

# ST JOHNS COUNTY CIVIC ROUNDTABLE

FEBRUARY 13, 2017

President Lofgren opened the meeting at 9:02am.

Treasurer's Report: Our bank balance was reported as \$806.93

Secretary's Report: The January minutes were approved as written.

President Rick Lofgren introduced this morning's speaker Richard Goldman, President and Chief Executive Officer of the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and the Beaches Visitors Convention Bureau. Rick pointed out Mr. Goldman's (University of Florida graduate) extensive background in marketing and advertising prior to his current post.

Tourism Overview:

Direct and indirect impact of tourism brings 670 million dollars to St. Johns County. We are the oldest tourism based economy in the country, an economy that is clean, has a small footprint and is largely recession proof.

The Visitor's bureau is funded by the "Bed Tax" that is collected on rentals of less than 6 months in St. Johns County.

The Tourism Development Council as mandated by the State of Florida has on its board one representative from the county, two from St. Augustine and two from St. Augustine Shores. They determine the allocation of funds which at the present time is approximately:

- 1) Leisure and Recreation 15%
- 2) Arts & Cultural Heritage 15%
- 3) JCB –Destination Marketing Division 44%
- 4) TDC Administration 24%

The Travel Channel selected St. Johns County as the “Destination of the Month” for February.

The county has a history of consistent increases in tourism and tourism generated jobs and income. The 29,000 plus jobs are up 25% and are resistant to automation replacement. 97% of our visitors say their needs were met or exceeded which is reflected in a very positive Traveler Sentiment Index rating.

Mr. Goldman gave us a viewing of the amusing “Conquistador” video which connects history to modern attractions in our area.

Richard fielded questions on the problems associated with the growth of tourist visits to the county. They centered around traffic congestion, lack of parking, and the need for an efficient shuttle service. Some local business owners want to keep parking close to their

properties. Another obstacle to traffic control and reform is lack of jurisdiction over key roads such as A1A and King Street.

Other topics:

Enterprise Florida

Rapid clearing of flood water in St. Augustine after Matthew storm. Use of social media to tell world we are open for business!

Need for other attractions besides History and Beach. Perhaps an extension of Orlando visit theme could be developed.

Development of local airline service principally from Frontier and Via airlines.

Limiting Inner city traffic similar to that in many European cities.

Enhancing river to sea development.

Richard Goldman in conclusion said that the final say on TDC spending rests with the county commissioners.

Rick Lofgren thanked Richard for his interesting coverage of a complex topic.

## Roundtable Discussion:

Bill McCormick noted the opposition to digital electronic billboards letter sent to county commissioners from SACA.

Rick Lofgren said the letter from the Roundtable had been sent in support of a renewed contract for Michael Wanchick as County Executive.

Bill McCormick – Feb 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of County Commissioners to review land development code regarding standards of open space. Specifically do retention ponds count as open space?

Sarah – Save our creeks and streams activity in NW St. Johns County

Mary – Seagate – salinization problems resulting from flooding during Matthew.

Dennis Froio – Loss of septic systems along A1A in Vilano and South Ponte Vedra due to Hurricane Matthew makes otherwise habitable homes unusable.

Robert Olson – Suggested future speaker from airport authority.

The meeting was concluded at 10:30am

Respectfully submitted:

Dennis Froio, Secretary