



Department of Urban Redevelopment

Fort Pierce Authentic Tours Meeting

April 5, 2012

Minutes

Board Members Present: John Barry "Chop" Legé, Donald Voss, Michael Adams, Mark Harrison, Roger Rucker, Jann Widmayer, Charlotte Lombard

Board Members Absent: Clive Daem (**excused**)

Staff in Attendance: Jon Ward, Director; Anne Satterlee, Communications and Marketing Manager; Queen Thompkins, Administrative Assistant; Libby Woodruff, Grants Administrator

FPAT Members and Visitors: Billy Gibson; James Burke; Cristin Ryan; Dean Kubitschek; Arlo Koletzky; Rosemary Knight; Deanna Green; John Provance, Chairman of the Communitywide Council; Alan Hayes; Kerry Firth; Federico Sandoval

Chop Legé called the FPAT Advisory Board meeting to order at 3:34 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Afterwards, Queen Thompkins called roll. Mr. Legé asked for approval of the Minutes from the March 1, 2012 Advisory Board meeting. There being no changes to the minutes, **motion was made by Don Voss and seconded by Michael Adams that the minutes from the March 1, 2012 meeting be accepted; motion carried.**

I. FINANCIAL REPORT:

A copy of the financial statement as of March 30, 2012 was given to each Board member. The financial report shows Grant Funding provided by CDBG for Fiscal Year 2011 was \$75,000.00 and for Fiscal Year 2012 was \$80,000.00. This gives a total of \$155,000.00 Grants Fund available. \$1,700.00 has been received for membership and \$1,171.41 has been awarded for Advertising. The total Business Grants paid was \$38,166.88. Net funds available is \$117,361.71.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. Oyster Fest – Update

Mr. Voss stated that he has attended at least 10 different events since the last Board meeting wearing his oyster costume. He said the Biker's event last week was his most

lively event. Mr. Voss said they passed out at least 1,000 "Save the Date" for the event this weekend. He said they are still desperately in need of volunteers for the Oyster Fest. Mr. Voss presented the Board members with a copy of the event catalogue for the Oyster Fest that showed pertinent information such as where the bathrooms are located and where the oysters will be. Mr. Legé asked if it had been discussed how many people are anticipated on attending the Oyster Fest. Mr. Voss said they are estimating at least 4,000 people attending. He stated that the food items would be cheaper than they were at the Sandy Shoes Festival. The appetizers would start at \$6.00 or six (6) tickets. Mr. Voss asked again if everyone would consider volunteering to help at the Oyster Fest.

Libby said they have over 60 vendors sign up for the event. Dean Kubitscheck, Director of the Fort Pierce City Marina, gave an overview of the event, and talked about the Sunrise Theatre ticket contest. Mr. Kubitscheck also displayed an event T-shirt and encouraged all FPAT members to volunteer to help.

B. Membership Committee Update/Evaluation of New Applicants

Libby Woodruff announced the following new membership applications were received – The Orange Snowman, the Lady Stuart, d/b/a Fort Pierce Lady Deep Sea Fishing, and River Lily Cruises.

Jon Ward asked if the membership committee wanted to consider the applications individually, or in a group. Chop Lege suggested that the applications be considered individually.

Don Voss said that he believes it is understood that if you operate in Fort Pierce and live in Fort Pierce, you are eligible for grants, but if you operate outside Fort Pierce, and you want to join our group, what do we do? Chop Lege invited Jon Ward to explain this to the group.

Jon said that as we become more successful, success would bring more people who obviously want to be with us, and that will be a good thing. Jon said he is wondering if the Board wants to consider implementing some sort of 'associate' membership, as opposed to a 'full' membership. The reason he is suggesting this be considered is because there will be a variety of businesses who want to join the program and want to contribute to the program, but for a variety of reasons, they will not normally qualify for our grant dollars. Jon also said that we have to remember that all of the funding for this organization thus far has come from the Community Wide Council of the City of Fort Pierce, which is CDBG (HUD Community Development Block Grant) dollars. In addition, those dollars are for a specific geographic area – Fort Pierce, so we are not able to grant any kind of programs that are outside our program area. That automatically precludes us from granting funds to folks who are not doing business in the area. Jon explained that we should be clear on this so that there will not be any surprises. He said the best way to clarify this is that when businesses are being admitted into the program, admit the businesses as either full members or associate members, and, if you are a full member, you qualify for the grant program, and if you are an associate member, you get everything except the ability to participate in the grants.

Jon opened the floor for discussion on the membership issue and said he is looking for an intelligent way to resolve this. He said we do not want to appear to be exclusive and standoffish, but we also cannot lose sight of the focus of our mission.

Roger Rucker asked if the Advisory Board will review the applications then determine how the business benefits the Fort Pierce area, then the Board will make the decision, per

applicant, as to full membership or associate. Jon agreed, stating that the Membership Committee will meet and vet the applications, and will be able to see pretty clearly, where they are from and what they do, then they will bring their recommendations before they Board. Jon continued that when the Membership Committee brings their recommendations before the Board, they should recommend some applicants for full membership and some for associates. Jon said that after the memberships are approved, the welcome letter should be clear on the type of membership that was approved and contain a listing of the benefits of the membership.

Libby Woodruff stated that she wanted to reiterate that potential members need to understand the current grant awards process for FPAT and that the CDBG funds used for the grant awards do come from HUD and can only be used to spawn economic development in Fort Pierce. So that it is not like we are trying to be selfish, but factually, our hands are tied when it comes to awarding the grant funds.

Don Voss asked if we should be letting people know up front, and not vetting them, taking their membership dues, then telling them that they do not qualify for grant opportunities. Jon agreed and they discussed the possibilities of having a different colored membership form or some other avenue to let prospective members know up front. Don said that the opportunity to apply for grant funds is an advantage, but he is hopeful that this would only be a small advantage to the program, in comparison to everything else they are going to get through the program.

Mike Adams brought up and the board discussed other opportunities associate members should garner from their membership. Jon Ward said his biggest concern is that FPAT stays focused and that 5 years from now we have not lost our way, because we waffle, so we need to set a course and stay it. He encouraged the Advisory Board to make the decisions on how the membership is going to work but also encouraged them to not lose focus on the founding mission of FPAT.

Jan Widmayer suggested FPAT incorporate member benefits into the website, letting potential members know up front what they will qualify for.

Roger Rucker stated that he does understand what FPAT is trying to do. Commented that Red Stag Tours website is Okeechobee. Mark Harrison commented that this is being updated. Roger also stated that John with airboat tours is outside the city doing business but they are members and are getting money through the program.

Mentioned that River Lily Cruises launches in Port St. Lucie, does not bring people here, etc. Jon Ward stated that some of the things we want to have as assets to FPAT, like ranches, since they are a key element to our ecological tours. However, the ranches and county tourism businesses, although outside the city limits, function within the City of Fort Pierce. And, the airboat tours, since there is not a lake inside the city limits, they consider their self a Fort Pierce business. However, if you are truly a Port St. Lucie business, and you conduct your business all in Port St. Lucie, then you are not a Fort Pierce business.

Jan Widmayer stated that we need to define the membership requirements and limitations up front, where potential members can choose to or not join. Jon Ward stated that the Board needs to set the requirements and the path we will take and we'll take it.

Don Voss recommended that the Fort Pierce Lady membership application be accepted today, seconded by Mark Harrison; motion carried to approve the membership for Fort Pierce Lady.

Don Voss then recommended Orange Snowman, website designer. Jon Ward asked how the Orange Snowman is a ecotourism provider. Mike Adams said this is an example of what an associate member should be – someone who has very strong interest in being part of the group – and is dedicated to the cause.

Charlotte Lombard stated that in her eyes this is a membership-based organization that is defined by the benefits that the members receive. Certain members, the ones that are based in Fort Pierce and bring tourism, will qualify for grants, while an affiliate or 'friendly' will receive benefits, that maybe isn't advertising on the site, but just a listing on the site. When tourists come here, they may do everything in Fort Pierce they want to do and want to explore a little bit further, but it still benefits the area. Maybe they are just an 'affiliate' or a 'friendly partner' sort of member that gets a listing but does not necessarily get all of the benefits that the Fort Pierce members do. Perhaps we can create some guidelines and criteria between those two members.

Jon said that it now sounds like that the general feeling is that the Orange Snowman would not be qualified as a full member, but because we are formulating this associate member thing, we don't want to take his check with his anticipation of one thing, and now we are changing the rules in mid stream. So perhaps what we ought to do now is formulate what the benefits are for the associate members and inform and inform folks that we will consider them as associate members if they want to apply under those guidelines, and if they do, we'll move forward, and if they don't, we'll give them their money back.

Charlotte Lombard stated that associate members should have a different price because they are not receiving as many benefits. Jon stated that in all fairness, membership dues do not pay for the grant awards.

Jon Ward reintroduced Orange Snowman for associate membership. Charlotte Lombard suggested we hold the application for the Orange Snowman until we define an associate membership for FPAT.

The Board decided that they will hold the membership application and check for River Lily Cruises, which is based out of Port St. Lucie, until the criteria for associate membership is defined, at which time River Lily Cruises will be given the opportunity to decide if they want to join as an associate member.

The Board considered Al's Family Farms, Tours and OJ Corral. Don Voss recommended their membership be approved, seconded by Mark Harrison; motion carried to approve Al's Family Farms, Tours and OJ Corral for membership.

Jon asked for the input from the board as to what to offer associate members, and if there will be a reduced membership fee. Jon stated that staff will develop some guidelines for this and present them at the next meeting for comments. Jon encouraged the board to email their recommendations for the associate membership status to him or to Libby Woodruff.

Don Voss asked if we are a copyright organization. He stated that FPAT could be a model and this could be a franchise situation. Don suggested that associate members from different areas could establish themselves, following the FPAT model in Port St. Lucie or another area. Libby Woodruff stated that if a new business wanted to start up in Fort Pierce right now and call themselves "Fort Pierce Authentic Tours" then they could do it because our name is not copyrighted.

Don suggested we copyright and reserve our name. Jon stated that we would do some research and provide a report on copyrighting the name FPAT at the next meeting.

Roger Rucker questioned that on the original application, we already established what dues would cost but now we are going to establish what the different types of membership get, a full vs an associate membership. Don Voss stated that this is good because we are coming up on our annual 'redo our dues' time in October, so this will be a perfect time to have this all laid out.

Libby Woodruff stated that she will add the associate category to the membership and let the Board decide.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Big Birding Festival – Mark Harrison

Mark stated that the Big Birding festival was held in about a 100-mile perimeter starting at the Port Labelle Inn.

Mark asked if the Oyster Festival could be a multi-day event, and food for thought since the southwest Florida area is really a major birding area.

Mark stated that we have world-class research, Harbor Ranch, the Adams Ranch, world class ranching, and he would like us to aspire to be a first-class operation. He challenged us to set ourselves apart, where we could incorporate something multi-day, event, to feed into the hotels, etc. and branch out – all food for thought.

Dean Kubitscheck commented that the Oyster Festival will go to a multi-day event, as attendance rises. He also stated that he believes that the growth in birding in Fort Pierce will come with the construction of the islands. Dean also explained the SHIP Board and their vision to sink a ship and create a new dive site in Fort Pierce.

Jon Ward explained that a multi-day festival has the potential to acquire funding from the County, when we are able to count the influx of tourism. Charlotte Lombard explained that the Tourist Development Council does grant annual funding to the Treasure Coast Sports Commission every year because they are able to verify room nights, and many times, it is a very mechanical process, where attendees are actually filling out forms, and rooms are verified at hotels. She explained that it is a lot of work to do all of that, but you have to have the numbers in order to justify the funding. Charlotte suggested that we could qualify for this, as more events are held here, for sure.

Mark Harrison encouraged everyone to go to other festivals and see what other people are doing. Chop Lege commented that he has witnessed bird festivals where the first year or two there were 500 to 1,000 people showing up, now, just a few years later, there are 60-70,000 people attending. He stated that FPAT look into focusing a festival of some sort on birding and the islands and also that he is all for contributing his time and expertise to develop a festival because it is a given, that when the islands are constructed, the birds are going to take it and people are going to come to see them. He stated that there will be unique types of species of birds and they will build it up because they will nest there. Chop says he believes we literally have a 'bird in the hand' because as the islands are built, 90% of the work will be done for us.

Dean suggested that if anyone is interested in serving on the Oyster Festival Board of Directors, please join in. Libby Woodruff stated that the date for next year's Oyster Festival is April 6.

Chop Lege led the board in complimenting the FPAT advertisement in the TC Almanac, and thanked Kerry Firth for her outstanding work. Kerry announced that the magazine has been distributed and she has copies available should any FPAT businesses like some for their individual businesses.

IV. BOARD COMMENTS

Charlotte Lombard announced that St. Lucie County launched its new tourism website a few weeks ago. Visitstluciefla.com is all new and updated, colorful and pretty. She stated that once the FPAT site is up and running, they will connect as a direct link.

Don Voss announced that his new site is up and running with links to all Advisory Board members' sites. He encouraged everyone to link back to his site from theirs.

He also stated that the hotel where Lisa's Kayaks works is interested in setting up an e-concierge's desk, that he has donated a computer with Microsoft PowerPoint, and they want everyone to produce a PowerPoint and they hotel has 250 rooms booked all summer. This is a great opportunity for hotel guests to be able to preview tourism activities in the area. Don said he believes the name of the hotel is the Ocean Reef Hotel.

Don also stated that the FPAT tent will be setup and displaying business brochures at the Oyster Festival.

Chop Lege' stated that everyone should be sure to thank Dyana Voss for her work. He said she really works hard for everyone.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Cristin Ryan encouraged the use of real "black-and white guidelines, not gray", for the types of FPAT memberships - not complicated and very transparent. Cristin said it should be easy to understand that 'yes' you meet the guidelines, or 'no', you do not.

Dean Kubitschek suggested the FPAT consider purchasing a stage where they can put their logo on it then rent it out to help sustain them. He said the County charges \$500-\$600 for the rent of their stage and it is the only one available. Dean stated that the stage could be stored at Fisherman's Wharf. He also suggested they consider purchasing bleachers to rent to build income for FPAT. He suggested that this is just food for thought because there is definitely a need.

Rosemary Knight with the Fort Pierce Lady Deep Sea Fishing - thanked everyone for approving her membership. Said they originally called their boat Lady Stuart, too, but to honor Fort Pierce, they renamed the boat Fort Pierce Lady. She also said she brings a lot of tourists here and does packages with the Sandhurst - 2-3 packages a week, and people are always asking her what else there is to do in Fort Pierce. She said she would love to get brochures for FPAT businesses. She said people pick them up in her store all the time. She said there are always opportunities at her business to promote other FPAT businesses.

Deanna Green with Little Jim's Bait and Tackle stated that Chop has been coming by and bringing his tour boat. Little Jim's is part of the Navy SEAL training history - established in 1944. She said Little Jim's wants to be more than just where people get their bait and tackle, wants to become where they can come eat, sit outside, and relax. They call themselves 'salt-water rednecks.' Chop Lege commented that he has taken several hundred people there through his tour boat and people always comment that it is an amazing place.

John Provance, with the Community Wide Council offered his compliments to the Board for their professionalism and explained that the businessmen and women of this board have relieved him of a lot of heartburn. He stated that he came in thinking about the \$155,000 and how they could make sure it is well protected then observed the Board's actions today, which exemplify the concerns of the Fort Pierce people, your businesses and the protection of the funding that the City Commission will ultimately be approving. He stated that he wanted to compliment the board for their actions, even as it has to do with membership and grants. He believes his committee has to be less concerned now and he thanked the Board for their efforts.

John Provance also confirmed that the May 3rd meeting is when the FPAT Advisory Board will be reviewing the grant applications. Libby Woodruff stated that the Advisory Board will be given a copy of the grant application on April 20th and then the Board will meet on May 3rd to score the applications.

Kerry Firth said she would like to comment on FPAT's membership. She explained that her business is based out of Vero Beach but she does business in Fort Pierce and promotes ecotourism. She commented that she would be perfectly happy, and expects that anyone doing business with the FPAT Board, like she and the Orange Snowman is doing, would be perfectly happy, to be an associate member of the program.

Federico Sandaval with the Orange Snowman commented that he is just tired of doing websites for only attorneys and wants to get into ecotourism, that he likes that line of work.

Chop thanked John Provance and everyone gave a round of applause for his efforts in supporting FPAT.

Cristin Ryan asked about the status of the FPAT website. Federico stated that the website is close to going online. Anne Satterlee reminded the FPAT members to please send in her their 200 word business description and photos for the website.

VI. STAFF COMENTS

Don Voss asked what time on the 20th will the grant applications be ready? Libby Woodruff stated that she would get the applications out on the 20th and the Board will read and score the applications then meet on May 3rd to come together to make their final recommendations. Libby explained that the scoring process will be the same as last time, that the grant reviewers will be given a scoring packet and instructions.

10. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion was made by Don Voss and seconded by Mark Harrison to adjourn. There being no further discussion, meeting adjourned at 5:02 p.m.