

Commission approves trolley ad plan

By Lisa Neff, Islander Reporter



An older Island Trolley with advertising awaits riders at the Anna Maria City Pier. Islander Photo: Lisa Neff

Manatee County commissioners approved an agreement for the Anna Maria Island Chamber of Commerce to again sell ads on the Island Trolley to generate revenue for the fare-free service.

The trolley operates the north-south length of Anna Maria Island 365 days a year. There is no charge to passengers, but in recent years, with diminished grant funding and declines in tax receipts, local governments have struggled with budgeting for the service.

A couple of years ago, the county and Island chamber crafted a partnership to promote and finance the trolley in part with advertising.

Island businesses bought into the campaign, but the county suspended the advertising while it pursued replacement vehicles for the mechanically troubled trolleys.

With replacement vehicles due this year, the campaign is being reactivated, according deputy county administrator Karen Windon.

The agreement approved by commissioners during a regular meeting May 24 stated that the chamber will pay the county \$15,000 in ad revenues each quarter to total \$60,000 a year.

Any sales revenue above the \$60,000 will be kept by the chamber, according to a memo from Windon to commissioners.

The new trolleys also will be equipped with donation boxes to help generate revenue for the service.

Under the agreement, the county “will not review or pre-approve advertising content, but will rely on the judgment of the chamber to ensure content is of a type and nature suitable for the trolley service,” Windon said.

The county agreement is for two years, with an option to renew.

