

**Escambia County Tourist Development Council Meeting
Escambia County Board of County Commissioners Chambers
221 Palafox Place
Pensacola, Florida 32502
August 29, 2024
3:00 p.m. CT**

Call to Order & Welcome – [Chair David Bear](#)

Public Forum – 3 minutes each speaker

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes - [Chair David Bear](#)

- June 18, 2024, TDC Meeting

Review of Expenditure Audit Trail - [County OMB James Baker](#)

Status of Funds Available and County Budget Update – [County OMB Stephan Hall](#)

**Bay Center and Ashton Brosnahan Indoor Sports Facility Discussion – [Michael Rhodes](#),
[Michael Capps](#), and [Ray Palmer](#)**

Marine Resources Department Request for the SS United States – [Robert Turpin](#)

Update on the DMO designations for ACE, PS, and VP – [Stephan Hall](#)

Other Business

Closing Remarks – [TDC Members](#) – 15 minutes

**Escambia County Tourist Development Council Meeting
Escambia County Board of County Commissioners Chambers
221 Palafox Place
Pensacola, Florida 325020
June 18, 2024**

Call to Order & Welcome-Chair David Bear (3:04 p.m.)

- Welcome everyone.
- Thank everyone for their commitment to Tourism Development

Roll Call-Danielle Cooper

- Was this meeting properly advertised?
 - Yes, In Escambia Sun Press June 13,2024
- Please call the roll.
 - Jeff Bergosh, D1 – Here
 - David Bear, Chair-Here
 - Mary Hoxeng-Here
 - Ronald Rivera, Vice Chair-Here
 - Shirley Cronley-Here
 - James J. Reeves-Here
 - Mitesh Patel-Here
 - Teniade Broughton-Absent
 - Casey Jones-Here
- **Do we have a quorum?**
 - Yes, we have a quorum.

Public Forum-3 minutes for each speaker

Tom Pace
Andie Trahan

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes-Chair David Bear

- April 16,2024 TDC Meeting
- May 21,2024 TDC Budget Workshop
- Are there any objections to the minutes as presented?
 - No objections

Motion: To Approve April 16,2024 Meeting Minutes & May 21,2024 TDC Budget Workshop
Made By: Ronald Rivera
Seconded By: Mitesh Patel
Disposition: Motion Passes Unanimously

- Hearing no objections, please show the Minutes approved.

Status of Funds Available- County OMB

James Baker provided a detailed report on the current status of funds available to the TDC. His presentation covered:

1. **Fund Balance Overview:** James outlined the current fund balance, emphasizing that the council is in a strong financial position. He noted that revenues from the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) have exceeded projections, providing additional flexibility in budget planning.
2. **Revenue Streams:** Analyzed the sources of TDT revenue, including hotel taxes, short-term rental taxes, and contributions from major events. He highlighted trends in tourism that could impact future revenue, such as seasonal fluctuations and the potential for increased competition from neighboring counties.
3. **Expenditure Breakdown:** Detailed the current and projected expenditures, including administrative costs, event funding, and marketing efforts. He stressed the importance of aligning expenditures with the council's strategic goals, particularly in promoting sustainable tourism growth.
4. **Reserves and Contingencies:** Discussed the importance of maintaining a healthy reserve fund to cover unexpected expenses, such as emergency repairs to tourist infrastructure or sudden declines in revenue due to economic downturns.

2025 Proposed TDT Budget – Chair David Bear

Chair David Bear presented the proposed 2025 TDT budget, which was developed after extensive consultation with stakeholders and analysis of previous years' performance. The budget included allocations for various tourism-related activities, with a focus on maximizing the impact of the TDT on local economic growth.

Key Points Discussed:

1. **Comparison to Mardi Gras Pensacola:** The budget was compared to similar large-scale events to ensure that funding levels were competitive and aligned with expected outcomes. The council discussed the need to balance investments in marquee events with support for smaller, emerging events that could also draw visitors.
2. **Marine Resources:** Marine resources were removed from the budget following advice from the Florida State Auditor General's office. The council discussed the implications of this decision, particularly regarding the potential impact on coastal tourism and related businesses.
3. **Event Insurance Costs:** The board debated whether insurance costs for events like Mardi Gras, Cadillac, Jazz Fest, Summerfest, and Labor Day should be categorized as administrative expenses or be funded separately. The discussion centered on the need to protect the county from liability while ensuring that funds were used efficiently.

Ray Palmer:

4. **DMO Insights:** Provided insights on destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and their critical role in representing the county's tourism interests. Palmer expressed concern about the potential dilution of the DMO's impact if too many entities are labeled as such.
5. **TDT Allowable Expenses:** Palmer highlighted recent changes in allowable expenses under the Tourist Development Tax (TDT), particularly regarding media familiarization tours, emphasizing the need for careful consideration in budget planning.

General Comments:

1. The board acknowledged the importance of accurate representation of DMOs and agreed to review the potential implications of recent changes in TDT allowable expenses.

Motion: Designate Ace as the arts and cultural DMO in Pensacola sports as a sports DMO, for Escambia County
Made By: Ronald Rivera Seconded By: Jeff Bergosh
Disposition: Motion Passes

Motion: To approve the budget to the county
Made By: Ronald Rivera Seconded By: Jeff Bergosh
Disposition: Motion Passes Unanimously

Other Business

1. **Request for Documentation:** The board requested copies of the Auditor General's recommendations and informal Attorney General opinions that had been referenced in previous discussions. Chair David Bear emphasized the importance of having these documents available for review to ensure that all council actions were legally sound and transparent.
2. **Visit Florida Inquiry:** The board agreed to request information from Visit Florida regarding how similar issues were managed in other counties. This would help the council benchmark its practices against best practices statewide and potentially adopt new strategies for managing tourism development funds.

Closing Remarks-TDC Members

James Reeves: Highlighted the need for continued vigilance in managing the TDT budget to ensure that funds are used effectively and that the county remains competitive as a tourist destination.

Mary Hoxeng: Emphasized the importance of supporting local events and cultural activities, which are key to attracting repeat visitors and building a strong community identity.

Shirley Cronley: Called for greater clarity in the council's decision-making processes to maintain public trust and ensure compliance with legal standards.

Ronald Rivera: Encouraged the council to consider the broader economic impact of its decisions, particularly on small businesses that rely on tourism for their livelihood.

Mitesh Patel: Stressed the importance of financial prudence, particularly in maintaining a robust reserve fund to safeguard against future uncertainties.

David Bear: Thanked the members for their thoughtful contributions and active engagement in the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned (4:02 p.m.)