Walton County Tourist Development Council Guidelines

The mission of the Walton County Tourism Department is to direct and manage activities that will strengthen Walton County's position in the tourism marketplace, while also enhancing the tourism economy of Walton County. The tourism department will manage and maintain the beaches as a primary attraction, serve as a responsible industry organization, and take a leadership role in addressing issues that affect tourism and the quality of life in Walton County.

CURRENT STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS AND STRUCTURE

Pursuant to Florida statutes, the Tourist Development Council is to be comprised of nine (9) members appointed by the Walton County Board of County Commissioners (BCC), with the following requirements:

- A member of the BCC, as designated by the chair of the BCC; and
- Two elected municipal officials, at least one of whom is from the most populous municipality in Walton County or a sub-county special taxing district where the tax is levied; and
- Six individuals who are involved in the tourism industry and who have demonstrated an interest in tourism development.
    - Not less than three, nor more than four, shall be owners or operators of motels, hotels, recreational vehicle parks, or other tourism accommodations in Walton County that are subject to the tax;
    - Not less than two, nor more than three, shall be individuals who are involved in the tourism industry and who have demonstrated an interest* in tourism development, but do not own or operate motels, hotels, recreational vehicle parks, or other tourism accommodations in Walton County that are subject to the tax;

      *Interest is defined as tourism-related business representatives in ownership, managerial-level positions in restaurants, retail, attractions, and destination marketing businesses.
- All members must be electors (registered voters) of Walton County, Florida. Terms shall be staggered at four (4) years each, except for the BCC-appointed seat.

SELECTION PROCESS

Pursuant to the criteria enumerated in Section 125.0104(4)(e) of Florida statutes, and the policies of the BCC, the BCC shall appoint qualified members to serve on the Council, of which

three members shall be elected officials (one member from the BCC and two elected municipal officials). The remaining six members shall be qualified individuals from the tourism industry. The following is a recommended selection process for the six non-elected seats:

- Qualified individuals interested in serving on the Council (seats 4-9) who meet the following criteria:
  - Registered voter in Walton County; and
  - Has not previously served on the Council for two full terms (8 years); and
  - Is either:
    - An owner or operator of a motel, hotel, recreational vehicle park, or other tourism accommodation in Walton County that collects or remits the tourist development tax; or
    - An individual who is involved in the tourism industry and who has demonstrated an interest in tourism development, but does not own or operate a motel, hotel, recreational vehicle park, or other tourism accommodation in Walton County that collects or remits the tourist development tax.
- Individuals meeting the above requirements who are interested in serving on the Council shall submit a resume and completed application ("application package") to the tourism department no later than 4 p.m. on the last day of the application period.
- The tourism director will review applications to determine whether applicants meet the required qualifications for the position.
- All applications received shall be provided to the BCC for review by or before November 10th.
- At the first regular meeting in December, the county administrator shall present the list of expiring positions and applicants to the BCC for appointment consideration.

<u>TDC MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS</u>

- **Seat 1** - A member of the BCC selected by the Chair of the BCC shall serve annual terms, with the ability to be subsequently reappointed by the Chair of the BCC.

- **Seat 2** - An elected municipal official from one of the two most populous municipalities in the county, with said person to be nominated by their respective board for the BCC to appoint. In the event a municipality should be created or come to exist in the sub-county taxing district (the area of Walton County south of the Choctawhatchee Bay), this seat shall automatically be designated to go to an elected official of the most populous municipality therein, to be nominated by the governing board of that

municipality for the BCC to determine appointment. Appointments shall be for four (4) year terms. Elected officials are not subject to term limits.

- **Seat 3** - An elected municipal official from one of the two most populous municipalities in the county, with said person to be nominated by their respective board for the BCC to appoint. In the event a municipality should be created or come to exist in the sub-county taxing district (the area of Walton County south of the Choctawhatchee Bay), this seat shall automatically be designated to go to an elected official of the most populous municipality therein, to be nominated by the governing board of that municipality for the BCC to determine appointment. Appointments shall be for four (4) year terms. Elected officials are not subject to term limits.

- **Seat 4** - A person who is involved in the tourism industry, has demonstrated an interest in tourism development, and is the owner or operator of a tourist accommodation(s) in Walton County that is subject to the tourist development tax. This term shall serve through December 2030, and subsequent appointments shall be for four (4) year terms commencing thereafter.

- **Seat 5** - A person who is involved in the tourism industry, has demonstrated an interest in tourism development, and is the owner or operator of a tourist accommodation(s) in Walton County that is subject to the tourist development tax. This term shall serve through December 2028, and subsequent appointments shall be for four (4) year terms commencing thereafter.

- **Seat 6** - A person who is involved in the tourism industry, has demonstrated an interest in tourism development, and is the owner or operator of a tourist accommodation(s) in Walton County that is subject to the tourist development tax. This term shall serve through December 2028, and subsequent appointments shall be for four (4) year terms commencing thereafter.

- **Seat 7** - A person who is involved in the tourism industry and has demonstrated an interest in tourism development but is <u>not</u> the owner or operator of a tourist accommodation(s) in Walton County that is subject to the tourist development tax. Preference shall be given to applicants who are actively engaged in a tourism-related industry with evidence of ownership or operation of a business within Walton County

that serves tourists. This term shall serve through December 2030, and subsequent appointments shall be for four (4) year terms commencing thereafter.

- **Seat 8** - A person who is involved in the tourism industry and has demonstrated an interest in tourism development but is not the owner or operator of a tourist accommodation(s) in Walton County that is subject to the tourist development tax. Preference shall be given to applicants who are actively engaged in a tourism-related industry with evidence of ownership or operation of a business within Walton County that serves tourists. This term shall serve through December 2030, and subsequent appointments shall be for four (4) year terms commencing thereafter.

- **Seat 9** - A person who is involved in the tourism industry and has demonstrated an interest in tourism development. This person may be the owner or operator of a tourist accommodation(s) in Walton County that is subject to the tourist development tax; engaged in a tourism-related industry, or both. To the extent that multiple seats are vacant and due for appointment at the time this seat is likewise vacant and due for appointment, the BCC shall endeavor to fill Seats 1 through 8 in accordance with the applicable terms first, and then may, at its discretion, consider the appointment of the most qualified applicant not chosen for appointment to one of those seats for appointment to this seat. The intent is to allow the BCC flexibility to appoint the most qualified person who has applied for a seat on the TDC, regardless of whether they qualify as an owner/operator. This term shall serve through December 2028, and subsequent appointments shall be for four (4) year terms commencing thereafter.

STRUCTURE FOR TDC MEETINGS AND BOARD GOVERNANCE

- Meetings to be held every two months, or as requested by the tourism director or the BCC.
- The TDC Chair will be appointed by the BCC annually.
- If an individual holds seat 1, 2, or 3, and for any reason is no longer an elected official, they no longer qualify for appointment and are therefore automatically removed from the Council. The process of replacing this member will begin immediately upon determining that the seat will be vacated.
- If any council member has a change in employment, position, or business, they are required to notify the tourism director and BCC immediately for evaluation of whether they can retain their seat.

- If any council member relocates outside of Walton County, they are required to notify the tourism director and BCC immediately for evaluation of whether they can retain their seat.
- Council members, the tourism department, and all activities performed on behalf of the TDC are required to comply with the Florida Sunshine Law. All appointed council members will receive annual detailed information and instructions regarding operating under the Sunshine Law.
- All council members are required to attend an orientation and training on BCC/TDC policies before they can take their seats.
- All Council meetings will be publicly noticed, recorded, and minutes taken.

COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES

With the help of community-minded people, Walton County Tourism has been successful in its role as the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) of Walton County.

Council members must act in the best interest of tourism success in Walton County and uphold the direction of the statute as his/her sole charge. This includes oversight of expenditures to ensure they are in line with the statute.

The Council shall continuously review expenditures of revenues from the tourist development trust fund and receive, at least quarterly, expenditure reports from the BCC or its designee. Expenditures which the Council believes to be unauthorized shall be reported to the BCC and the Department of Revenue. The BCC and the department shall review the Council's findings and take appropriate administrative or judicial action to ensure compliance with this section. Outlined below are some of the responsibilities that come with the title of Council Member:

COUNCIL SPECIFIC DUTIES

- Support and give input into the performance of the tourism director.
- Approve and monitor financial statements of the TDC.
- Attend the bi-monthly council meetings and one annual planning session.
- Council members are encouraged to participate in community meetings.

AMBASSADOR OF GOODWILL

Council members are regularly asked to attend openings, ribbon cuttings, and participate in community events representing the TDC. Council members should always be ambassadors of goodwill on behalf of the TDC.

PUBLIC AND MEDIA RELATIONS

The Council will adopt a communications policy that directs all press responses and outreach to the Council chair and tourism director. This will ensure there is a consistent and proactive message for the media. Council members will not speak on behalf of the Council without express permission from the Council or the tourism director. This does not preclude a council member speaking to the media or in a public hearing as a member of the community.

When speaking to the public and the media, members of the TDC shall not represent their personal views as the view of the TDC. While all members may express individual opinions on actions taken by the TDC, any member doing so should clearly qualify that statement as an opinion, and therefore not necessarily reflective of the views of the TDC or the Walton County BCC.

ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council members are expected to attend all TDC meetings, including strategic planning sessions, and make every effort to attend the annual meeting and workshops. Members are required to attend 85% of the scheduled meetings. Failure to do so will be grounds for removal. Family emergencies and illnesses will not be counted as absences.

TDC meetings are publicly noticed and recorded, with minutes taken. The Council must have a quorum (a majority of the Council) present at a properly scheduled meeting for official action (a vote) to be taken. Lack of a quorum will result in no action being taken.