

Minutes

TOURISM BOARD

Regular meeting

5:30 p.m. February 3, 2025

Board Meeting Room of Town Hall Annex, 105 E. Corbin St.



Present: Chair Victoria Pace, Vice Chair Megan Kimball, Rainbow Cabbage, Barney Caton, Scott Czechlewski, and Eryk Pruitt

Absent: Smita Patel, Meaghun Darab

Staff: Planning and Economic Development Manager Shannan Campbell

1. Call to order

Chair Victoria Pace called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. Agenda changes and approval

Pace asked if there were any agenda changes. Shannan Campbell requested an addition as item 4.b to verify reappointments for a few board members.

Motion: Pace moved to approve the agenda as amended. Member Eryk Pruitt seconded.

Vote: 8-0.

3. Presentations

Contract partner quarterly reports

A. Alliance for Historic Hillsborough (Visitors Center)

Amanda Boyd from the Alliance presented their Q2 updates. She reported strong visitor numbers for November and December. The Alliance held several events, including spirits tours which sold 199 tickets, and Pictures with Santa at the Dixon House which welcomed 528 people. They also supported community events like the Downtown Trick or Treat, Shop Small Saturday, and the Gingerbread House Tour.

Boyd discussed upcoming events, including Rev. War Day, for which they applied for a North Carolina A250 grant to expand the event in collaboration with partners like the Burwell School and Orange County History Museum. She also mentioned the May Preservation Tour, which will include new partners and offer free market activities at the Dickson House.

Regarding marketing efforts, Boyd presented social media statistics, highlighting improved reach on Instagram compared to Facebook. She noted successful collaborations with micro-influencers and Discover Carolinas, which resulted in increased engagement. The Alliance also invested in print advertising in various publications.

Boyd concluded by discussing heritage education efforts and guided tours, emphasizing their impact on downtown visitation.

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B. Burwell School Visitor Services

Emma Vadney presented updates for the Burwell School. She recapped Q1 events, including research-focused events, a star party, and their fall festival which attracted nearly 400 attendees.

For Q2, Emma reported on several events:

- Halloween at Burwell, featuring kids' crafts and costumed house tours
- A book reading event in November
- Participation in the holiday parade in December, selling hot cocoa and cookies

Vadney also discussed new holiday tours offered at the Burwell School, which attracted about 70 visitors. She presented visitor statistics, noting that 75% of guests were from outside Orange County.

Other updates included progress on their comic book project, work on the brick schoolhouse, and upcoming events such as a talk by Judge Beverly Scarlett and their Mardi Gras-themed auction on March 1st.

C. Hillsborough Arts Council Events/Visitor Services

Heather Tatreau presented for the Hillsborough Arts Council, introducing their new board chair, Julia Workman. She reported on volunteer hours and provided an overview of Q2 programming, including Last Fridays art walks in October and November, and the Solstice Lantern Walk in December.

Tatreau detailed the success of the October Last Friday event, which had an estimated 2,500 attendees and featured various activities. She also discussed the Solstice Lantern Walk, which saw record attendance of around 6,000 people. Heather highlighted improvements made to the event, including increased donations, new marketing opportunities, and enhancements to the river walk experience.

Tatreau presented the budget for these events, noting that while the Solstice Lantern Walk generates revenue, the Last Fridays events do not have a direct monetization component. She explained that changes in grant funding have created a shortfall for the Last Fridays program, which they are working to address through increased fundraising efforts and potential program adjustments.

Motion: Cabbage moved to amend the Hillsborough Arts Council budget by adding \$19,866. Member Barney Caton seconded.

Vote: 8-0.

D. Orange County Historical Museum

Catie Atkinson presented for the Orange County History Museum. She reported a total of 1,283 visitors served, including on-site visitors, program attendees, and students on field trips. Catie highlighted the closure of their 2024 special exhibit, which had a holiday makeover in December.

She discussed successful events such as the Hammer of the Scots Cabaret and Theater event, which raised over \$4,000 for the museum, and a historic cocktail tasting event with Yonder. Atkinson also mentioned collaborations with other organizations for programs addressing racial history in Orange County.

Atkinson previewed upcoming events and exhibits, including a program on armed insurrection in North Carolina and a new special exhibit on the history of youth sports in Orange County, scheduled to open in April.

4. Discussion/Action items**A. FY24 Audit Report**

Campbell presented the FY24 audit report. She noted that the audit findings were good, with no unaccounted for monies. The unassigned fund balance (savings account) was reported at \$438,000. Campbell mentioned that while they overspent their budget, they made it up in revenues for that year. The net position of the board grew compared to the previous year.

There was a discussion about the possibility of investing the fund balance, with Pruitt pointing out that at a 4% APY, it could earn about \$1,400 per month. Campbell agreed to inquire with the finance director about investment options for public funds. She said public funds couldn't be invested the same way private ones could, but she wasn't sure exactly what the laws were.

B. Reappointments of Eryk Pruitt, Scott Czechlewski, Rainbow Cabbage, and Smita Patel

Campbell explained that these members' terms were coming up. All members expressed a desire to be re-appointed. Campbell indicated that she would check with Patel to make sure they also wanted to be reappointed.

5. Monthly reports and comments

FY25 F&B Report (In-Progress)

Campbell presented the in-progress FY25 Food & Beverage tax report. Initially, there was confusion about the numbers presented, as they appeared to show a decrease. However, upon closer inspection, it was determined that the percentages were inverted, and the board was up by approximately \$9,000 compared to the previous year. Campbell agreed to correct and resend the report.

Member Cabbage indicated that she thought that more visitor materials like maps and brochures should be in more locations around town. She also suggested that the Visitors Center maybe could be combined with the Hillsborough Arts Council's Gallery and Gift Shop. She explained that she wondered if there could be cost savings combining contract partners. She said that she did not like the location of the visitors center because it was not central and the signage wasn't great.

Member Kimball explained that the Visitors Center being located inside the historic Alexander Dickson House was special because the house had significance and the grounds can support events like Revolutionary War Day, concerts, etc. Member Pruitt agreed and said he likes the location because people can park easily come in and ask where to eat and then walk to dining, bars, and shopping.

Member Czechlewski explained that some businesses will allow you to put maps and things in their location but some may not want it. Campbell said there was a push to get maps in more locations a few years ago and that was her experience. She said she would talk with Visitors Center staff on doing another push for materials.

6. Adjournment

Motion: Pace adjourned the meeting at 7:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dakotah Kimbrough
Planning Technician
Staff support to the Hillsborough Tourism Board

Approved: June 3, 2025

