

**Sarasota County Sports Commission  
Minutes of August 22, 2011 Meeting**

**Present:** Brent Alexander, Suzanne Anderson, Rob Butcher, Joseph DiPuma, Richard Dorfman, Dr. Joanne Fava, John McCarthy, Timothy Mulqueen, David Pierce, Ben Pinegar, Brad Robbins, Shauna Ruby, Spencer Sobczak, Robert Whitford, Laura Williams, Jim Wormley, Ed Wyatt

**Excused Absence:** Patrick Calhoon, Lucy Nicandri

**Staff in attendance:** Deborah Ericson, Virginia Haley, Jason Puckett

**Agenda:**

Jason Puckett called the meeting of the Sarasota County Sports Commission (SCSC) to order. Introductions were made by all in attendance stating name and background.

Virginia Haley gave an explanation of the Sunshine Law and how it pertains to this Commission. There will be a complete orientation of the Sunshine Law at the October orientation meeting. All of the Sports Commission meetings will be posted and open to the public.

Jason Puckett gave a brief description of the definition of "Sports Tourism." He outlined how the Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau's (SCVB) economic impact growth has changed from six events per year to 55 this year.

Mr. Puckett highlighted the list of Applicants for the Sports Commission Sponsorship and the scoring system for how the sponsorship funds are allocated. Sixty-two applications were received. The reasons for some of the high ratings are event longevity, number of event days, and proven economic impact statistics. The Offshore Grand Prix was given as an example, generating over \$12 million in revenue. It was reported that the Sports Commission budget is \$172,000, \$129,000 of which is allocated for sponsorship. The remaining balance is used for marketing, travel and flux in event needs. Two applications were highlighted by Jason Puckett. The first is the support for the Ultimate event in November which is nearing the end of its commitment to play in Sarasota, and staff feels it is important to show how valued the event is in the community. The second is the tennis event on Longboat Key which is a challenge for the SCVB because it does not generate many room nights, but the organizers have been very active with the Greater Sarasota Chamber and in meeting with elected officials. However, the criteria need to be consistent.

The question as to where the funds come from was discussed. The five percent (5%) bed tax provides the funding and also funds beach re-nourishment, beach maintenance, rowing and the stadium.

There was more discussion on how the applicants were chosen. Once the committee approves the applications, the applicants will be notified by letter. It was noted that funds cannot be allocated until the last week of September as the County's fiscal year begins in October.

Jason Puckett stated that there is a flexibility of monies coming back into the budget for events that do not occur. The question was asked whether funds ever were received from the Florida Sports Foundation. Events that generate participation from outside Florida may be subject to reimbursement by Florida Sports Foundation, which gets its funding from the sale of automobile license tags. Mr. Puckett will be submitting applications to the Foundation for several events.

Commission requested a list of our current venues. That list, along with a white paper on future sports strategy, will be presented at the January meeting.

In answer to a question, Commission members are encouraged to seek out events and bring suggestions to the table. Roles and responsibilities for the SCSC members will be covered at the October orientation meeting.

There was a discussion on the relationship between Manatee and Sarasota counties. Since some of the SCVBs events take place on the border, e.g., Benderson Park, there was a question on how Sarasota hoteliers feel about room nights going to Manatee County. It was pointed out that the soccer facility in Manatee was built without a dime of public funds and fully benefits Sarasota hotels. Jason Puckett noted that the relationship between Manatee and Sarasota is that of a "good neighbor" policy. Although several venues are in Manatee County, Sarasota County holds the lion's share of hotel rooms. It is in the best interest of both communities to work together.

There was a question if the SCVB requires event organizers to utilize local Sarasota County vendors, for example, for printing. The answer is no; the SCVB does not want excessive requirements to lessen the ability to draw the event to Sarasota County. There also was a discussion of working with event holders to create local sponsorship opportunities to offset costs.

The question was asked "Are we at the cap of the number of events that we can hold?" Some venues have date restrictions while others are too outdated for national and international games. The destination must have the infrastructure to support the events. Some facilities need to be updated to draw professional tournaments, for example, BMX and softball, and we need to have a staff of volunteers to support the events.

Jason Puckett noted that girls' sporting events generate more economic impact than any other type because a girl will travel with 1.5 more persons per event than her male counterpart.

There was a question as to whether there was a value in some events that might help change perceptions of Sarasota rather than solely generate room nights. As an example, Sarasota could attract youthful events to counter an image of an aging community. Virginia Haley

explained that image building events do carry weight in the evaluation. As to the aging question, it is not a matter of choosing one over the other but rather positioning Sarasota as “active Sarasota,” encompassing all ages.

It was suggested that going forward that the application process be web-based.

A motion to approve the Allocation of Funds was made by Suzanne Anderson and was seconded by Tim Mulqueen. Motion carried.

The proposed mission statement was presented to the group. There was a discussion as to whether it should address Sarasota County or the region. The Commission members agreed that out of respect for the existing organization in Manatee, it was more appropriate to stay with Sarasota County. Dr. Joanne Fava made the motion to approve the mission statement as presented and it was seconded by Dave Pierce. Motion carried.

Proposed Logo: From the logos presented, it was suggested that the O of Sarasota be turned into a sports ball, perhaps a different one for each sport. There was a discussion about the difficulty of having many logos, and the need to stick close to the brand. It was agreed that we would have our webmaster look into the possibility of an interchangeable logo. It was unanimous that the second line of the logo be centered. We will readdress the proposed logo when we have information from the webmaster.

The committee discussed the major events that are scheduled, number of room nights expected, and what our position should be as far as scrolling signage welcoming participants to the area. It was suggested that pitches for individual events be kept out of the Commission meetings.

Airport Connection: It was suggested that for the tournaments drawing national and international participants, we should engage the Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport into some strategic planning to activate some routes with airlines for these events, thereby keeping the revenue in Sarasota County rather than in Tampa or Ft. Myers. It was also suggested that the airport director make a presentation to the Commission at a future meeting.

Next Meeting: Advisory Committee Orientation on October 18, 2011 4:00 pm at the AmericInn on Fruitville Road.

The meeting was adjourned. Cake was served.