

APPROVED

**BEACH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT COMMITTEE (BID)
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
8TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA
MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2009 – 3:30 P.M.**

| <u>BID COMMITTEE MEMBERS</u> | <u>ATTENDANCE</u> | 10/08 – 9/09 | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| | | <u>PRESENT</u> | <u>ABSENT</u> |
| Amaury Piedra, Chair | P | 4 | 2 |
| Carlos Molinet, Vice Chair | A | 4 | 2 |
| Ina Lee | P | 6 | 0 |
| Andreas Ioannou | P | 5 | 1 |
| Ramola Motwani | A | 2 | 4 |
| Gabriel Rodriguez | P | 4 | 2 |
| Joseph Geluso | P | 4 | 2 |
| Jim Oliver | P | 6 | 0 |
| Jon McGaunn | P | 2 | 0 |

As of this date, there are 9 appointed members to the Board, which means 5 would constitute a quorum.

Staff

Stephen Scott, Economic Development Director
Don Morris, Beach CRA Director
Earl Prizlee, Engineering Design Manager, CRA
Eileen Furedi, Economic Development Representative
George Gretsas, City Manager
Hilda Testa, Recording Secretary, Prototype, Inc.

I. Call to Order / Roll Call

Chair Piedra called the meeting to order at 3:42 p.m. Roll was called and it was determined a quorum was present.

II. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Motion made by Ms. Lee, seconded by Mr. Geluso, to nominate Chair Piedra to another term in that position.

Motion made by Ms. Lee, seconded by Mr. Oliver, to nominate Vice Chair Molinet to another term in that position.

III. Approval of Minutes – February 9, 2009

Motion made by Ms. Lee, seconded by Mr. Ioannou, to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2009 meeting. In a voice vote, the **motion** carried unanimously.

IV. Hurricane Placard Discussion

Mr. Morris advised that the previous week, over 100 letters were sent to area hotels regarding emergency preparations, should a hurricane or other disaster occur. Beach hotels, he noted, often have personnel on-site as quickly as possible after a storm to assess any damage and determine their capability to reopen. Participation by area hotels allows the City to evaluate what is available to house emergency workers and to keep track of who is coming onto and off the Beach, with preference given to those providing necessary services.

Large properties, he continued, will be allowed up to five management placards, to be designated for key personnel, such as general managers, maintenance chiefs, and housekeeping and security staff. Up to two shuttle placards will also be allowed for bringing employees on-site if work needs to be done. The City suggests that hotels designate a meeting place for these employees. While there have been requests for more management placards, the Police Department will limit these to five in order to control the number of vehicles traveling in the area in the event of an emergency.

Chair Piedra added that the number of placards has traditionally been determined by the number of rooms a facility has: for example, a hotel with 1-100 rooms is given two, 101-200 rooms receives three, and over 200 will get five.

Ms. Lee noted that shuttle arrangements have already been made for many hotel employees to meet at the Galleria and at 17th Street.

Mr. Morris continued that Staff has met with the Director of Security for Bahia Mar, who will coordinate with other such Directors to make emergency plans. Additional copies of the applications will be available at that meeting.

Ms. Lee recalled that at one previous such meeting, emergency coordinators, general managers, and County personnel had attended as well as security employees. She felt they should be invited to attend again, as many new people have come to work in the area during the past year. Mr. Morris affirmed that the Director of Security from Bahia Mar has contact information for all such individuals, or can contact Mr. Morris' office if not.

Mr. McGaunn requested clarification on evacuation guidelines for the City. It was stated that complete evacuation of the barrier islands is likely to occur in the event of a Category 2 or larger storm.

George Gretsas, City Manager, addressed the Board at this time to inform them he was aware of the issues and concerns involving Beach amenities. He felt that the focus should now be on ensuring that their performance improves. The City has two options, one of which is to find the vendor in breach of contract; however, City Manager Gretsas felt this would not have optimal results for the situation. The vendor has since "made a lot of promises," and he asked for the Board's participation in making sure they keep these promises.

He added that the vendor would be given an additional "week or so" to take care of these issues. The concept of the bid, he pointed out, had been to ensure that the amenities provided by a four- or five-star hotel were matched by those available on the Beach. Currently the City is reviewing the concept for food and beverage service that requires some interpretation by the Legal Department; in question is whether it is permissible to treat Beaches the same way a sidewalk café would be treated regarding the use of public property for private enterprise. City Manager Gretsas noted that it would first need to be determined whether a new City Commission shares this interpretation of the concept. If they are in agreement, the question of legality would proceed. He reiterated that the Board's support will be needed on this issue, and thanked them for their timely input regarding the Beach vendor situation.

He noted that there are many plans for the Beach area, from improved customer service to the changes planned for the Aquatics Complex. Once the new City Commission is seated, he encouraged the Board to show their support for these projects.

City Manager Gretsas offered to answer any questions or address concerns the Board might have.

Chair Piedra expressed concern that the RFP to which the vendor responded did not seem to accurately reflect the services that the hoteliers had wanted to see on the Beach. He noted in particular that, while the hoteliers were not satisfied with the services provided, the vendor seemed to be fulfilling the demands of the actual RFP. He felt if this was the case, the RFP could not have contained the specifications the hoteliers had intended. In addition, while the hoteliers had wished to cover "the basics" with these services, it now appeared that they would have to purchase some services separately.

City Manager Gretsas responded that he had not been aware that the vendor's services as described by the RFP did not meet the hoteliers' wishes. He noted that, however, staff members report that the vendor is not holding up its end of the contract. He asked if the expected compliance within two weeks will meet the hoteliers' needs, or if there are additional needs that they wish to have met.

Chair Piedra offered the example of new equipment on the Beach, which the hoteliers had expected would mean new equipment in front of their hotels as well. However, this service will now be provided only at extra cost to the hotels, although the hoteliers had believed new equipment "throughout" was a provision of the RFP.

Mr. Morris stated that he thought that new chairs were planned for the Beach, per the agreement discussed; he noted that Staff had asked the vendor to provide new white chairs as opposed to the multicolored ones presently on the Beaches. He recalled that new chairs had been an important aspect of the meeting with the vendor, as the existing chairs were in poor shape, and the intent had been for the vendor to provide new and attractive equipment.

Ms. Lee expressed concern that the hoteliers would have to pay out-of-pocket for a service they had believed to be included on the RFP.

Chair Piedra affirmed that the hoteliers would "work through" the remainder of the season, and focus attention on communicating their future needs clearly.

Mr. Scott suggested that the discussions between the City, the hoteliers, and the vendor would serve as a "learning experience," and as the hoteliers were the major stakeholders in the venture, Staff would do their best to keep them apprised and communicate clearly with them in the future.

Mr. Ioannou stated that an individual with hotel experience should be included in the Selection Committee for RFPs of a similar nature going forward, as they would have the clearest understanding of what services are needed for the hotels.

Chair Piedra thanked City Manager Gretsas for his time and attention, and encouraged him to let them know if the Board could assist him with any endeavors going forward.

Regarding the issue of food and beverage services, City Manager Gretsas asked if the hoteliers would prefer to provide this service themselves. This was met with general assent. He then asked if the hoteliers could provide a measure of public access to vendors, citing sidewalk cafés as an example. This was met with agreement as well. With regard to vendors placing platforms in public areas on the Beach, however, Mr. Oliver explained that the hotels offer services with the intent of bringing guests into their facilities.

Ms. Lee asked City Manager Gretsas what the hotels could officially do, such as creating a position statement, to explain why food and beverage services are important to maintain business at their venues. City Manager Gretsas suggested having an individual representing the hoteliers' interests begin making contact

with the new City Commissioners, as they will be inundated with requests by various interests once they are seated. He did not recommend putting any statements in writing, however, until the newly seated City Commissioners had had the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the issues.

He reiterated that there was some language in the contract that would allow the City to hold the vendor to a "better standard," and added that after speaking with the vendor, they seemed willing to comply and to better their relationship with the hoteliers.

Chair Piedra noted that from March 2008 to March 2009, hotel occupancy is down 21 points, although it had fallen no lower than 94% occupancy for the past five years. Mr. Oliver pointed out that the Yankee Clipper has lower occupancy as well, primarily "short-term pickup." When last-minute changes of this nature occur, it becomes difficult to staff a facility adequately, he explained.

Mr. McGaunn agreed, stating that there is a current lack of brand loyalty, and that plans seem to be made at the last minute.

Chair Piedra remarked that the 1st Quarter seemed to run "flat to last year," but what would happen in the summer was of greater concern for hoteliers.

Ms. Lee felt next year's Super Bowl would be of critical importance to the Fort Lauderdale Beach area. While this is some time away, she suggested that any help the community's business leaders can give to this event will be vital to its success. Mr. Scott agreed, affirming that City Staff has been encouraged to do "anything [they] can" to make sure this event is successful.

Chair Piedra felt Fort Lauderdale would be in a position to put on a "much better show" for the Super Bowl than Tampa had, based on what the City has to offer. He described this as a great opportunity.

Ms. Lee thanked City Manager Gretsas for his understanding of the Beach District's importance to the City. She wished to state for the record that he is the first City Manager to realize and champion the Beach's economic impact on the City at large.

City Manager Gretsas encouraged the Board members to get in touch with him should further issues or questions arise, asserting that he shared their concern for the Beach.

V. Police Update

It was noted that there was no Police Update for the Board at this meeting.

VI. Old / New Business

It was noted that not many college students had arrived in the City for Spring Break so far. Mr. Morris stated that a larger influx is anticipated for the week of March 16, 2009.

Chair Piedra informed the Board that the upcoming Music Festival, now scheduled for October 2009, would be discussed at the April 13, 2009 meeting.

Ms. Lee advised that the RFP for the proposed signature event has now gone out. She had received feedback from one potential respondent to the RFP, who noted that it would be very difficult to secure any kind of sponsorship beyond the available \$80,000, given that the proposed program would start within 60 days of City Commission approval. She added that the economy presented concerns for potential sponsors as well.

Mr. Scott recalled that according to the RFP, a bidder's plan must be prepared by the time the contract is approved; they are then given until July 2009 to put a program together, and this date may be adjusted in future years.

Ms. Lee recalled that the thought behind the response was that major corporations already have their 2009 budgets completed, with no funds left over to be invested in a sponsorship.

Mr. Ioannou asked if it would be possible for the Board to see the RFP. Mr. Scott agreed to send this to all members.

Mr. Ioannou continued that the Board should also see the concepts returned for bid as well, as they would want to develop and promote the idea. He asked for an overview of the process' timeline.

Mr. Scott did not have a copy of the timeline with him, and could not refer to specific dates; however, he recalled that a date had been set by which they hoped to bring the contract before the City Commission for approval. While he believed the RFP was "aggressive" with this particular date, he reminded the Board that it only applied to the contract: the vendor will then be allowed a set amount of time to come up with a concept for the event, which will necessitate their making a presentation to the Board.

Mr. Morris agreed to put together a timeline for the process, informing the Board that the RFP closes on Friday, March 13, 2009. This early date was set in order to expedite the process as much as possible, he explained.

Mr. Morris continued that the maintenance contract/pressure washing RFP has also been sent out. The current contract with Prism Powerwash extends through April 2009.

He asked for the Board members' opinion of the services Prism had provided over the previous weekend. Chair Piedra felt that, had they not scheduled cleanings over the weekend, the City would not have been able to keep up with this responsibility itself.

Mr. Ioannou asked how cleaning of the Beach District had been handled prior to maintenance contracts. Mr. Morris explained that there had been a desire to "bring the Beach up to a higher level" and a recognition that its appearance should be improved.

The Parks & Recreation Department powerwashes the City's East side, he noted, but not the West side. In addition, although trash was emptied several times a day, it was still insufficient.

Ms. Lee pointed out that there had been a higher level of service by the City until it experienced a series of budget challenges some years ago. After that time, the services were "cut dramatically." In addition, the Beach demands a higher level of service. The maintenance contract guarantees a certain level of cleanliness for the area.

Ms. Lee reminded the Board of the Beach Council Board meeting on March 20, 2009, at which the new Mayor and Vice Mayor Charlotte Rodstrom will speak. The event was set up primarily for introductory purposes, she advised. It will include a luncheon. She encouraged anyone with connections to the Beach Council Board to attend.

Mr. Oliver did not recall being given a date by which the Boucher Brothers would get back to the hoteliers regarding their contract obligations. Mr. Scott advised that they would probably contact Cate McCaffrey's office; he would send them a note as well.

Ms. Lee advised that the Convention & Visitors Bureau were staging a major campaign for summer 2009 with the City's Beaches as their "push."

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 4:27 p.m.