

City of Fort Lauderdale

City Hall
100 N. Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
www.fortlauderdale.gov



Meeting Minutes - APPROVED

Monday, June 2, 2014

12:00 PM

**Joint Workshop with Beach Business Improvement District
Advisory Committee
City Commission Conference Room**

CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP

FORT LAUDERDALE CITY COMMISSION

JOHN P. "JACK" SEILER Mayor - Commissioner
ROMNEY ROGERS Vice Mayor - Commissioner - District IV
BRUCE G. ROBERTS Commissioner - District I
DEAN J. TRANTALIS Commissioner - District II
BOBBY B. DuBOSE Commissioner - District III

LEE R. FELDMAN, City Manager
JOHN HERBST, City Auditor
JONDA K. JOSEPH, City Clerk
CYNTHIA A. EVERETT, City Attorney

Meeting was called to order at 12:09 p.m. by Mayor Seiler.

ATTENDANCE ROLL CALL

Present: 5 – Mayor John P. “Jack” Seiler, Vice-Mayor Romney Rogers, Commissioner Bruce G. Roberts, Commissioner Dean J. Trantalis and Commissioner Bobby B. DuBose

Also Present: Beach Business Improvement District Advisory Committee: Chair Amaury J. Piedra, Members Ina Lee, Eduardo Fernandez, Marylouise Fitzgibbon and Bill Cunningham and Manager Dan Barnett

No public comments were submitted by email for this meeting.

ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

BUS-1 14-0762 COMMITTEE PRIORITIES AND BRANDING OF FORT LAUDERDALE BEACH

Tortuga Music Festival

Beach Business Improvement District (BID) Chairman Amaury Piedra commented that the vast majority of BID funds in years past went toward cleaning. They want to work toward impacting beach businesses and increasing revenue. They now have the opportunity to host more events. He described the evolution of Tortuga Music Festival and its success. Local residents as well as tourists attend and spend money. It was done without having to request funding. The promoters expressed interest in hosting a second event and have requested some funding for it. They hope to hold events back to back in April similar to the Coachella Music Festival in California as well as potentially another event in the fall around November. The BID would like to partner with them. Any profit would come back into the BID for other events. The BID has set a three-year time table for events to become self-sustaining with the thought that if one is not self-sustaining by year three, it does not make sense. He felt there is an opportunity to be known for live music events. High-quality, impactful live music events can help brand the beach. In response to Commissioner Trantalis, Piedra provided more information about the music festival in California and the type of music planned for the back-to-back events.

Member Marylouise Fitzgibbon noted that Tortuga Music Festival is well-operated. Traffic flow is well-organized. It filled hotel rooms. Hoteliers have noted that they get a better rate for the occupancy, which drives more revenue into the destination overall. Piedra agreed that the Westin had some of the highest rates of the first four months of the year during the Tortuga festival. Member Eduardo Fernandez said that Tortuga does more than generate revenue to hotels. It also benefits the businesses on the beach and local transportation. Attendees are high-quality. It raises the bar, brings income to the market and puts Fort Lauderdale on the map for many people who would not otherwise visit. It is very positive overall.

Commissioner Trantalis agreed with the BID's focus on the beach. The beach is underutilized as an entertainment venue. He stressed the importance of having skilled promoters. Fort Lauderdale beach seems to be uniquely positioned these types of events. He encouraged them to consider the inconvenience of those who reside on the beach when festivals are held. They understand there will be

a certain number of events and that the beach is used for entertainment venues, but care should be taken to not have too many. Spacing them out is probably best. There are other events such as walks and runs that occur in addition to concerts. He noted that once the new Aquatic Center is complete, it will attract additional clientele. Piedra agreed. The BID's vision is to have three or four large events each year to gain national notoriety rather than a constant stream of small ones.

Commissioner Roberts thought the back-to-back events were a good idea. Tortuga has a reputation for being a high-quality event. He did not want to do something like was held in Miami Beach that got out of hand. He has confidence in the BID. Piedra felt that Miami has become known for nightclubs and so forth and Fort Lauderdale has an opportunity to become known for live events, a different type of music and clientele.

Vice-Mayor Rogers agreed with many of the previous comments. He agreed with the concept of participating in partnerships and improving the business model as to the venue's value. He has concerns about the number of events. The City should be sensitive to traffic issues and impact on beach residents.

Commissioner DuBose wanted to ensure that as conversations go forward, the BID considers the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and the County. He believed the vast majority of people who come to Broward County do so because of Fort Lauderdale and its beaches. It is more than filling hotel rooms, it is transportation and businesses. He applauded the BID's initiative. He encouraged the BID to make sure all revenue that should be coming to the City from County partners is exhausted.

Mayor Seiler agreed that the Tortuga event improved in its second year in many aspects. He has heard complaints that the event should not be held before Easter. He would be more inclined to have back-to-back events if held after Easter. The beach must remain open during the week. He would support another event in November but not an electronic music festival. He encouraged the BID to look at September, which seems to be the month with the least activity. It should not conflict with the boat show. He agreed that a few good events are better than something every weekend. He pointed out that partnerships share in losses and profits. The City is not in a position to underwrite losses. He agreed with Vice-Mayor Rogers that a reasonable fee for use of the beach should be determined. He agreed with Commissioner DuBose that more than 50 percent of the CVB's revenues come from Fort Lauderdale hotels. Those dollars should come back for Fort Lauderdale events. Piedra noted that Easter will be in March next year, so the April dates are after season. This year, the promoters wanted the event to be held in April so that it will be known that the event is in April. He added that with a sponsorship, the money never comes back. With this event now off the ground, he felt the BID could achieve a profit or at least get a good portion of their support funds back and use those funds toward a November event.

Mayor Seiler concluded that there is consensus for the BID to explore this topic further.

Beach Branding

Piedra explained that the BID is trying to brand the beach by special events, making it known as a live music venue. There are insufficient marketing dollars to launch a massive branding campaign. He would prefer to use funding on tangible events. Member Fitzgibbon commented that hoteliers struggle with determining the brand of the beach. Hotels built in the last few years have changed the beach's image to a much more luxury customer. A wide range of promoters ask the BID for funding. She supported spending funds to retain a branding firm to identify what the beach has become. Mayor Seiler posed the idea of defining the branding by the entities that receive BID funds. He thought there

should be a balance of high-end and family. He did not want to price families out of Fort Lauderdale Beach. Fitzgibbon considered Fort Lauderdale Beach as approachable luxury. However they are constantly trying to articulate what is approachable luxury. She believed the BID is in agreement that they do not want to launch a marketing campaign and a new slogan. They simply want to define Fort Lauderdale Beach. Commissioner Trantalis agreed with Mayor Seiler; the definition is based on what is created on the beach in terms of price point for hotel rooms and condominiums and the look and feel of the beach. It creates itself and it is better because it is not forced. Vice-Mayor Rogers agreed. He believed that the BID represents a certain clientele and ought to brand itself as such. It can be done by how the BID allocates funds. They should ignore the CVB's efforts. He did not see a benefit in going outside the BID's boundaries in terms of branding. The beach is successful because of its diversity. Commissioner DuBose pointed out that a lot of marketing money is spent through the CVB, and it would be difficult to compete with it. Branding is more about an individual's experience, so it comes down to customer service. Places are often branded by word of mouth rather than a consultant's assessment. He thought it would be more advantageous to focus on the individual experience. Fitzgibbon commented that everyone may be saying the same thing. There is no desire to hire a marketing firm. However the BID wants to identify its image organically so they all have some sort of alignment. The BID is not particularly strategic in what it is currently funding, and need to narrow their focus.

Commissioner Trantalis commented that compared to five years ago, the customer service by all of the hotels he has visited in the last six months has been outstanding by every employee he encountered. Mayor Seiler agreed. Commissioner DuBose felt that such a high level of service is actually the brand. Commissioner Trantalis indicated that the City will do its part through public works improvements to make the beach more attractive but he felt the brand will create itself. Piedra commented that the BID continues to work with Parks and Recreation during special time periods to augment City services. Vice-Mayor Rogers felt that being known as one of the cleanest beaches is a good brand in itself.

Piedra noted that the BID's manager, Dan Barnett, is a part of funding request processing. There is a formal application and post-event assessment process now in place. Piedra went on to say that there are about 40 to 45 dates per year in Miami Beach when the hotels have serious compression from special events. Fort Lauderdale Beach has about 15 dates per year. He would like to continue building on this. Vice-Mayor Rogers noted that, until five years ago when Saturday Night Alive launched, there was no summer marketing for the beach. He felt Fort Lauderdale Beach is a young market with the luxury brand and the BID is figuring it out. He did not think they have done anything wrong so far.

Beach Ambassadors

Piedra explained that this program is a way to improve service. Uniformed citizens would be stationed along the primary beach corridors to provide directions and information to tourists. It is similar to what is done in Times Square. Mayor Seiler suggested capitalizing on people in the community who want to volunteer such as retirees and they would receive some benefit such as discounts at area hotels and restaurants. Piedra said the BID has just begun discussions on this topic and has not worked out the details. One possibility is to approach hospitality schools about students becoming ambassadors as an internship. It needs to be consistent. Member Lee said she reviewed West Palm Beach's ambassador program, which is not volunteer-based. It also assists and supplements the police department. It was professionally operated and has had a significant impact on their community. She would like this group to present to the BID. In addition to providing directions, the West Palm Beach ambassadors also serve as security detail at local malls. The Central Beach Alliance (CBA) is attempting to address safety issues on the beach, so this may be something where the residents and business community could collaborate. Piedra indicated that the ambassadors could report issues and be a presence. Commissioner Roberts agreed that consistency is key, which may be difficult with a volunteer program.

Piedra indicated that the initial thought was to have a paid base which would then be supplemented with volunteers or interns. The City Manager felt that ocean rescue lifeguards could be used for this purpose also. There should be some training and daily updates so they are aware of what is going on at the beach. Those positions are staffed during daylight hours. City staff would be willing to handle training. Signage on the lifeguard station that beach questions could be answered, for example, would be needed. He plans to propose in next year's budget some options for increasing City employee presence on the beach separate and apart from the ambassador program. City employees would receive information with their morning briefing.

Beach Operations: Food and Beverages on the Beach

Piedra explained that it is not a money-making venture for hotels; it is a matter of providing service to customers. However, he did not want hawking of wares up and down the beach. Image is important. The City Manager explained that discussions are underway about whether food and non-alcoholic beverage service should be exclusive. He is crafting a regulatory scheme that would require a non-exclusive license for venues that meet all requirements, one of which is that vendors cannot walk along the beach soliciting customers. If called, they could deliver to the beach. The restaurants would be responsible for their own marketing. Products must be environmentally sound. In response to Commissioner Trantalis, he said staff has not considered allowing food stands. Rules covering concessions are fairly strict. The goal would be to encourage commerce, but not an open door to the entire world. Commissioner Trantalis wanted to allow the large hotels and restaurants to deliver food and beverage to people on the beach. However, it is a dangerous situation for wait staff to cross A1A. Therefore he suggested a stand from which food and beverages could be dispensed and certain businesses could qualify to have a stand. The City Manager explained that it would have to be stationed on the sidewalk. The State considers business on the beach to be encroaching on turtle habitat. Moreover, the sidewalk is not wide enough and there are no proper facilities. Piedra said the BID has been working with staff on this issue; the BID is aligned with staff. He also recognized the scope of marketing issue already raised. He wants to avoid vendors walking a 500-foot radius peddling. The BID felt it is better for a single waiter crossing A1A instead of all of the visitors. Member Fitzgibbon questioned how to regulate, for example, another business serving in front of The Ritz Carlton Hotel. Commissioner Roberts thought it could be a disadvantage for other restaurants to serve in front of The Ritz because that is not their clientele. Restricting advertising would also be helpful. Piedra explained that the hotels do not want several restaurants competing for individual customers. The City Manager advised it would be non-exclusive, but the restaurant would have to be located within 500 feet of the point of service and each restaurant would need a license from the City. Piedra indicated that the implementation goal is the fourth quarter of this year. Mayor Seiler did not see that the City would object provided a certain level of decorum is maintained.

Memorial Day Weekend

Mayor Seiler summarized his view of the crowd during the holiday weekend. There several family reunions on Monday. He saw one minor disagreement over a table. The crowd changed around 4 p.m. It appeared that a couple hundred people went to the beach simply to create a problem. It was very disrespectful. He thought the law enforcement personnel were outstanding. He supported the staff's decisions. The Commission needs to determine for the long-term how to program Sunday and Monday to avoid this type of activity. Possibly something could be programmed on the beach with the military on Memorial Day. The military reflects the diversity of the community and is a well-respected segment of the population. It was disturbing that there seemed to be no purpose of the disruptive individuals at the beach on Memorial Day. Commissioner Trantalis questioned whether programming would prevent future problems. Mayor Seiler felt that individuals may not misbehave in a crowd where it would not be well-received. Many families that were gathered at the beach on Monday left because they did not like

the environment. It was reminiscent of the atmosphere at Miami Beach when suddenly things change and the crowd becomes louder and more raucous. When there are gatherings for beach volleyball or beach soccer, they are well-attended and there are few problems. Access cannot be restricted, so it must be programmed differently in order to bring a crowd that appreciates the beach. Commissioner Trantalis pointed out that this happened on another holiday also. Member Fitzgibbon supported programming on holidays. There are probably just four or five holidays each year when a problem could be anticipated. Advance planning makes sense. Piedra also agreed with the programming idea. He felt that the BID could work with the City on it. He was in Miami Beach on the holiday, and police stationed on Arthur Godfrey Bridge were stopping vehicles. Mayor Seiler noted that Miami Beach has massive causeways leading up to a bridge that allows them to set up checkpoints. Fort Lauderdale would have to shut down Federal Highway. Member Lee commented that images posted on social media have a real impact on businesses. It appeared in this case that Broward County buses were bringing in large groups of youth from west Broward. Programming is important but it would also be helpful to take preventive measures. Commissioner Roberts noted that in years past, there were New Year's Eve and spring break riots. What happened on Memorial Day was a disturbance, not a riot. It is important not to let the negativity fester. There was a core group of people who got together over social media and they decided to go have a fight. Some buses were turned back. He thought more arrests should have been made. There are ways to restrict certain access. The Sheriff's Office had a DUI checkpoint on Federal Highway and 17 Street Causeway. Vehicles could be stopped randomly to get a feel for what is coming onto the beach and it is being looked into by the Police Department. This was a diverse group of troublemakers. Of 43 addresses, just three resided in Fort Lauderdale and there were only a handful of juveniles. In the future there may be a chance to hold back in the beginning with respect to appearance. He referred to the riot equipment on the scene and how it was played by the press although many other communities had problems also.

Member Lee suggested a text messaging program to notify hoteliers when such a disturbance is occurring would be helpful. Commissioner Roberts added that not just the hoteliers but also surrounding neighborhoods could benefit from that information. He felt that nextdoor.com in that regard would be useful. The infrastructure exists but it needs to be coordinated and implemented.

Mayor Seiler referred to the need to continue working on improving activity at Beach Place. There is a high volume of foot traffic across A1A at that location. Commissioner Roberts noted that disturbances can begin from impeded traffic flow.

Mayor Seiler felt that the BID's vision for the beach is well aligned with the Commission's vision.

There being no other business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 1:23 p.m.