

Minutes

TOURISM BOARD

Regular meeting

5:30 p.m. August 4th, 2025

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



Present: Vice-Chair Megan Kimball, Meaghun Darab, Smita Patel, and Eryk Pruitt.

Absent: Rainbow Cabbage, Barney Caton, Scott Czechlewski, Chair Victoria Pace.

Staff: Planning and Economic Development Manager Shannan Campbell
Planning Technician Dakotah Kimbrough

1. Call to order

Vice-Chair Megan Kimball called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m. Planning and Economic Development Manager Shannan Campbell confirmed the presence of a quorum.

2. Agenda changes and approval

Campbell requested to add item 5c to discuss canceling the September 3rd tourism board meeting, citing potentially low attendance due to its proximity to Labor Day.

Motion: Member Meaghun Darab moved to approve the agenda with the addition. Member Eryk Pruitt seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

3. Minutes

- A. August 5th, 2024
- B. May 5th, 2025
- C. June 2nd, 2025

Campbell explained that the August 5th, 2024, minutes were included because they had not been previously approved due to oversight.

Motion: Vice-Chair Kimball moved to approve all minutes as submitted. Member Pruitt seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

4. Discussion/Action Items

A. Q3 & Q4 Reports from Contract Partners

- Alliance (Visitors Center)

Amanda Boyd presented the Q3 and Q4 report for the Alliance. She highlighted two marketing initiatives:

1. A collaboration with Ral-Eats!, a micro-influencer from Raleigh, focusing solely on food in Hillsborough. This was their first food-focused campaign targeting the Raleigh and Durham audiences.
2. A partnership with Raleigh Wanderlust, which included purchasing a User Generated Content (UGC) package. This provided the Visit Hillsborough with reels and video content from various Hillsborough locations, which they have already used to create several reels.

Boyd also discussed three successful programs from Q3 and Q4:

1. Dram of History: A spin-off of Outlandish, featuring a whiskey tasting and speakers from Western North Carolina. This event was held at the Colonial Inn.
2. West Hillsborough Walking Tours: Attendance improved from 0 last year to 16 this year. They adapted the format to "walk and talks" to address issues with shade and sidewalks.
3. Indigenous Beading Classes: Led by Beverly Scarlett, co-founder of Indigenous Memories, these classes were held at the visitor center and were well-attended.

Boyd presented the annual report, highlighting:

- Over 8,500 visitors to the center, up from about 5,000 last year.
- Top counties for visitors were Wake and Durham.
- Top states were Virginia and California.
- Volunteer hours were tracked to showcase their value.
- Instagram followers grew by 1,700, reaching 9,159 at the time of the meeting.
- Press highlights included a Southern Living digital article and a focused approach with 6 AM Raleigh.

Boyd concluded by mentioning the temporary closure of the Speedway due to recent flooding and its impact on tourism. She introduced the incoming new Executive Director, Dani McIvor, who would be taking over for her when she left later this month. Campbell indicated that there would be a longer introduction later on in the meeting.

- Arts Council

Heather Tatreau presented the Q3 and Q4 report for the Arts Council. She began by thanking the board for the additional \$20,000 support for Last Fridays, which helped them break even on the event. Key points from her presentation included:

- The addition of part-time support staff, including a paid marketing intern and a part-time events coordinator.
- Q3 overview: January and February were used for planning the rest of the Last Friday's year.
- March saw the relaunch of Last Fridays, starting with a "light" version.
- They conducted an open call for the poet laureate position.
- In April, they inaugurated the new poet laureate, Amal Kassir.
- May and June saw the full programming of Last Fridays on the Old Courthouse lawn, including music performances, comedy, and poetry readings.
- The gallery and gift shop had 5,000 visitors in this half of the year, with 67% from outside Hillsborough and 57% from outside Orange County.
- They generated over \$28,000 in income for 50 artists.
- New revenue-generating initiatives included art-making kits sold through the gift shop.

- Burwell School

Emma Vadney presented the Q3 and Q4 report for the Burwell School. Key points included:

- A successful bourbon tasting fundraiser in January with Leland Little and Mark Solomon.
- Two Black History Month programs in February.
- The auction gala in March, which raised over \$30,000 in net profit.
- Participation in Rev War Day with the Alliance in Q4.

- A poetry reading in celebration of National Poetry Month featuring Jackie Shelton Green.
- Collaboration with the Hillsborough Garden Club on their garden tour in May.
- A sold-out tea fundraiser in May featuring Lee Smith and her husband Hal.
- A Juneteenth event in June with Crystal Simone Smith and Dr. Sheila Smith McCoy.

Vadney mentioned the reopening of the schoolhouse after receiving a preservation grant from the Questers organization. They also installed a new TV cart with a digital exhibit about Elizabeth Keckley's life. She noted that the site was closed for about a month due to HVAC issues, which will impact their June and July visitor numbers.

Vadney also mentioned upcoming events, including a star party on August 29th, a fall festival on September 27th, and a kids' event focused on historical dress on October 4th.

- OC Historical Museum

Catie Atkinson presented the Q3 and Q4 report for the Orange County Historical Museum. Key points included:

- 1,497 on-site visitors, 513 people served through programs and events, and 199 students served through field trips, totaling 2,235 individuals served.
- Visitor breakdown: 583 from Orange County (425 from Hillsborough), 456 from North Carolina outside Orange County, 267 out-of-state visitors, and 38 international visitors.
- They hosted an exhibit from the Hillsborough Garden Club celebrating their 100th anniversary.
- In April, they opened a new exhibit called "Score," focusing on youth sports in Orange County history, which saw significant community engagement.
- They participated in Revolutionary War Living History Day with a colonial beauty salon and Lord Cornwallis.
- They held a garden party fundraiser and a Colonial Waffle Frolic & Regulator Debate as fundraising events.
- The museum received two awards at the North Carolina Museums Council Annual Conference.

Atkinson also discussed their upcoming celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Third Provincial Congress on September 6th, which will include academic speakers, a Colonial Market, and a dramatization of the Congress.

5. Staff Updates

A. F&B Tax Report FY25 through May

Campbell reported that food and beverage revenues were down slightly, possibly due to people eating out less and being more conservative in their spending habits. She mentioned that while restaurants still seem busy, people may be foregoing appetizers, desserts, or cocktails to save money.

Kimball added that the food and beverage tax was down, which may affect the available funds for contract partners in the following year if revenues did not rebound.

B. Amanda Boyd leaving the Alliance- Next Steps

Kimball announced that Boyd would be leaving her position at the Alliance. She praised Boyd's contributions, particularly in improving the organization's social media presence. Kimball introduced Dani McIvor as Boyd's successor, mentioning that Dani was selected after a thorough search and interview process.

Dani briefly introduced herself, stating that she had recently completed her PhD in history from UNC Chapel Hill and expressed her excitement about joining the Alliance/Visitors Center, and working with everyone.

Kimball noted that there would be an overlap period to ensure a smooth transition, with Boyd training McIvor on various aspects of the job. She also mentioned that a going-away party would be organized for Boyd.

- C. Campbell suggested canceling the September 3rd Tourism Board meeting due to its proximity to Labor Day and anticipated low attendance.

Motion: Vice-Chair Kimball moved to cancel the September meeting. Member Pruitt seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

6. Board Updates/comments

No board updates or comments were shared.

7. Adjournment

Motion: Member Darab moved to adjourn at 6:27 p.m. Member Pruitt seconded.

Vote: 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Dakotah Kimbrough
Planning Technician

Approved: November 3, 2025