000 from the Tourist Development Special Revenue Fund account for the 2023 Springing the Blues event. – **approved unanimously**

D. 2023 WasabiCon

Tom Croon

Carol Brock introduced Tom Croon with Green Mustard Entertainment and Ms. Brock gave a summary of the event. Green Mustard Entertainment requested a multi-year marketing grant, reducing the funding by \$2,000 each year for three years. For the WasabiCon event in 2023, the TDC funding request was \$12,000. Ms. Brock scored the application 44 out of 60. Mr. Croon gave a background of his company and how he has grown this WasabiCon event over the years, making it not only the largest anime convention in North Florida, but also the largest pop culture event in Northeast Florida and the longest running in Duval. Mr. Croon explained that they already have the Prime Osborn Convention Center, an under-utilized venue, reserved for the duration of the multi-year funding.

Mr. VanLoh said he supports the event. Mr. Kuverji agreed that the event looked very promising and asked about the set date and if it those dates competed with any other anime conventions in the state. Mr. Croon said they have the dates reserved for the 41st weekend of the year and no other anime conventions are scheduled during that time.

Motion (VanLoh/ 2nd Salem): Approve Green Mustard, Inc. to receive 2023-2025 Multiyear Marketing Grant for \$12,000 from FY22-23 Event Grants account plus \$10,000 for 2024 and \$8,000 for 2025 from future FY Event Grants account for the 2023, 2024, and 2025 WasabiCon events. – **approved unanimously**

Assistant Council Auditor Phillip Peterson gave the financial report. TDC tax revenues for the 12 months ending January 2023 were \$ 10,324,558.71, a 18.06% increase over the 12 months ending January 2022. Revenue for January 2023 was \$3,220,424.77, up 8.46% from the same month in 2022. Actual collections for the fiscal year to date exceed the average monthly budgeted amount by \$247,304.77.

Mr. Peterson reviewed the budgetary balances as of December remaining in the TDC's contractual and operating accounts, they are: Destination Services - \$4; Marketing - \$0; Convention/Group Sales - \$0; Convention Grants, Sponsorships, and Promotions - \$434,607.59; Planning and Research - \$100,000; Event Grants - \$500,000; Development Account - \$1,871,075.63; Contingency Account - \$2,006,060; Equestrian Center Promotion - \$23,691.05; Remaining to be Spent in Accordance with the TDC Plan – TDC Operations - \$2,253,376; TDC Administration - \$209,250.53; and the Special Revenue Fund - \$176,267.50.

VI. Visit Jacksonville Update

Michael Corrigan

Michael Corrigan with Visit Jacksonville provided a quarterly update to the TDC. He explained that new vendors were selected for 4 RFP Marketing Services: Creative, Media Buys and Placement, Meetings & Groups, and Public Relations. Local firm, Wingard won the bid for Creative and Madden Media won the other 3 contracts. The special meeting scheduled in March will be for the TDC to approve the creative concept crafted by Wingard. Mr. Corrigan explained that the goal is to come up with a couple of options for the TDC to make the final selection.

Mr. Corrigan also shared with the TDC that Visit Jacksonville became Florida's first destination management organization to earn the Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) designation. This designation, granted by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), recognizes organizations that have undergone staff training to better understand and meet the needs of autistic visitors and their families. A second initiative that Visit Jacksonville is pursuing is to have their entire staff be CPR and AED trained at each of the visitors centers.

Additionally, Mr. Corrigan detailed that Visit Jacksonville has formed a diversity, equity and inclusion committee which will begin meeting in the coming weeks to better welcome the varied visitors that come to Jacksonville. They also begun driving the Seymour Jax Mobile Visitor Center to events outside of Jacksonville.

Visit Jax received an audit for FY21-22, which covered Visit Jax previous 5-year contract. Out of 40 million dollars, Visit Jacksonville had only a minimal financial discrepancy of \$5,000. The audit does show that Visit Jacksonville owes the city \$824,000 that they will be writing a check for the City. This amount includes \$367,000 of PPP Loan forgiveness. This was money that was advanced to help cash flow for Visit Jacksonville. Mr. Corrigan mentioned that he believes it's time for a visitors survey. They received a proposal for \$100,000 for this project and believe it would be a good investment for the TDC.

Mr. Corrigan detailed a couple action items the TDC needs to take regarding regards to a FY22-23 Revised Annual Meetings Marketing and Media Plan and also a FY22-23 Revised Annual Leisure Marketing and Media Plan. When Visit Jacksonville was working out their contracts, much of the data was based on predictions. Now that plans are in place, Visit Jacksonville needed to revise these plans to match the funding initiatives under these contracts.

Motion (Salem / 2nd Phillips): Approve the 22-23 Revised Annual Meetings Marketing & Media Plan. – **approved unanimously**

Motion (Salem / 2nd Phillips): Approve the 22-23 Revised Annual Leisure Marketing & Media Plan. – **approved unanimously**

Mr. Corrigan then explained that per Visit Jacksonville's contracts with the City of Jacksonville, they may budgetarily exceed line items on an expense by up to 10% or \$100,000; however, any shifts in amounts needed larger than this must be brought before TDC for approval. This fiscal year, Visit Jacksonville secured a new Marketing Agency and has established Marketing Plans for quarters 2 through 4 with this agency that require budgetary shifts in

spending to align strategically with the direction for placement of ads. The budget in total will not change from the previously approved budget by the Tourist Development Council.

Motion (Salem / 2nd VanLoh): Approve the Visit Jacksonville Budgetary Reallocation Request. – **approved unanimously**

Mr. Corrigan then explained the PPP loan that is due to the City. Visit Jacksonville applied, received, and had the loan forgiven in the amount of \$367,000. Mr. Corrigan would like the TDC to allow Visit Jacksonville to keep these funds to assist with cashflow as FY22-23 ends and FY23-24 begins.

Phillip Peterson with the Council Auditors Office stated that the PPP loan was used as a budget balancing mechanism for Visit Jax. However, the TDC does not have the authority to allow Visit Jacksonville to forgive the loan. Visit Jacksonville agrees that they must write a check back to the City to cover the money owed. Mr. Corrigan, Mr. Peterson, Mr. Wilson, and Ms. Brock will meet to discuss options which will be discussed at the next TDC meeting.

VII. Strategic Plan RFP Update

Angela Phillips

Council President Freeman explained that Ms. Phillips would chair a subcommittee for the Strategic Plan. Ms. Phillips then provided the board historical data on the process for the TDC developing a Strategic Plan. She explained In January 2020, the TDC was set to choose a consultant to do a strategic plan however, the pandemic caused this effort to stall. In 2022 this effort was resurrected; the proposal was dusted off; and RFPs were sent out again. Unfortunately, this time the TDC only received one RFP. Ms. Phillips continued that TDC staff met with the Procurement Department and decided the TDC should send these out again because the timing was likely a challenge given that they were due during the holidays, and the subcommittee will look at the scope of the RFP to see if it needed to be tweaked to allow for more responses. While the actual RFP is about 55 pages long, most of which are the COJ policies and procedures which we cannot change, Ms. Phillips noted that the TDC does have some control over the scope of the study.

When these plans were resurrected, the plan was originally budgeted \$100,000. Ms. Phillips explained that this may be too low and would like the board to agree to up to an additional \$50,000 if needed. Furthermore, looking back at the RFPs received in 2019 the amounts ranged from \$85,000 to \$195,000

Motion (Salem / 2nd Hindsley): Move \$50,000 from Events Grant Budget Balance to the Planning and Research Budget Balance to cover the cost of the strategic plan up to \$150,000. – **approved unanimously**

Council President asked if any other members of the TDC would like to sit on this subcommittee and Mr. Kuverji and Mr. Thompson volunteered.

VIII. Closing Comments and Adjournment

Chair Freeman

Mr. Thompson discussed the cell phone data with Visit Jacksonville. He would like to make his decisions on how to allocate TDC grant funding by utilizing stronger post-event analysis and cell phone data. Council Vice President Salem asked if it isn't cell phone data used, then what other data can be collected. Ms. Brock explained that we use ticket sales, hotel nights, surveys, to name a few. Visit Jacksonville agreed to discuss how they collect their data at the next special meeting on March 16, 2023.

In closing, Chairman Freeman reminded the members that there will be a special meeting of the TDC to be held on Thursday, March 16, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. in the Lynwood Roberts room at City Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Brett Nolan, TDC Administrator.

These minutes were approved at the TDC Special Board meeting on March 16, 2023.