



DeSoto County

Tourism Development Council

Meeting Minutes - Draft

Thursday, April 10, 2025

1:30 PM

This meeting was originally set for April 8, 2025, but was changed due to meeting scheduling conflicts.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Anthney called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

Present: Ashley Harn, Trent Anthney, Pam Ames, Summer Lempenau, Daniel Sutphin and Sondra Guffey

Excused: Jerod Gross, Sanjay Patel, Judy Wertz-Strickland, Zac Varner and Meagan Joseph

MINUTES APPROVAL

Minutes for February 11, 2025

The council reviewed the minutes from the February 11, 2025, TDC meeting. Ms. Ames made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Lempenau seconded. All approved.

REGULAR BUSINESS

Tourist Development Revenue Update

Ms. Guffey informed the Council that there was a significant revenue increase of 73% in January compared to the previous year, attributed to bed tax.

Council members discussed potential reasons for the increase, such as optimistic travel behavior, but no major events were identified.

Ms. Harn noted that retail businesses experienced a downturn in January, due to post-Christmas effects and ongoing construction. She added that there is a need for better signage regarding the downtown retail shops during the construction.

State Transient Tax Review and Discussion

Ms. Guffey told Council members that the Tourism Department wants to align county statute with state statute regarding transient tax.

She gave an example stating that campgrounds must charge transient TDC tax unless permanent occupation exceeds 50%, adding that Southern Sands RV Resort has reached 50% permanent occupancy, affecting tax status.

The transient tax applies to rentals of six months or less in various accommodations. Council members discussed the maximum rate the county can set, currently believed to be at the maximum.

Ms. Guffey stated that, historically, campgrounds were required to pay a 3% tax unless more than 50% of their sites were occupied by tenants residing for over six months. The Department of Revenue requires a declaration of taxable status for exemptions

when more than 50% of rental units are occupied by long-term tenants.

She added that there is confusion due to discrepancies between the Department of Revenue guidelines and the statute.

Ms. Guffey added that it is crucial to ensure everyone is informed and consistent in their understanding of the regulations.

Placer.AI presentation by Clayton Demanes

Mr. Demanes introduced Placer.AI, a location analytics platform.

The platform leverages mobile location data from approximately 30 million mobile devices to provide insights into physical locations across the United States.

The data is collected from a sample of the population, not everyone, to maintain privacy.

Placer.AI can analyze any physical location, from small businesses to entire cities or counties. The platform provides insights into visitors, employees, and residents, including visitation patterns, origin zip codes, and shared audience information. Additional data sets include demographics, psychographics, workplace data, and vehicle traffic data. Use cases include tourism, economic development, parks and recreation, and Main Streets.

Mr. Demanes emphasized the platform's strength in tourism analytics, providing data on visitor numbers, origins, destinations, and duration of stay. The platform supports various other applications, such as local economic analysis and grant writing.

Users have access to a dashboard to observe and analyze data.

The dashboard can be customized with specific locations of interest, such as retail stores or parks.

He stated that the GPS system operated through Placer.AI is accurate down to feet, ensuring precise visitor tracking. The system can geofence specific areas to provide detailed visitor

data, capturing individuals who stay in the area for over 10 minutes.

Placer.AI partners with Life 360, a family tracking app, to gather location data. This partnership is transparent and well-known. The company also collaborates with over 500 apps, contributing to a data set of 30 million people.

Placer AI pricing is structured as \$16,000 for the first year, \$18,000 for the second year,

and \$20,000 for the third year, totaling \$34,000 over three years.

The contract is for 36 months, averaging \$18,000 per year.

Ms. Guffey stated that there is no current marketing budget or plan for using the data, which raised concerns about the investment.

Chair Anthney suggested the program might be worth it as a county-wide effort, not particularly just for the Tourism Department.

Destination and Dining Brochure

Mr. Sutphin presented the Destination and Dining Guide tri-fold brochure, adding that staff has already distributed its first 1,000 brochures with another order on the way. He stated that staff has distributed the brochures to tourist spots, hotels, shops and restaurants around the county.

Ms. Guffey added that staff is only ordering so many brochures at a time because restaurants and businesses do change around the area. The goal is to keep the brochures as up to date as possible.

Chair Anthney suggested adding more hotels and places to stay to the brochure. Ms. Harn added that the brochure should showcase as much as possible. Council members also suggested minor changes to the map legend.

Proclamation for National Tourism Week, May 5-9, 2025

Ms. Guffey informed Council members that she will be reading a proclamation for National Tourism Week (May 4-10) at the April 22, 2025, County Commission Meeting, encouraging members to attend.

Bird Watching Tourism Opportunities

This was tabled to the Tourism Development Council due back on 6/10/2025.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

n/a

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Ms. Ames announced a May 8th celebration at the Tree of Knowledge Park in Arcadia, highlight Arcadia Main Street's 40th anniversary, the dedication of a Frederick Remington replica "Bronco Buster" statue at the park, and other changes and upgrades at the park.

STAFF COMMENTS

n/a

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m. with a motion by Ms. Ames and a second by Ms. Harn. All Approved.

NOTE: For quasi-judicial matters, any party desiring a verbatim record of the proceeding of this hearing for the purpose of an appeal is advised to make private arrangements for the production of a

record and anyone wishing to present documents or other written evidence to the Board must provide

eight (8) copies of the written material. If special accommodations are required in accordance with

the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals should contact the County Administrator's Office by

calling 863-993-4800 at least forty-eight hours prior to the hearing.