**PRESS RELEASE**  St. Pete Pier™

 ***council approves tampa Bay watch to operate education center at the St. Pete Pier™***

**ST. PETERSBURG, FL (May 3, 2018) –**

Today, St. Petersburg City Council approved a resolution authorizing Mayor Kriseman to execute a lease agreement with Tampa Bay Watch, Inc., a Florida not for profit organization, for the development and operation of an education station and wet classroom at the new St. Pete Pier™ for a five-year term.

In September 2017, Tampa Bay Watch, Inc. made an unsolicited proposal to the City to lease, operate, and manage the Education Center, which would include programs focused on marine and environmental education presented to families and tourists during summer camps, afternoon and evening sessions. They will also provide management services for the center as an event venue for corporate meetings and special events.

Tampa Bay Watch is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Tampa Bay estuary through scientific and educational programs. Established in 1993, Tampa Bay Watch performs a variety of habitat restoration and protection activities throughout the year, utilizing thousands of volunteers to help the bay recover from its environmental problems.

Chris Ballestra, City Managing Director of Development Coordination said, “Tampa Bay Watch is perfectly situated to manage the education center. They have decades of environmental stewardship, programming, and a proven ability to provide outstanding environmental education to the Tampa Bay Region.”

 “Tampa Bay Watch is thrilled to be able to expand our youth education and community outreach programs to the new St. Petersburg Pier”, says Peter Clark, President and Founder.  “The new facilities will advance our mission to protect and restore the Tampa Bay estuary by involving our kids and the community in stewardship and educational activities.”

Said City Education Director and member of the Pier Education Advisory Team, Leah McRae, Esq., “We are truly excited to bring this educational opportunity to the St. Pete Pier.  A partnership with Tampa Bay Watch will create a more enriching experience for generations to come.  This is an important step forward for the Pier and Pier District for citizens young and old.”

Additional information about the St. Pete Pier™ is available on the Pier website at: <http://www.newstpetepier.com>

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