



Pinellas County

Legislation Details (With Text)

File #: 25-1873A **Version:** 1

Type: Informational Report **Status:** Regular Agenda

File created: 11/19/2025 **In control:** Convention and Visitors Bureau

On agenda: 12/16/2025 **Final action:**

Title: Revision to the Fiscal Year 2026 Elite Event Funding Recommendations from the Tourist Development Council.

Sponsors:

Indexes:

Code sections:

Attachments: 1. FY26 Elite Event Evaluations v2, 2. EEFPP Funding History 11-20-25, 3. History - FY26 Elite Event & Destination Enhancement Funding Program, 4. OMB.Review_25-1873A_EliteEventFunding_TDC

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
12/16/2025	1	Board of County Commissioners	approved	Pass

Subject:

Revision to the Fiscal Year 2026 Elite Event Funding Recommendations from the Tourist Development Council.

Recommended Action:

Approval of the Tourist Development Council’s revised recommendation to fund 49 events through the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Elite Event and Destination Enhancement Funding Program (Elite Event Program).

- A total of 49 Elite Events were initially approved, totaling “up to” \$2,685,000.00 in recommended funding based on evaluation and scoring conducted by Convention and Visitors Bureau staff. The approved amount has since been revised to \$2,755,000.00 to reflect administrative actions totaling \$85,000.00.
- We are requesting an amendment to one Elite Event, the MLK Parade, to update the event owner due to a change in organizational leadership. The originally approved \$65,000.00 allocation remains unchanged; however, this amendment incorporates the Tampa Bay Collard Green Festival, a Category 3 event, under the same event umbrella.
- Funding for these recommendations is included in the FY26 Budget for Visit St. Pete Clearwater (Convention and Visitors Bureau Department) within the Tourist Development Tax Fund 1040. Funding for future years is dependent on approval in the annual County Operating Budget.

Strategic Priorities:

Prosperity and Opportunity
3.2 Provide and promote tourism opportunities

Summary:

With Board approval, CVB is requesting an amendment to one Elite Event, the MLK Parade, to

update the event owner due to a change in organizational leadership. The originally approved \$65,000 allocation remains unchanged, and the amendment additionally incorporates the Tampa Bay Collard Green Festival, a Category 3 event, under the same event umbrella.

In addition to the amendment for the MLK Parade and Collard Green Festival, several administrative updates are provided for Board awareness:

The event previously listed as "Tide Fest" (\$15,000) was renamed and rescheduled by the organizer, requiring a new application. The updated event, "A Taste of the North," was administratively awarded \$15,000. Additionally, four other events were administratively awarded funding totaling \$70,000, including: Halloween on Central (\$15,000), St. Pete Country Fest (\$25,000), Treasure Island Kite Festival (\$15,000), and Paddy Fest St. Pete (\$15,000).

CVB staff will continue to administer the FY26 Elite Event Program, which provides funding to qualified high-profile and community events that meet the minimum criteria outlined in the Elite Event Program Guidelines.

Background Information:

Tourist Development Tax funds may be legally expended for an activity/event if that event has as one of its main purposes the attraction of tourists as evidenced by the promotion of the event to tourists, per Fla. Stat. 125.0104(5)(a)3. In enacting this authorization, Pinellas County's Tourist Development Plan, Section 118-32 of the Pinellas County Code, authorizes the use of up to \$3,000,000 annually for the marketing of special events and programs, which funding is governed by the Guidelines adopted by the Board on February 25, 2025. Those Guidelines include the following criteria:

Category 1, \$150,000 - \$250,000: Elite Event that meets or exceeds 50,000 unique attendees, 15,000 room nights and 500,000 broadcast views.

Category 2, \$75,000 - \$150,000: Elite Event that meets or exceeds two out of the following three criteria - 50,000 unique attendees, 15,000 room nights, 100,000 broadcast views or planned PR/media coverage valued in excess of \$50,000.

Category 3, \$50,000 - \$75,000: Elite Event that meets or exceeds one out of the following three criteria - 20,000 unique attendees, 7,500 room nights, 500,000 broadcast views or planned PR/media coverage valued in excess of \$100,000.

Category 4, \$25,000 - \$50,000: Elite Event that meets or exceeds one out of the following two criteria - 10,000 unique attendees or 3,000 room nights.

Category 5, up to \$25,000: Destination Enhancement Event that meets or exceeds 5,000 unique attendees.

In accordance with the Guidelines, off cycle events that are evaluated and recommended for Categories 1-4 will be brought before the TDC for review with final approval by the Board. Events recommended for Category 5, Destination Enhancement funding, will be administratively awarded by staff.

On June 25, 2025, during the regular TDC meeting, staff presented the CVB's recommendation to fund 49 FY26 events for a total of "up to" \$2,685,000 in funding. Additionally, Events applying outside

of the application window may be considered if funds are available and may be recommended at VisitSPC's discretion. Unallocated funds may be used for marketing purposes at VisitSPC's discretion. Following discussion, the TDC unanimously approved staff's recommendations.

Total Category 1 Elite Events: \$500,000
Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg - \$250,000
Valspar Championship - \$250,000

Total Category 2 Elite Events: \$675,000
The ANNIKA Driven by Gainbridge at Pelican - \$150,000
St. Pete Pride - \$150,000
The St. Pete Powerboat Grand Prix - \$125,000
The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival - \$125,000
2026 Clearwater Offshore Nationals - \$125,000

Total Category 3 Elite Events: \$840,000
Clearwater Jazz Festival - \$75,000
Sanding Ovarions, The Gallery of Sand - \$75,000
World Champions Cup - \$75,000
ReliaQuest Bowl Clearwater Beach Day - \$75,000
Dunedin Highland Games & Festival - \$75,000
St. Pete Bike Fest - \$75,000
Reggae Rise Up 2026 - \$75,000
Clearwater Sea-Blues Festival - \$65,000
St. Pete Run Fest - \$65,000
MLK Dream Parade - \$65,000 --- Now includes the Tampa Bay Collard Green Festival
Festivals of Speed - \$65,000
Tampa Bay Blues Festival - \$55,000

Total Category 4 Elite Events: \$300,000
John's Pass Seafood Festival - \$50,000
Savor St. Pete - \$50,000
33rd Annual Spring King of the Beach - \$50,000
NYE at the Pier - \$40,000
Tampa Bay Barbeque Festival - \$40,000
St. Pete Tacos & Tequila Festival - \$40,000
Dunedin Mardi Gras - \$30,000

Total Category 5 Destination Enhancement Events: \$345,000
32nd Annual Fall King of the Beach - \$25,000
Holiday Lights in the Gardens - \$25,000
American Stage "Into the Woods" the Musical in the Park 2026 - \$25,000
OCC Invitational Bike Show - \$25,000
SHINE St. Petersburg Mural Festival (contingent on receiving mural rights) - \$25,000
St. Petersburg Distance Classic - \$25,000
Winter Pride Saint Pete - \$25,000
Multiple Events (Tampa Bay Brewers Alliance) - \$20,000
SALSA at the District - \$20,000
Dunedin Celtic Music Festival - \$20,000

LOCALTOPIA, "A Community Celebration of All Things Local" - \$20,000
Merry Beach Market & Holiday Festival - \$15,000
Dunedin Pride Week - \$15,000
Tampa Bay Empanada Festival - \$15,000
Tide Fest - \$15,000
Palm Harbor Festival - \$15,000
Clearwater AquaX Grand Prix - \$15,000

1 Event Bundle for 6 events at the St. Pete Pier: \$25,000
St. Pete Pier Fall Festival and Pumpkin Patch
Piertoberfest
Tampa Bay Ice Cream Festival
St. Pete Spring Festival & Easter Egg Hunt
Paws on Parade
Putt The Pier Holiday Edition

Fiscal Impact:

The allocated amount for the FY26 Elite and Destination Enhancement Events is \$2,755,000, which includes administrative actions previously approved. This amendment does not change the total allocation. It only expands the eligible use of the existing \$65,000 for the MLK Parade to also include the Tampa Bay Collard Green Festival, with no additional funding required.

Funding for these recommendations is included in the FY26 Budget for Visit St. Pete Clearwater (Convention and Visitors Bureau Department) within the Tourist Development Tax Fund 1040. Funding for future years is dependent on approval in the annual County Operating Budget.

Staff Member Responsible:

Brian Lowack, Director, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Partners:

Tourist Development Council

Attachments:

Elite Event and Destination Enhancement Funding Program Guidelines