

Tourist Development Council Regular Meeting

Ocala/Marion County Visitor & Convention Bureau

109 W Silver Springs Blvd.

Ocala, FL 34475

Thursday, September 25, 2025

9:00 a.m.

The regularly scheduled meeting for the Tourist Development Council was held both in person and via Teams.

Mr. Rus Adams read into the record, members of the public are advised that this meeting/hearing is a public proceeding, and the clerk to the board is making an audio recording of the proceedings, and all statements made during the proceedings, which recording will be a public record, subject to disclosure under the public records law of Florida. Be aware, however, that the audio recording may not satisfy the requirement for a verbatim transcript of the proceedings, described in the notice of this meeting, in the event you desire to appeal any decision adopted in this proceeding. Please note the published agenda had a scrivener's error noting the start time as 8am however all communications and Sunshine Notices have the correct time of 9am.

Roll Call

Present:

Rus Adams, Commissioner Carl Zalak, Danny Gaekwad, Councilmember Barry Mansfield, Christopher Fernandez (arrived at 9:01am)

Staff:

Loretta Shaffer, Sky Wheeler, DeeDee Busbee, Bryan Day, Corry Locke, Heidi Villagomez, Candace Shelton, Coleen Robinson

Guests:

Dana Olesky, Chief Assistant County Attorney; Isiah Lewis, Downs & St. Germain Research; Mohamed Mohsen, College of Central Florida; Shelley Page, World Equestrian Center; Jeff Haungs, R&L Carriers; Tom Hern, World Equestrian Center; Austin C; Tammy McCann, Marion County Tax Collector's Office; Sarah Thacker, World Equestrian Center; Olivia Hoblit, World Equestrian Center; Rob Balmes, Ocala Marion Transportation Planning Organization; Paresh Chhotu, Holiday Garden Inn; Amy Agricola, Engel & Völkers Ocala; Evelyn Morales, Hampton Inn & Suites Ocala; Jim Hilty, City of Ocala Councilmember.

Notice of Publication

Notice was published on the County Website on January 29, 2025 and subsequently updated to include Teams information on March 13, 2025.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Councilmember Barry Mansfield, seconded by Danny Gaekwad, to adopt the minutes from the August 20, 2025 Tourist Development Council Meeting as presented. The motion was unanimously approved by the council (5-0).

Acknowledgment of Financials – August 2025

A motion was made by Commissioner Carl Zalak, seconded by Councilmember Barry Mansfield, to review and approve August 2025 Financials. The motion was unanimously approved by the council (5-0).

Report from Chair

Introduction of Incoming TDC Member, Bobby Walker

Mr. Rus Adams advised he would not be introducing Mr. Bobby Walker as he was not present for the meeting due to illness.

Resignation of TDC Member, Jason Reynolds

Mr. Rus Adams announced that Mr. Jason Reynolds submitted his resignation from the TDC effective September 22, 2025. He advised the council that copies of Mr. Reynold's resignation letter had been provided and were at each council member's seat for them to read. Mr. Adams noted that this was a significant loss for the Council but that efforts to solicit applicants to fill the vacancy were already being made.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad inquired about the application timeline.

Ms. Loretta Shaffer advised that the current vacancy missed the October solicitation deadline so it would be included in the following solicitation which was anticipated to be in two weeks or early November.

Commissioner Carl Zalak asked whether stakeholders were directly notified of the opening and solicitation efforts.

Ms. Shaffer explained that those efforts are coordinated through the Commission Office by Gennifer Medina, Executive Assistant to the BCC and Jennifer Clark, Executive Assistant to the BCC. She noted that while staff does not solicit for the seat, individuals often show interest and come forward independently, but staff could notify stakeholders if that was the Council's preference.

Commissioner Zalak suggested an email be sent to stakeholders advising that an open seat was available. He asked for confirmation that the available seat would be a partner seat.

Ms. Shaffer clarified that it would be an accommodator's seat.

Commissioner Zalak noted that he receives several inquiries regarding vacancies with the council

but is often unsure of the availability of positions.

Council members expressed consensus that broader outreach would be beneficial.

Mr. Rus Adams suggested that the vacancy be published to the Ocala/Marion County Visitor's and Convention Bureau website.

Ms. Sky Wheeler cautioned that the bureau's website is visitor facing and may not be the appropriate outlet for publishing the vacancy but advised staff would be able to work with Marion County's public relations team to identify the proper channel.

Mr. Rus Adams inquired about how applicants would be selected.

Commissioner Zakak confirmed that all applicants would be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners for selection.

Mr. Gaekwad emphasized the importance of including qualified stakeholders, noting the value the applicants bring to the Council and the value the Council brings to the applicants.

Ms. Shaffer concluded by noting that all applications remain active in the queue for one year, allowing interested parties to be considered for future vacancies should additional seats open.

Visit Florida Flagler Awards

Mr. Rus Adams transitioned to the presentation of the Visit Florida Flagler Awards. Mr. Adams reported that on August 29, 2025, as part of the annual Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism, VISIT FLORIDA awarded its Flagler Awards for excellence in tourism marketing. The Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau was awarded the Silver Award Flagler for its tradeshow booth in the Resource/Promotional Material - Trade Category; and the Bronze Award Flagler for its Orlando Moving Billboard Campaign in the Out of Home Category. Mr. Adams emphasized that these projects were completed in house by staff rather than an external agency and commended the team for their outstanding work.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad congratulated staff and led members in recognizing their achievements.

Ms. Sky Wheeler added that Ms. Heidi Villagomez developed and executed the campaign for the Orlando Moving Billboard Campaign which was the Carvertise that the board had previously been notified of using wrapped vehicles in the Orlando market while Ms. Jessica Heller developed and executed the tradeshow booth that was used for Florida Huddle/Encounter in February.

Following recognition of the awards, Mr. Adams introduced Ms. Tammy McCann to provide a presentation on tax collections.

Brief discussion ensued regarding the newly launched *Floridays* initiative.

Presentation: Short Term Rental Compliance Update, Deputy Tax Collector, Tammy McCann

Ms. Tammy McCann advised she would be providing a brief update to the council noting that she planned to provide a longer presentation indicating changes from the beginning of the year for the fiscal year end at the next meeting in October. She reported that from August to yesterday,

twenty one new accounts were added however, there were a total of 1,269 accounts registered which included both hotels and short term rentals. Ms. McCann advised that the Tax Collector's Office was identifying most short-term rentals, getting them registered with a few new accounts expected to come online in the coming months, including one that was scheduled to begin in January due to ongoing renovations at the property. She noted that financials had increased significantly but added that seasonal fluctuations are to be expected with the fall, winter, and spring periods representing peak rental activity, while summer typically sees fewer rentals due to heat.

Ms. McCann outlined the compliance letter process that includes three letters. The first letter notifies property owners that they were identified as short term rentals through rental platforms and of their obligation to comply with Marion County ordinance. She noted that property owners are typically unresponsive to the first letter. The second letter provides a ten day deadline to contact the Marion County Tax Collectors Office. The third letter warns of legal consequences including the potential for misdemeanor charges, penalties and fines which often prompts compliance due to the fear of legal consequences. Ms. McCann invited the Council to review the letters and share any modifications with Ms. Sky Wheeler and Ms. Loretta Shaffer, further advising that she would be happy to include any suggested edits.

Mr. Gaekwad asked why the process takes such a long time and inquired as to if the length of time was mandated by law.

Ms. McCann explained that the timeline allows thirty days for the first letter, ten days for the second letter and two days before the final letter is sent, amounting to approximately two months which is standard practice.

Commissioner Carl Zalak noted that this approach was much more efficient than in the past at bringing properties into compliance which previously took several years.

Mr. Rus Adams inquired how many new properties are typically identified in a given month compared to how many ultimately register.

Ms. McCann noted she would research this using her spreadsheets which show how many letters are sent out by comparing those numbers with the number of properties that register with the Tax Collector and provide an answer during the next month's presentation.

Mr. Gaekwad inquired about who the largest rental operator in Marion County is on Airbnb, further asking who the top three accounts were.

Commissioner Zalak inquired of Ms. McCann as to whether she was allowed to provide the Council with the information requested by Mr. Gaekwad.

Ms. McCann explained that she is prohibited from disclosing the requested information under the RISE Agreement.

Mr. Gaekwad asked if there was an alternative means for obtaining the requested information.

Ms. McCann advised that there was no way of obtaining the requested information.

Ms. Sky Wheeler clarified that Ms. McCann was allowed to know the information but that the Council was not.

Mr. Gaekwad expressed concern that hotels and campgrounds are publicly identifiable as tax remitters, whereas short-term rental operators remain anonymous.

Ms. Dana Olesk clarified that the confidentiality restrictions apply equally to all types of accommodations, including hotels under the RISE Agreement and does not differentiate between individually owned and operated properties on platforms such as Airbnb and traditional hotel lodging. She noted that the only information that may be verified is whether an operator is registered, not their identity or tax payment amounts.

Mr. Gaekwad stated that the matter needed to be looked at further as there needed to be a method for obtaining the information.

Commissioner Zalak recommended working with state representatives to review the applicable statutes and determine if language could be amended to provide greater transparency.

Mr. Gaekwad advised that Florida State Representative Ryan Chamberlin would be attending a meeting at one of his hotels later that day and he would inquire about the matter. He further advised that he is participating in fundraising for Florida State Representative Richard Gentry and it was imperative that the short term rental operators not be shielded by the RISE Agreement. He further clarified that he was not inquiring as to how much tax is being collected from properties but wanted to identify who those operators are.

Commissioner Zalak offered to coordinate with staff to provide Mr. Gaekwad with the appropriate language needed to ask for legislative language.

Mr. Gaekwad agreed to pursue this matter further

Ms. McCann reiterated that under the RISE Agreement, she is bound by confidentiality and cannot release names or identifying information of short-term rental operators.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad asked for further clarification on what the RISE Agreement is.

Ms. Tammy McCann explained that the RISE Agreement allows for information sharing between the Tax Collectors Office and the Department of Revenue.

Ms. Loretta Shaffer asked whether this prohibition also applies to staff access.

Ms. McCann confirmed that it does.

Ms. Olesky further explained that the Department of Revenue collects taxes and the Tax Collectors Office acts as a conduit for the Department of Revenue therefore the Tax Collectors office is required to sign the RISE Agreement requiring them to adhere to the same confidentiality standards.

Mr. Gaekwad shared background information regarding his previous legal actions against the State of Florida during Governor Rick Scott's administration concerning agreements between Airbnb and the State of Florida. He explained that at that time Airbnb was provided a notice

indicating that they would be able to remit tax payments at their convenience in a manner that was not equitable with how traditional lodging operators were required to remit tax payments which prompted him to file suit. Mr. Gaekwad advised that as a result of his suit the State of Florida made changes to the agreement with Airbnb which allowed for more transparency but that there were still issues particularly when hotels are required to remit taxes openly under their business names while individual short-term rental operators remain confidential. Mr. Gaekwad emphasized that he was not requesting financial details but argued that, at minimum, the names and addresses of operators should be publicly available, similar to hotel and campground operators.

Ms. Tammy McCann stated that she would follow up with the Department of Revenue to confirm what information may legally be shared. She also committed to providing the Council with excerpts from the RISE Agreement that specify what information can be shared with the Council so that all members would have a better understanding.

Mr. Rus Adams called for additional questions directly related to Ms. McCann's presentation.

Mr. Christopher Fernandez inquired about the expectation for back taxes when short-term rental operators are discovered to be out of compliance, asking whether the County seeks payment retroactively to the start of their rental activity.

Ms. Tammy McCann responded that while the Tax Collector's Office has the authority to pursue back taxes, under the direction of Mr. George Albright the office has taken the position of moving forward rather than retroactively assessing. She explained that many operators are small business owners, and the goal has been to bring them into compliance once identified.

Danny Gaekwad out 9:24am

Ms. McCann added that registered operators who fail to make a payment, even of zero dollars are assessed penalties under Florida State Statute noting that the penalties imposed by Marion County are much lower than those imposed by the Department of Revenue. She further explained that the Tax Collectors Office is working collaboratively with customers to bring them to compliance as they have been misinformed by platforms such as Airbnb and VRBO, believing that all taxes are automatically remitted on their behalf. She emphasized that this misinformation does not excuse renters' failure to comply as the tax obligations are clearly outlined on the Marion County Tax Collector's website. She noted that many short-term rental operators are older individuals renting secondary properties, and that the Tax Collector's Office works with them to provide education and assistance in coming into compliance. While the Tax Collector has aimed to be lenient, Ms. McCann stated that penalties and interest are applied when property owners neglect to remit taxes altogether.

TPO 2050 Plan Presentation, Rob Balmes

Mr. Rus Adams introduced Mr. Rob Balmes to provide a presentation of the TPO plan.

Mr. Balmes advised he would be presenting on two projects the TPO has been working on for over a year.

Danny Gaekwad in 9:26am

Mr. Balmes noted that the TPO has been working collectively with various partners including TPO board members advising that TDC councilmember Commissioner Carl Zalak is the TPO board's chairman and TDC councilmember Councilman Barry Mansfield is also a member of the TPO board. He also introduced Councilman James Hilty who was present at the meeting. He expressed his appreciation for the collaboration and support from with Ms. Loretta Shaffer and her staff as part of the TPO technical advisory committee and Mr. Christopher Fernandez who is involved in the steering committee for the active transportation plan. Mr. Balmes announced two major projects being released to the public. The Active Transportation Plan is focused on bicycling, walking, trails, and the greenway system. The plan will be available for public comment beginning September 26, 2025, and open for review through October. The Long-Range Transportation Plan is comprehensive framework for all modes of transportation and the development of the County's transportation network over the next 25 years including sales tax projects, federal and state funded projects. Mr. Balmes stated that an in-person public open house will be held on Tuesday, September 30, 2025, from 4:00–6:30 p.m. at the Mary Sue Rich Community Center, providing an opportunity for citizens to review maps and provide input. He added that the documents will also be available on the TPO website. A public hearing on the Long-Range Transportation Plan will be held at the October 28, 2025 TPO Board meeting, with the plan scheduled for adoption in November. The Active Transportation Plan will also be presented to the TPO Board in October for approval. Mr. Balmes encouraged Council members to share the information and documents with colleagues, neighbors, and stakeholders and invited questions.

Commissioner Carl Zalak commended Mr. Rob Balmes and the TPO team for their work, noting that significant time and financial resources have been invested in developing long-range transportation solutions. He discussed several transportation issues faced in Marion County particularly congestion at I-75 crossings, where limited access points create bottlenecks. Commissioner Zalak advised that the TPO board was exploring various solutions to include adding a beltway, additional capacity to State Road 200, and other improvements over the next 20–30 years. Commissioner Zalak updated the Council on various key projects that will impact the community. CR 484 would not be complete for a significant period of time due to construction on I-75. 66th Street crossing I-75 is still one lane but is scheduled for demolition which will significantly impact traffic. FDOT is working to ensure the opening of 49th Street; behind Heath Brook and Epic Theatres, before demolition begins to provide an alternate route. Reconstruction is expected to take 8–9 months, and there are ongoing discussions with FDOT about expanding the bridge from two to four lanes using insurance money and other funds.

Mr. Gaekwad noted that there is significant congestion along CR 475A, resulting in delays of 15-20 minutes. He expressed appreciation for the ongoing improvements.

Commissioner Zalak advised the TPO is making changes to add capacity to those routes. He continued with updates on ongoing projects advising that delays have occurred with projects on CR 484 due to engineering issues resulting in redesigns and cost increases.

Mr. Rus Adams inquired about when the project on I-75 would begin.

Commissioner Carl Zalak advised that the project has started with design elements. He stated that awards would be presented in the near future and deferred to Mr. Angel Roussel to confirm if the 49th Street Interchange had been awarded.

Mr. Roussel advised that he was unsure of the project details but would research the information and provide an update to the Council in the future.

Mr. Adams then inquired about projects occurring on SW 80th Avenue.

Commissioner Zalak advised a major reconstruction project extending from SR 200 past the World Equestrian Center is underway. The state is expected to award contracts to connect 49th Street to 225A/80th Avenue. He added that over \$100 million in transportation projects are scheduled to begin by the end of the year and into early 2026.

Mr. Gaekwad inquired about construction occurring on the Florida Turnpike and extensions at Wildwood.

Commissioner Zalak advised that FDOT previously considered extending the Florida Turnpike to connect with Veterans Expressway. While that project has not moved forward, it may be reconsidered in the future.

Mr. Rus Adams called for additional questions. No additional questions were raised.

Funding Requests

Mr. Rus Adams introduced the funding request agenda item noting that multiple related funding requests were on the agenda. He recommended that the requests be presented as three grouped packages: Joseph Volleyball Camps (JVC), Horse Shows in the Sun (HITS) and World Equestrian Center (WEC). Each package would be discussed and voted on collectively. He inquired as to any objections to the recommendation.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad voiced no objections.

Councilmembers agreed to proceed with the grouped presentation format.

Ms. Sky Wheeler inquired whether members preferred to review the funding allocations using the consolidated funding allocations sheet or by individual request.

Mr. Adams stated his preference for the consolidated FY 2025–2026 Room Night Generating Event Funding Allocations sheet, noting that members had both printed and digital copies available. Mr. Adams then turned the presentation over to Mr. Corry Locke.

Mr. Locke reported that there would be 16 funding requests, totaling \$139,985, representing 46% of the FY 2025–2026 funding budget of \$300,000. He noted that 15 of the events are scheduled in the first quarter, with one additional event in April. Under the program guidelines, reimbursement for the first quarter is based on \$5 per verified room night.

JVC First in Show (Room Night Generating) (Requested Funding - \$10,000)

JVC Winner's Circle (Room Night Generating) (Requested Funding - \$25,000)

Mr. Locke presented two funding requests for JVC Volleyball. He advised that details about the funding requests began on page 81 of the meeting agenda packet.

He first presented on the JVC First in Show Tournament scheduled for January 17th-19th, 2026 at World Equestrian Center. JVC has requested the maximum eligible award amount of \$10,000 and they anticipate generating 2,000 room nights for the event. The total economic impact for the event is estimated to be just over 3.5 million dollars with a 775% ROI. The intended use of funds for the event were officials, volleyball court rentals, equipment rentals and shipping of volleyball courts. The event has been held in Ocala for four years and has become a staple event. Mr. Locke advised the event has grown to occupy both Expo Centers at World Equestrian Center where it initially only occupied one. The event anticipates over 220 teams. He then called for any questions regarding the funding request.

Mr. Gaekwad asked about the event days.

Mr. Locke confirmed the tournament would be held January 17-26, 2026, MLK weekend.

Mr. Corry Locke then presented the funding request for the JVC Nike Winner's Circle Volleyball Tournament scheduled for April 11-12, 2026, this two day event is eligible for \$10 per room night since it is scheduled to occur in the second quarter. JVC requested the maximum award of \$25,000. The event anticipates to generate just over 3.1 million dollars which is a 204% ROI. In order to earn the maximum funding of \$25,000 the event has guaranteed 2,500 room nights. The intended use of funds is officials, volleyball courts and equipment rentals. The tournament expects 130 teams.

Mr. Rus Adams asked that a motion be entertained if there were no questions about the funding requests presented.

Mr. Gaekwad referenced a funding model based on 'heat mapping' where the Council would not approved funding during busy months.

Mr. Adams clarified that when the funding programs were revised there was a change made to the reimbursement caps with Quarter 1 offering the lowest reimbursement. He noted that this meeting would be the first time the Council had received funding requests since the funding program was revised.

Ms. Loretta Shaffer added that the Room Night Generating Funding Program is the only funding program offered by the Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau that offers funding during the first quarter of the year.

Commissioner Zalak further noted that the cap adjustments were made to encourage events during slower periods.

Mr. Christopher Fernandez shared his appreciation for Mr. Locke's highlighting of the event quarter in the meeting materials.

With no further discussion, Mr. Adams requested a motion.

Ms. Dana Olesky advised the Council that a roll call vote does not need to be done for each

individual funding request although she recommended that the Council continues with the roll call vote for the meeting to accommodate Samantha Solomon's (Meeting Clerk) script for the meeting.

A motion was made by Councilmember Barry Mansfield, seconded by Christopher Fernandez, to approve funding for JVC First in Show and JVC Winner's Circle for recommendation to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners as presented. The motion was unanimously approved by the council (5-0).

HITS Post Time Farm Premier I and HITS Post Time Farm Premier II

HITS Ocala Winter Circuit Weeks I-III

Mr. Corry Locke transitioned to presenting two funding requests for HITS. He advised the funding first funding request started on page 89 of the meeting agenda packet and the second request started on page 141.

Mr. Gaekwad inquired as to how many requests HITS had made and what the total of the requests were.

Mr. Locke reiterated that two funding requests were made by HITS for a total of \$20,000 at \$10,000 per request.

Mr. Gaekwad noted that he saw several funding requests in the agenda packet previously.

Mr. Locke clarified that that twelve funding requests for World Equestrian Center would be presented later in the meeting but HITS only had two funding requests. Mr. Locke first presented the HITS Post Time Premier I and II scheduled to occur December 31st to January 12, 2026 at HITS Post Time Farm. HITS has requested the maximum award amount of \$10,000 and anticipates 2,000 room nights. The anticipated economic impact for the event is just over two million dollars with a ROI of 431%. Funding would be used for judges, officials, equipment rentals, course designers and promotional expenses.

Mr. Gaekwad asked how staff determined which quarter the event would be assigned to as it begins on December 31st.

Mr. Locke advised that majority of the event occurs in the first quarter thus funding is provided at \$5 per room night.

Commissioner Zalak stated that he recognized Mr. Gaekwad had some concerns however, he recommended that the Council continue funding events under the current program structure for this year. He suggested that the Council revisit the program structure again in the fall to evaluate whether adjustments were needed, particularly regarding the distribution of funds across quarters. He emphasized that applicants relied on the published guidelines when submitting their requests, and it would not be fair to alter the rules mid-cycle. He suggested that if additional funding is required, budget transfers could be considered at that time, and longer-term strategies might include further incentivizing summer events.

Mr. Gaekwad expressed his preference to discuss changes to the program during the current

meeting.

Commissioner Zalak responded that the timing of the discussion could be flexible, but reiterated his immediate concern was ensuring sufficient funding to cover approved events under the existing budget before re-evaluating how the program is structured.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad inquired about the application deadline for first quarter events.

Mr. Corry Locke clarified that the deadline is 120 days prior to the event, and confirmed that the applications before the Council had met that requirement.

Mr. Gaekwad asked if events submitted within 119 days would be disqualified.

Mr. Locke confirmed they would.

Mr. Rus Adams noted that the first quarter covers a 90-day window, so events scheduled later in the quarter could still apply.

Mr. Locke added that March and late February events could still qualify.

Mr. Gaekwad remarked that early January is traditionally a slow period for accommodations, based on his experience as a local hotelier. He commended HITS for scheduling events beginning December 31st, which he felt helped generate activity during a slow time of year. He further encouraged HITS to consider scheduling even earlier in the season.

Commissioner Carl Zalak asked if the funding motions could be made collectively.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad responded that only two motions would be made.

Ms. Dana Olesky clarified that the Council would consider motions in three groups one for the two JVC requests, one for the two HITS requests and one for the twelve WEC requests.

Mr. Rus Adams confirmed that the JVC items had been presented and asked Mr. Corry Locke to proceed with the second HITS request.

Mr. Locke presented the second funding request for HITS, the HITS Ocala Winter Circuit, Weeks I – III scheduled for January 14 – February 1, 2026. HITS requested the maximum award eligible of \$10,000. The estimated economic impact for the event is just over 3.1 million dollars with a 641% ROI. The event is anticipated to generate 2,000 room nights in order to achieve the requested funding amount of \$10,000 at a reimbursement rate of \$5 per room night. The intended use of funds are judges, officials, equipment rentals, course designers and promotional expenses.

Mr. Locke asked if there were any questions. None were raised.

A motion was made by Danny Gaekwad, seconded by Commissioner Carl Zalak, to approve funding for HITS Post Time Farm Premier I & II and HITS Ocala Winter Circuit Weeks I-III for recommendation to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners as presented. The motion was unanimously approved by the council (5-0).

WEC Winter Series Weeks 1-12

Mr. Corry Locke presented the funding requests submitted by World Equestrian Center (WEC) for its twelve week Winter Series. Each week was submitted as an individual event for a total of \$105,015. Each week's request varied with six of the weeks requested at \$10,000 those were weeks 6,7,8,10,11 and 12 while the remaining weeks were for various amounts less than \$10,000. Mr. Locke noted that there were questions raised regarding competitors for the event for which WEC provided the following information: 'each week attracts 100-850 departing competitors and 390-780 new or incoming competitors. Our competitor demographic come from all 50 states as well as a large worldwide presence. In 2025 we hosted competitors from 17 countries (outside the USA). Breakdown of our international riders, 40% are from Canada, 30% are from South America and the last 30% are from Europe and other parts of the world.' Mr. Locke also advised that representatives from WEC were present to provide clarification or answer specific questions.

Commissioner Carl Zalak asked whether the request represented one continuous event or twelve distinct events.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad and Mr. Rus Adams also requested clarification directly from the applicant.

Ms. Sarah Thacker, Director of Sales for WEC explained that while the series runs consecutively, it operates on a rolling basis, with competitors selecting specific weeks to attend based on the classes and divisions in which they wish to compete. For example, a rider may choose to participate in Week 5 rather than Week 1, depending on the level of competition scheduled for that period. She compared this structure to athletic divisions (e.g., JV, Division I, Division II), emphasizing that each week draws different competitors based on qualifying opportunities and competition schedules. Ms. Thacker further highlighted that the competitor counts provided in the application represent athletes only and do not account for accompanying family members, spouses, or spectators. She stressed that the total number of individuals traveling to Marion County during the series is therefore much greater, with significant economic contributions extending beyond the competitors themselves. Ms. Thacker invited her colleagues Olivia Hoblit, Shelley Page and Tom Hern to provide additional clarification if needed.

Mr. Tom Hern affirmed Ms. Thacker's explanation.

Commissioner Zalak expressed appreciation for the clarification, noting the importance of understanding the structure and nuances of equestrian competitions when evaluating funding requests as it can be difficult to understand if one is not directly involved in that sector. He confirmed that the competition was divided into separate events as there are different classes and events within the twelve-week series.

Ms. Thacker noted that while WEC could have requested funding for the overall twelve week series they felt it imperative to educate the community and Council about each week and the impact they bring. She added that participants begin coming to town as early as December to attend the event. Ms. Thacker further noted that WEC's lodging facilities including its hotels, RV spaces, and Home Away from Home units are heavily utilized during the series, but many competitors and their families also stay in off-site accommodations such as VRBO rentals, contributing to broader community lodging demand.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad commended WEC for their efforts in coordinating the event describing it as

“mind blowing”. He asked for clarification regarding the “Home Away from Home” units, inquiring whether these were comparable to Airbnb rentals and how many units were available.

Ms. Olivia Hoblit advised that WEC maintains approximately 95 Home Away from Home units, all configured as three bedroom units along with Crownwood which is configured as two and three bedroom units.

Mr. Gaekwad inquired as to how many units total were available.

Commissioner Zalak confirmed that during the original approval process, the total number units was approximately 100 modular homes located along Highway 40.

Mr. Gaekwad further noted that he observed that WEC also has large apartment and inquired if those apartments were included in the Home Away from Home property.

Ms. Hoblit clarified that WEC does not operate apartments, but does operate Crownwood.

Mr. Gaekwad asked for further information on the Crownwood property.

Ms. Hoblit added that Crownwood operates as individual townhomes grouped in fours located along Highway 27, comprised of approximately 30 units ranging from two to three bedrooms that are rented on a weekly or monthly basis.

Mr. Gaekwad confirmed that Crownwood included 30 units that were separate from the 100 units included in the Home Away from Home property, totaling 130 units. He asked if WEC had any other properties.

Ms. Sarah Thacker added that the majority of Crownwood residences are used to house WEC employees during the Winter Show Series. She explained that this practice is intentional, as WEC prioritizes providing accommodations for staff members working the 12-week event.

Mr. Gaekwad noted that prospective visitors occasionally contact him about renting WEC properties and indicated he would refer such inquiries directly to WEC’s lodging team.

Ms. Sarah Thacker expressed appreciation for the opportunity to present at the TDC meeting and emphasized WEC’s desire to improve communication with the broader community which also reflects feedback she received during a recent site visit with Staff. She added that it was important to be able to explain WEC’s operations as equestrian competition can sometimes be difficult to understand for those outside of the industry. She further emphasized the importance of communicating with the TDC about operations at WEC as it is a mutually beneficial relationship. She added that while some may perceive WEC as not needing financial support, funding requests are strategically reinvested into the property to enhance the overall guest experience, which in turn benefits Marion County’s tourism economy. She concluded by acknowledging that WEC is a business entity, not a charitable organization.

Mr. Rus Adams noted that he was initially unclear about what differentiated the individual weeks and requested that in future the weeks be clearly identified based on the type or level of competition, for example rather than naming the event ‘Week 1’ to name the event ‘Week 1 – Hunter Jumper’. He explained that this would act as an educational process for the Council but

also provide additional transparency for public records associated with the requests. He added that the Council wants to avoid the perception of duplicating grants for the same event and better understand the distinct impact of each week.

Ms. Sarah Thacker responded that WEC could certainly accommodate that request and welcomed the feedback. She noted that this first year of applications involved some growing pains and commended Ms. Shelley Page for working diligently on the submissions. Ms. Thacker assured the Council that future requests could be labeled more clearly to reflect the specific type of competition each week represents.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad agreed and stated that the Council requires specific and detailed requests where the difference between each request is clear as he wanted to avoid the possibility of an event being able to obtain multiple grants for a singular event.

Commissioner Zalak noted that the event descriptions already contain much of this detail but suggested labeling each one by its feature competition for example CS13 and CSIU25.

Ms. Thacker confirmed that the information was included in the details and reiterated that WEC can provide clearer weekly labels moving forward, such as "Hunter Week," "Jumper Week," or "Qualifier Week," to assist both Council members and the public in understanding the distinctions.

Commissioner Zalak asked for clarification as to the difference between the various levels such as CS13, CSIU25 and CS14.

Ms. Sarah Thacker deferred to Ms. Shelley Page for an explanation.

Mr. Tom Hern explained that he would be able to provide better insight. He explained that each week featured different classes or disciplines. He explained that looking at week 1 of the series it includes both Quarter Horse National Show competitions and Hunter/Jumper competitions occurring simultaneously, thereby drawing a broader range of participants and spectators. In subsequent weeks, the focus may shift to a single discipline, such as Hunter/Jumper, or an internationally rated Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) competition. He further clarified that the designations for example CS13, CSI U25 refer to competition categories and levels of prize money offered. Mr. Hern concluded by stating that each week does have a distinctly different feature and WEC would be able to provide a more clear breakdown in future applications.

Ms. Sarah Thacker emphasized that the funding applications could benefit from including more detailed descriptions of each week's featured competitions.

Mr. Rus Adams encouraged simplifying the terminology where possible.

Ms. Thacker acknowledged that she herself has become more familiar with the competition categories through the process of reviewing the applications and working with her colleagues.

Commissioner Zalak added that while the existing descriptions are informative, that labeling each week with clear identifiers related to the competition levels would be helpful in educating the Council. He compared the structure of the events to college athletics, noting that some weeks represent qualifying rounds while others are equivalent to championship games.

Ms. Thacker agreed, noting that such clarity would also help local accommodators and tourism partners prepare for peak weekends, ensuring hotels, advertising, and signage efforts align with the scale of the competitions.

Commissioner Zalak stated that it would be beneficial to the community to alert them of events occurring particularly high-profile events to encourage local attendance and engagement.

Ms. Thacker concurred, emphasizing that WEC actively seeks to welcome the public to its events and wants the community to view events at WEC as a shared opportunity, not solely an internal operation. She expressed optimism that continued collaboration with the Visitors and Convention Bureau would help expand outreach and community involvement.

Mr. Christopher Fernandez stated that it is important that the relationship between WEC and the community be reciprocal in that as the community is engaging with WEC, which he enjoys himself, that WEC is actively shining a spotlight on the community. Mr. Fernandez noted that while making distinctions about the different events during the Winter Series was important it was also important to understand how WEC is actively connecting those visiting competitors and attendees for the event with the broader community including attractions such as Silver Springs and other unique local businesses.

Ms. Sarah Thacker responded that partnering with the broader community is a central part of her role at WEC. Though she was hired to promote the lodging and venues at WEC, a part of her role also includes attracting national groups which she partners with the Ocala/Marion County Visitors and Convention Bureau to do. She explained that it was important to offer experiences to visitors beyond the equestrian activities available at WEC such as glass bottom boat rides and Cactus Jack's. She shared that she routinely engages with activities in the community with her own family so she is better equipped to market those activities in her role at WEC. She added that WEC has partnered with Gypsy Gold Farms to offer experiences to groups at discounted rates. As an example, she noted an upcoming national group visit in December with approximately 450 attendees over five days, which includes six scheduled excursions such as complete buyouts of the Glass Bottom Boats and other local experiences. She added that WEC also integrates community partnerships into its broader programming and emphasized that the Roberts family has made significant contributions to the community beyond tourism.

Ms. Olivia Hoblit added that each year, as WEC increases the number of shows it hosts, overall attendance continues to grow. She emphasized that this growth directly contributes to increased tourist development tax revenues for the community. Ms. Hoblit also noted that many attendees return for subsequent visits during the summer or fall and often share their experiences with family and friends, helping to expand WEC's visibility not only across the United States but internationally as well.

Ms. Thacker added that WEC's website features things to do in Ocala. The website is being revamped to make it more conducive not only to the WEC property but also to the things to do throughout Marion County. She stressed that while the Visitors and Convention Bureau (VCB) already provides excellent resources, WEC intends to strengthen its partnership by linking to and featuring content from the VCB's website rather than duplicating efforts.

Mr. Rus Adams asked if WEC currently has the VCB website linked on their website.

Ms. Thacker confirmed that a link is included on their website and reiterated that the website is being revamped. Ms. Thacker also noted the significant financial investment WEC has made in regards to marketing and hosting of Florida Encounter/Huddle.

Mr. Fernandez added that there is a local celebrity that has been highlighting local attractions and experiences through a video series. He suggested that WEC could incorporate those videos on their property such as on monitors in restaurants and bars on-site to help visitors plan their itineraries and encourage them to explore the community beyond the WEC property.

Ms. Thacker advised that WEC is already partnering with the same celebrity to produce an insider video on the WEC property scheduled for filming on October 2, 2025. She explained that when meeting with Ms. Loretta Shaffer she became aware of challenges the property was facing such as community members not recognizing that the property was accessible to them due to gates on property. She noted that WEC was making efforts to make the property more appealing to the community through activities on the property which they are advertising but also through investing in new retail spaces along 80th Ave that could feature local businesses. She also mentioned that WEC uses Miles Partnership for marketing which is the same marketing company that the VCB uses. This allows both organization to have similar messaging in their marketing efforts.

Ms. Thacker then highlighted the upcoming Annual Tourism Meeting in December where more than 626 people were invited and will also be utilized as a FAM (familiarization trip) including site visits for approximately 150 guests at The Equestrian Manor and trolley tours of the property. She noted that both WEC and the VCB had contributed financially to the success of the Annual Tourism Meeting.

Ms. Olivia Hoblit added that WEC is actively developing lodging and activity packages designed to extend visitor stays. She noted that when visitors are able to experience what Ocala has to offer they often choose to purchase homes in the area as a result of the positive experiences.

Ms. Sky Wheeler asked that the TDC Chairman clarify the names and titles of the WEC representatives for the record.

Mr. Rus Adams asked the WEC team to reintroduce themselves with their names and title for the record.

Commissioner Carl Zalak out 10:08am

The following WEC representatives were present:

- Sarah Thacker, Senior Director of Sales at the World Equestrian Center
- Olivia Hoblit, Director of Lodging Operations at the World Equestrian Center
- Shelley Page, Assistant of Equine Operations
- Tom Hern, Senior Director of Equine Operations

Mr. Adams then asked if there was any further presentations.

Mr. Corry Locke confirmed there were no additional items and invited questions from the Council. None were raised.

Commissioner Carl Zalak in 10:09am

A motion was made by Commissioner Carl Zalak, seconded by Danny Gaekwad, to approve funding for WEC Winter Series Weeks 1-12 for recommendation to the Marion County Board of County Commissioners as presented. The motion was unanimously approved by the council (5-0).

Staff Updates

TDT Collections/STR and Key Data Update

Ms. Sky Wheeler provided the update for the Tourist Development Tax Collections and STR and Key Data. She began with the collections for the reporting period of August which covered July revenues. Collections totaled \$580,771.55. This represented an increase of \$171,122.87 which is 41.77% compared to last year. She explained that as the Council reviews the data month-to-month numbers may fluctuate due to the efforts being made by the Tax Collectors Office for short-term rental compliance. She added that since the numbers were being presented within the fiscal year that the focus would not be on monthly totals but on the annual trends. Ms. Wheeler noted that Ms. Tammy McCann would return to provide the Council with a more robust report of the collections throughout the fiscal year at the next meeting in October. Year to date, Marion County was 17.48% ahead of the previous year and has surpassed last year's reporting by \$958,929.26 with one month still to be reported. Ms. Wheeler added as a point of context that the amount collected beyond last year's total is greater than the County's entire annual collections when she began in 2013.

Ms. Wheeler then transitioned into Smith Travel Research and CoStar data for both Marion County and Visit Florida along with Key Data which represents short-term rental data as it relates to occupancy and other metrics. She noted that the metrics being presented were unrelated to compliance of short term rentals as that information would be provided by Ms. Tammy McCann. For August in Marion County, occupancy was 47.8% which was a decrease of 8.1% year-over-year. The average daily rate was \$103.87 which was a decrease of 2% compared to last year and RevPAR was \$49.61 which was a decrease of 9.9% compared to last year. For the running 12 months occupancy increased by 4%, ADR increased by 6.2% and RevPAR increased by 10.5%. She noted that, unlike in previous years, Marion County did not experience hurricane displacement traffic during the late summer, which typically boosts occupancy as evacuees seek refuge in the region. Without that natural event-driven surge, occupancy in August was down compared to the prior year.

For Visit Florida STR data, statewide occupancy was at 62.2% which was an increase of 0.3%, the average daily rate was \$154.49 which was an increase of 2.5% and RevPAR was \$96.04 which was an increase of 2.9%.

Turning to short term rental data, occupancy was 39% which was an increase of 18%, average daily rate was \$113 which was a decrease of 10% as occupancy increased there were more

opportunities resulting in a decrease in rates. RevPAR was \$36 which was an increase of \$5 compared to last year and nights available for the month of August in short term rentals as reported by Key Data was 5,893 which was a decrease of 5% compared to last year. For the running twelve months short term rental occupancy increased by 4%, average daily rate decreased by 6%, RevPAR decreased by 2% and room nights available decreased by 1%

Ms. Wheeler called for questions. None were raised.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad commented that the data indicates a direct relationship between hotels and short term rentals noting that as more rooms shift to Airbnb, hotel occupancy and ADR also declines.

Ms. Wheeler responded that the trend charts included in the meeting agenda packet show Visit Florida STR data compared to Marion County STR data and Key Data so the council is able to see how the trends align.

Mr. Gaekwad asked for the ADR for Airbnbs compared to hotels.

Ms. Wheeler responded that the ADR for short term rentals was \$113 whereas for hotels in Marion County it was \$103.87

Mr. Gaekwad asked for the RevPAR data as well.

Ms. Wheeler responded that RevPAR for short term rentals was \$36 and RevPAR for hotels and traditional lodging operators was \$49.61

Mr. Gaekwad observed that the comparison remains challenging to interpret, describing it as “a hodgepodge” that makes it difficult to determine who is renting.

Ms. Wheeler added that there may be shifts in the data as new hotels open in the downtown area. She explained that currently, with only one downtown hotel, visitors who want to stay in the metro area often turn to short-term rentals. Once the additional hotels come online, it will be interesting to observe how occupancy patterns change.

TDC Events Calendar

Ms. Wheeler advised that there is an events calendar in each meeting agenda packet and it is also available online which includes all events approved during the current meeting and any events scheduled through the new fiscal year.

Marketing and Communications Update

Ms. Wheeler presented the Marketing and Communications update located on page 171 of the meeting agenda packet on behalf of Ms. Jessica Heller who was attending a media mission with Visit Florida in the United Kingdom along with the president and key representatives of Visit Florida. She noted that the mission was going extremely well and that Ms. Heller will provide a full update at the next meeting.

Ms. Wheeler highlighted a few items from the Marketing and Communications update. Ms. Wheeler explained that September was a quieter month for media activity as staff finalized the

closeout of the FY 2025 media plan. The new FY 2026 plan would launch in October, at which point additional activity would resume. She noted that digital placements were still active during this transition period, while print advertising had paused in order to close the fiscal year. Billboards, however, remained in place and continued to run consistently. Ms. Wheeler highlighted the significant work done on industry facing and community advocacy communications, drawing attention to the third page of the Marketing and Communications update which details the number of press releases that have been issued. Staff has also made significant efforts to educate the community about available funding programs. She reminded attendees that letters of intent for the Arts and Cultural Destination Enhancement Funding Program were due by October 1, and encouraged any interested parties to connect with Ms. Candace Shelton following the meeting for more information. She noted that press releases also included significant information about the Flagler Awards and that several press releases were done through Visit Florida which achieved strong media pick up. Ms. Wheeler closed by thanking those who have collaborated with the VCB to host press trips in July and August as it is a great time to get people into the community and writing about things to do.

Ms. Wheeler turned the floor over to Mr. Corry Locke to continue with the next item on the agenda.

Sales Update

Mr. Locke provided the sales update, highlighting several items of new business. He reported that the MPI Tampa Area Board Retreat will be hosted in Ocala next weekend. While event is not anticipated to generate a significant number of room nights, it is valuable to build relationships with board members and showcase the community's hospitality. The VCB staff will host the group for dinner on October 2 in downtown Ocala. Mr. Locke then shared that the Big East Swimming and Diving Competition were hosted for a site visit that included the Big East Assistant Commissioner and their Commissioner of Broadcasting on Tuesday at Florida Aquatics Swimming & Training (FAST) which went well. They have confirmed that the event will be held in Ocala February 18-21, 2026 and will also return in 2027. The Florida Interscholastic Cycling League Mountain Biking event is an hosted by an organization based out of Tallahassee that Mr. Locke connected with at the Florida Sports Foundation Summit in June. The organization is exploring opportunities to bring the event to Ocala/Marion County to so mountain biking at Santos Trails and utilize the Florida Horse Park as a vendor area with 100 vendors.

Mr. Locke presented new leads next. The Blue Knights Florida Spring Meeting is hosted by the Blue Knights which is a motorcycle group made up of retired and former police officers. The organization is considering Ocala for their spring meeting in April 2026. Mr. Locke and Mr. Bryan Day met with the group and believe they will select Ocala to host the event. The event is anticipated to generate 300 room nights. The Florida Hospital Association has expressed interest for their Board Retreat to be held May 8-10 of 2026 and is anticipated to generate 80 room nights. The Florida Hospital Association also has a Workforce Summit they are considering hosting in Ocala/Marion County September 11-12 of 2026 that is anticipated to generate 200 room nights. Fishers of Men, a Christian-based fishing organization, is considering Orange Lake for an October 2026 event, expected to generate approximately 200 room nights. The event was previously

hosted in Ocala/Marion County in 2013 however Mr. Locke recently met with the group at Connect Miami. The UF/IFAS Extension Office is reviewing Ocala as a site for its annual meeting in May 2027, which could generate over 1,200 room nights. The Florida Supervisors of Election are also considering Ocala for their December 2027 annual conference, with an anticipated 380 room nights.

Mr. Locke also reported on lost business noting that he had been recently notified that Ocala/Marion County did not win a bid for the Florida Propane Gas Association. A bid was distributed in the VCB's CRM, IDSS approximately three or four months prior however, the organization chose to host the event in another location. The Association Societies Alliance also informed the team that Ocala/Marion County was not selected as the host location. Mr. Locke added that this was a national bid with over 150 responses.

He then updated the council on upcoming tradeshow that the sales team would be attending. The TEAMS Conference is a large sports industry conference that is affiliated with the Olympic Committee and the National Cheerleading Association giving the team the opportunity to meet with several valuable stakeholders. The conference will be held in Columbus, Ohio on October 13-15. The team will also attend the FSAE Education Expo where they will have a sponsor booth and several partners attending with them including four or five hoteliers that will share the booth with Staff. The VCB is expected to have a significant presence at that event with the opportunity to garner some new business.

Mr. Gaekwad asked when and where the FSAE Education Expo will be held.

Mr. Locke responded that event will be held in Tallahassee on October 15 at the Donald L. Tucker Civic Center.

Mr. Gaekwad asked how large the event is.

Mr. Locke responded that the total number of attendees is between 100-150, primarily meeting planners that are FSAE members based in Tallahassee and destinations. He noted that there are still two available slots for partners to participate. Lastly Mr. Bryan Day would be attending the FSAE Central Florida Power Luncheon to represent Marion County.

Mr. Locke called for any questions regarding the sales update. None were raised.

Mr. Adams thanked Mr. Locke for the update.

America 250

Ms. Shaffer reported that the America 250 initiative had been raised during the recent budget workshop hearings and noted that the budget was approved. She explained that America 250 will be a major event nationwide and is a significant event for Visit Florida at a state level. The U.S. Semi Quincentennial Commission has been established by Congress to orchestrate celebrations nationwide. Ms. Shaffer emphasized that the Marion County Commissioners have directed her to aid in coordinating celebrations for America 250 and was eager to explore opportunities whether statewide, nationwide or at a local level. She deferred to Commissioner Carl Zalak to provide any additional updates on America 250.

Commissioner Zalak advised that there are a number of initiatives being considered for America 250 and that the celebration offers a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity to celebrate the country. He expressed that America 250 represents a unifying opportunity for the community. He advised that he has been named the Chairman for the America 250 board and has met with the City of Ocala and the Marion County School Board. He plans to meet with the City of Dunnellon, City of Belleview and many more partners. He explained that the board is currently exploring the option of doing a parade for the America 250 celebration. Being that July 4th of 2026 falls on a Saturday it allows the opportunity to host events throughout the week leading up to July 4th. He explained that Marion County intends to embrace an Americana theme beginning January 1, 2026, with both internal and external communications reflecting the historic 1776 milestone. Plans are underway to include a parade in the thematic and coordinate with the City of Ocala on additional projects. He added that a significant amount of funds will be needed to execute the projects and the board has an expectation that the Tourist Development department will pay for tourism related activities while the County Commission will raise funds from business partners for general non-tourism related activities. Commissioner Zalak noted that meeting are also underway with the CEP to make reservations for items such as fireworks. One fireworks provider that has been contacted proposed producing four simultaneous shows across the county with synchronized music, which would require early reservations due to high demand.

Mr. Danny Gaekwad asked if there would be a drone show for the America 250 celebrations.

Commissioner Zalak advised that there would not be a drone show as it would be too costly. He stated that no programming for the event had been finalized but that the board plans to establish a committee and several sub committees to include veterans and community business partners. He encouraged Councilmembers to bring any suggestions to the board that may enhance the celebration. The kickoff is anticipated in late March 2026 during Marion County Day, launching a "100 days to July 4th" campaign to encourage residents and businesses to display flags and patriotic symbols throughout the county.

Mr. Gaekwad asked if the City of Ocala would be participating with the County.

Commissioner Carl Zalak responded that everyone would be participating. The City of Ocala intends to host daytime activities downtown at Tuscawill Park while the County intends to host evening activities including the parade and fireworks at Veterans Park. He stated that he has not yet met with other municipalities so he is unsure of their intentions for the celebration. Commissioner Zalak also highlighted a grant provided by the Governor to the Daughters of the American Revolution to create lasting commemorations of the nation's founders. Statues have already been placed in counties such as Jefferson (Thomas Jefferson) and Washington, and a proposal has been submitted for Francis Marion, the county's namesake. The hope is to unveil a statue of "The Swamp Fox" at Veterans Park as part of the celebrations. In addition, the City of Ocala has offered to collaborate on programming, such as special screenings during the celebratory week. Commissioner Zalak suggested that showing films like The Patriot loosely based on Francis Marion would tie directly to local heritage and help unify the community. He concluded by emphasizing that the County is developing a variety of ideas to bring residents together, including parades, fireworks, cultural events, and patriotic displays, and that further

discussions will be brought back to the TDC for consideration of funding and support. He noted that Ms. Shaffer's position on the VISIT FLORIDA Board would be instrumental in ensuring Marion County's participation in state-level America 250 initiatives.

Mr. Adams verified that there were no additional items on the agenda that would require a vote.

Ms. Shaffer confirmed that there were no additional items on the agenda which would require a vote and that she had a few more items for discussion before Mr. Adams would be able to adjourn the meeting.

Barry Mansfield out 10:31am

Job Fair hosted by CareerSource CLM

Ms. Shaffer informed the Council that CareerSource CLM, in partnership with the College of Central Florida (CF), will be hosting a Marion County job fair. She noted that CF has recently launched a new hospitality school, and the job fair will serve as a way to connect students with local opportunities in the tourism and hospitality industries. Ms. Shaffer shared that she had recently presented to CF students and expressed enthusiasm about seeing a succession plan developed within the community that supports the future of tourism as a whole. Council members were encouraged to participate in the job fair if interested.

Notation for Record

Marketing, Sales and Advocacy Plans

Ms. Shaffer noted for the record that while no presentation was given at the meeting the meeting materials included the Marketing Plan, Sales Plan and Advocacy Plan which builds on the Media Plan that was approved in the previous month. She emphasized the importance of these documents for the tourism industry as they develop their own individual marketing plans.

Long Range Tourism Plan Tracking Document.

Ms. Shaffer highlighted that Ms. Wheeler has undertaken significant work in reassessing the Long-Range Tourism Plan with the knowledge that in 2026 the County will be revising both the County's plan and the department's plan. A tracking document has been included in the meeting materials which demonstrates progress made thus far.

Sales Report

Ms. Shaffer advised that the sales report prepared by Mr. Corry Locke is also included in the meeting materials for review.

Old Business

Mr. Adams called for any old business and none was brought forth.

New Business

Mr. Adams called for any new business and none was brought forth

Public Comment

Upcoming Meeting

Mr. Adams called for any public comment and none was brought forth.

Mr. Adams stated that the next TDC meeting will be on Thursday, October 23, 2025 at 9am.

The meeting adjourned at 10:33 am.



Rus Adams, Chairman