

Highlights of the December 14, 2011 COBWRA Meeting at Valencia Reserve

Discover the Palm Beaches

Steve Crist of the PBC Convention & Visitors Bureau

spoke to the Delegates about the role of the Bureau. They are responsible for marketing the region from Jupiter to Boca to the individual traveler using on-line, print, social media, radio and TV. The Bureau also oversees all tourism by servicing the millions of visitors and prepares tourism guides and maps.

- A major goal is to market our region to groups such as corporate, association and government conventions, sporting events, reunions and weddings.
- The C&VB is funded by the 5% bed tax on all hotel, motel and B&B rooms.
- The Convention Bureau provides complimentary services to all event planners, including help with selecting the most appropriate site.
- Also responsible for airport reception and signage.
- Palm Beach County competes with Miami, Naples and Fort Lauderdale for tourists and conventions.
- In 2010, Florida had 82.5 Million visitors spending \$134/day and employing over 917,000 workers.
- In 2010, Palm Beach County had 4.15 Million visitors, spending \$155/day and employing 68,000.
- Canada tops international visitors followed by the UK and Germany. Columbia and Brazil are the fastest growing countries and surpass the UK in spending.
- There have always been direct flights between Toronto and PBI. Recently, direct flights were added between PBI and Montreal. He stated that adding one flight a day for a year means between \$7 and \$10 Million in spending and \$195,000 additional bed tax.
- He described the hotel partner program where they negotiate special deals for groups and residents.
- Crist introduced Debbie Allen from the Marriott Courtyard on Congress Avenue. She offered 20% off discount cards to those present and reminded everyone the Marriott had both hotel rooms and 2-bedroom villas for visiting families.
- The C&VB is looking for volunteers for their Ambassador program at the airport and visitor center.

Officials' Reports

Commissioner Shelley Vana, District 3, Chair of the BCC, spoke about the challenges facing the BCC: redistricting, charter amendments and next year's budget. She wished everyone Happy Holidays, Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Commissioner Burt Aaronson, District 5, reported on his work with country clubs to hire local workers instead of importing foreign workers this season. He also promised that officials were working to solve the dilemma of a site for the West Boynton Charter Schools

and promised a solution by the end of January. He ended by wishing all Happy Holidays and Happy New Year.

State Representative Lori Berman, District 86, spoke about the upcoming legislative session in Tallahassee.

The two big issues will be redistricting for state and Congressional representatives and balancing the budget.

Captain Marty Bechtel, PBSO, began by thanking COBWRA for its support of the Sheriff's Office and for supporting the Caridad Adopt-a-Family program. In November, District 6 reported there were 13 stolen vehicles, 1 carjacking, 7 purse snatchings, 7 business burglaries, 59 residential burglaries and 48 vehicle burglaries with most left unlocked. Deputies arrested 24 truants and investigated 24 vehicle accidents. There is an uptick in residential burglaries west of the Turnpike. Keep all house and car doors locked and alarms armed.

COBWRA Reports

Charter School Report. President Lassiter announced that no formal proposal has been submitted to the Growth Management Committee regarding the charter school. This means that COBWRA has not yet discussed the location of the proposed charter school. The Executive Board directed that a letter be sent to the Board of County Commissioners clarifying COBWRA's position on the proposed site for charter schools. Lassiter said the parents group is still looking for a site without the complication of preserve status.

COBWRA Nomination Committee. The following were elected to the Nominating Committee:

Bruce Brodsky, Cascade Lakes

Lew Doctor, Aberdeen

Sam Hershkowitz, The Grove at Boynton Beach

Barbara Katz, Valencia Shores

Sandy Parker, Coral Lakes

The Committee reports at the February meeting.

Caridad Center's Adopt-a-Family Program means holiday presents for needy families. COBWRA asks all member communities to consider adopting a family to make their Christmas merry. To adopt a family, call the Caridad Center and speak to **Scarlett Favé at 737-6336, X115**. Scarlett's office is open Wed-Fri 8:30 am to 5:00 pm and Sat, 8:30 to 11:30 am. Deadline for dropping off wrapped presents at PBSO Dist 6 is Dec 20.

Future Meetings (Open to the public)

Jan 3, 6:30 pm: Growth Management, PBSO District 6

Jan 18, 9:30 am: COBWRA Delegates meeting at Majestic Isles. Woolbright Rd between Jog & Military Trail. COBWRA business session to review the Articles of Incorporation. No speakers or official Reports.

—Ken Lassiter for COBWRA Communications
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