

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
GRANT APPLICATIONS

Council President Scott Wilson, TDC Chairman
 Wednesday, December 11, 2019 - 3:30 P.M.
 Don Davis Room of City Hall (117 West Duval Street)

Meeting Convened: 3:30 p.m.
 Meeting Adjourned: 4:47 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

- Roll Call

TDC Member / Staff	Status
City Council President Scott Wilson (Board Chairperson)	Present
City Council Vice President Tommy Hazouri (Board Vice Chairperson)	Present (arr. 3:36)
City Council Member Aaron Bowman (Member)	Present
Steven Grossman (Member)	Present
Kirit Patidar (Member)	Present
Craig Smith (Member)	Present
Jeffrey Truhlar (Member)	Present
Lillian Graning (TDC Executive Director)	Present
Jeff Clements, City Council Chief of Research	Present
Kim Taylor, Assistant Council Auditor	Present
John Sawyer, Office of General Counsel	Present

- Introductions
 Council President Scott Wilson convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

ACTION ITEMS

1) Public Comment

None

2) Consideration of TDC Grant Applications

- **2019/2020 Tax Slayer Gator Bowl**.....Lillian Graning

Ms. Graning noted the need to approve a waiver of the grant eligibility guidelines to accommodate the prior commitment to the Gator Bowl.

Motion (Smith/2nd Truhlar): Approve \$500,000 special event grant for the 2019 game by waiving the grant guidelines to accommodate the TDC’s multi-year commitment -

Ms. Graning said that this is the last year of the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl’s multi-year commitment, but the organization could apply in next year’s cycle for another grant.

Motion approved 4-1 (Patidar opposed)

- **2020 Spartan US Championship race leg**

(Marketing).....Alan Verlander

Motion (Truhlar/2nd Smith) – approve the requested marketing grant of \$60,000 from the marketing account – **approved 5-0**

- **THE PLAYERS Championship (Marketing)**.....Jared Rice

Motion (Patidar/2nd Truhlar) – approve a \$175,000 grant –

Ms. Graning reviewed prior years' funding levels (\$250,000 the past four years). Commissioner Bowman said that he would give the full requested grant to this event because of its economic impact and national and international visibility. Mr. Truhlar said that the TDC needs to develop a mechanism for supporting continuing, major events. Mr. Grossman suggested that the Player's Championship consider applying for a multi-year grant akin to the Gator Bowl. Mr. Smith said that the event is one of the largest and most impactful of all the events the TDC supports. Mr. Patidar said that continuing events eventually need to be weaned off of TDC funding when they're very successful and other, new events have made requests for support. Ms. Graning said that "signature events" were exempted from the multi-year scoring penalty. The Players Championship has the second highest dollar for dollar impact, and lowest TDC cost per tourist of the projects requesting funding today.

Jared Rice of the Players Championship described how the funds would be used for marketing purposes via advertising campaigns and television production costs. He said that the TPC produces tremendous value in publicity and tourism impact. The request for additional funding this year would support familiarization trips bringing in golf and travel writers on a year-round basis. Mr. Rice said St. Johns County's support has been increasing over time, both in TDC funds and operational support. In response to a question from Mr. Truhlar about hospitality chalet use, Mr. Rice said that Visit Jacksonville participates in a centralized venue shared by St. Johns County and other entities. In response to a question from Mr. Hazouri, Mr. Rice said St. Johns County provides more support than Jacksonville for marketing, in addition to operational support. Mr. Patidar said that the TDC had previously supported a hospitality chalet at the Players Championship and did not last year. Ms. Graning said that the TDC did support the chalet but through an allocation to Visit Jax rather than directly as it did two years ago. Mr. Rice said that the move of the tournament from May to March produced very substantial increases in room occupancy and revenues for the tournament week demonstrating its impact. Mr. Bowman said that the Players is the event that brings in the highest number of important corporate decision makers to see what the area has to offer and offered his support for the full requested amount. In response to a question from Mr. Truhlar about the percentage of out-of-market attendees, Mr. Rice said that is the Players' number one priority. Mr. Smith said that he thinks March is the appropriate month for The Players. Ms. Graning said that the Players submitted a marketing grant instead of a special event grant because their focus is on increasing exposure of the market rather than ensuring that the event has the operational support to survive.

The Patidar **motion was withdrawn**. Mr. Patidar asked Mr. Rice how long the Players Championship would continue to seek increasing amounts of TDC support. Mr. Rice said that the event produces a tremendous impact and they will continue to make reasonable requests to keep growing the economic impact.

Motion (Grossman/2nd Hazouri) – grant the full \$325,000 requested (\$40,000 from the marketing account and \$285,000 from the unallocated account approved by City Council last night) – **approved 5-0**.

- **Downtown Outdoor Concert Series (Marketing)**.....Eric Miller

Eric Miller of Downtown Vision Inc. explained the \$42,000 grant request for a downtown, Thursday night 7-concert series in March and April. Mr. Bowman said he didn't grade the request very highly, but is willing to take a chance on a first-time event to see if it can be successful. The event will be on the foot of Hogan Street at the St. Johns River. In response to a question about coordination between DVI and Visit Jax about this event, Visit Jax CEO Michael Corrigan said they have been in contact and the request is made in part because of a similar Thursday night concert series he saw in downtown Buffalo that has been very successful in drawing people to downtown. Mr. Corrigan said he has spoken to all of the organizations requesting grants today and Visit Jax is ready and willing to help all of the organizers make their events successful.

Motion (Bowman/2nd Hazouri) – approve the \$42,000 grant request from the unallocated funding account – **approved 5-0**

- **MD Anderson Cork & Cuisine**.....Molly Davidson

Molly Davidson of the Baptist Health Foundation described the 3-day event which will bring 47 vintners to the city for a charity event to raise money for the Baptist/M.D. Anderson Cancer Center neuro-oncology unit. This is a first-time event targeting attendees from the Southeastern U.S. interested in wine and cuisine. This event would be one of a circuit of wine-centered events around the country. Mr. Grossman expressed reluctance to support a fund-raising event for the hospital lest it set a precedent for other charities to request similar support. Ms. Davidson said that there is a draw for the vintners who have numerous customers in the Northeast Florida area. Mr. Bowman said he couldn't justify allocating limited funds to a small event with relatively few attendees. No motion was made.

- **2020 Spartan US Championship race leg (Special Event)**.....Alan Verlander

Alan Verlander with Airstream Ventures said that Spartan Events is beginning to see Jacksonville as a hub for its US activities. Last year's event drew participants from 47 states and 5 countries and had a tremendous economic impact. Ms. Graning said that Mr. Verlander had requested consideration of a multi-year commitment from the TDC, to which Wilson suggested that a multi-year request be considered at a later meeting.

Motion (Smith/2nd Truhlar) – approve a \$100,000 special event grant for the Spartan US Championship first leg race from the special event grant account – **approved 5-0**

- **2020 Spartan City Race (Special Event)**.....Alan Verlander

The city race is a smaller, Downtown focused beginner race for participants that want a more urban experience, occurring in May. This is a new event so local vs. out-of-town participation isn't known, but 70% out-of-town is anticipated. Ms. Graning said that the request guaranteed at least 7,000 out-of-towners and that Spartan organization is showing great confidence in Jacksonville and Airstream Ventures by bringing a second race to the area. Mr. Verlander said that Spartan recently bought a company that produced these downtown, obstacle course events and liked its experience in Jacksonville last year enough to bring the new series here. Mr. Patidar questioned the economic impact of the event based on the guarantee of only 7,000 attendees for \$100,000. Mr. Verlander said that Spartan would be announcing a marketing initiative around this event which he is not at currently at liberty to disclose. Ms. Graning said that Spartan requested a special events grant because it requires operational support to get this event established in the market.

Motion (Bowman/2nd Hazouri) – approve the \$100,000 special event grant request from the special event grant account. – **approved 4-0** (Smith out of the room)

- **Lucas Oil Motocross Championship (Special Event)**.....Alan Verlander

Mr. Verlander said that last year's race was a huge success, drawing attendance from 22 states and 16 foreign countries. The organizer and participants were elated with the success of last year's event, which lost money because it was a first-time event with start-up costs. The event has been moved from late June to early June next year to address the heat that was experienced last year.

Motion (Bowman 2nd Patidar) – approve a \$50,000 special event grant request from the special event grant account – **approved 4-0** (Smith out of the room)

- **Springing the Blues Festival (Special Event)**.....Alan Verlander

Mr. Verlander said this is the largest blues festival in the country and is celebrating its 30th anniversary. Because it is a free event and production costs are increasing, the grant is requested to help support signing top-flight talent to keep the event as popular as it has been in the past.

Motion (Truhlar/2nd Patidar) – approve a grant of \$65,000 (\$50,000 from the special event account and \$15,000 from the unallocated funding account) – **approved 4-0** (Smith out of the room)

- **Downtown Outdoor Concert Series** (Special Event).....Eric Miller

Mr. Miller requested a \$100,000 special event grant to get the event off the ground with production expenses. In response to a question from Mr. Patidar about what DVI would do if the first few concerts don't attract big crowds, Mr. Miller said that DVI would not cancel the remainder of the events but would hold the full 7 concerts to try and maximize the exposure of downtown to out-of-towners. Ms. Graning said that failure to produce the 5,000 guaranteed out-of-town visitors would cost DVI the full amount of the grant. In response to a question from Mr. Grossman, Ms. Graning said that special event grant recipients pay the event costs up-front and get reimbursed by the TDC after the event and documentation of the attendees. Mr. Patidar suggested that Friday or Saturday would be better nights to hold the concert to leverage attendance

Motion (Bowman/2nd Hazouri) – approve the \$100,000 special event grant request from the unallocated account – **approved 5-0**.

Old Business

The topic of establishing working groups was postponed to the new year.

Kim Taylor reported that after today's actions the TDC has \$514,880 remaining in its unallocated account, and \$52,693 in the sponsorship account. The special event and marketing accounts have been fully depleted.

Mr. Bowman requested that a future meeting agenda include discussion of a policy on how to support recurring events. He also asked for future discussion of whether grant applicants should be required to coordinate with Visit Jax as part of their application process for TDC funding. In response to a question from Mr. Patidar Ms. Graning confirmed that she automatically deducted the appropriate points on the grant scoring sheets for multi-year grant requests.

In response to a question from Mr. Hazouri about whether members could appoint designees within their same appointment category (council member, hotel industry, etc.) to vote in their place if they couldn't attend a TDC meeting, John Sawyer of the General Counsel's Office said it would take an Ordinance Code change to allow "or designee" as voting members.

Mr. Truhlar asked about progress toward filling the vacancies on the TDC. Chairman Wilson said that he has several candidates in mind and will be making recommendations for appointments.

Minutes Taken by Jeff Clements, City Council Chief of Research
904-255-5137 jeffc@coj.net

Minutes Posted by Lillian Graning, Executive Director of TDC
On 12.19.19 12:00pm
