

Minutes

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Regular meeting

5:30 p.m. April 24, 2024

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



Present: Chair Meaghun Darab, Dani Black and Victoria Pace

Staff: Planning and Economic Development Manager
Shannan Campbell

1. Call to order

Chair Meaghun Darab called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. Planning and Economic Development Manager Shannan Campbell confirmed the presence of a quorum.

2. Agenda changes and approval

Motion: Member Victoria Pace moved to approve agenda as presented. Member Dani Black seconded.

Vote: 3-0

3. Minutes review and approval

Minutes from regular meeting on January 31, 2024

Motion: Darab noted her last name was spelled incorrectly. Pace moved to approve the January 31, 2024, minutes as submitted, with the spelling corrected. Black seconded.

Vote: 3-0

4. Discussion items

A. Draft FY25 TDA Budget

Campbell shared a screen showing the FY2024 year-to-date spending and proposed FY2025 budget. She said the board had a healthy fund balance of approximately \$372,000 and suggested most of the money should go toward marketing, which could include sponsorship of any event that uses the tourism logo and promotes visiting Hillsborough, print ads, photography used to promote the town, etc.

Black said she didn't see the 'Visit Hillsborough' logo on the website or flyers promoting the River Park concert. She suggested the board be more intentional in making its expectations of sponsorship recipients clear, e.g., using the logo and including links to lodging in its promotional materials.

Campbell noted the Tourism Board includes such language in its contracts and it would be a good idea to translate that to TDA sponsorships as well. Campbell answered questions about contract services and the town's administrative fee for collecting occupancy taxes. She said the board could increase its special projects budget. Up to this year, she said she'd been cautious about using fund balance because of COVID uncertainties, but she's now more comfortable with spending more of the fund balance because revenues are strong. Campbell shared some suggestions for using board money to promote tourism next year. She said last year the board had discussed providing tourism materials to place in Airbnb's in addition to local hotels. She

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said before COVID, the Tourism Board was planning to put up two more kiosk signs displaying a map of town attractions, one at the Calvin Street entrance to Riverwalk and another at the Visitors' Center. She said the Tourism Board has had a lot of recent funding requests, but the TDA could instead fund the signs, which would cost about \$20,000. Black suggested installing one on Nash Street close to the art box across from Whit's Custard, rather than on Calvin St. Darab thought a West Hillsborough location should be a higher priority than another one downtown. There was a brief discussion of reviving pre-Covid plans to market the town as a location for small retreats and conferences. Campbell said the board needed to develop new videography and photography; ideally, the work should be sourced by the tourism program, so it has full ownership of the materials. She suggested photos and videos could be made at the Hillsborough Excursion Day, some Last Fridays, the Handmade Parade, FlushFest, Hog Day, Outlandish, and the bluegrass concert at Moorefields. She said \$5,000 to \$6,000 should cover the expenses. The Board concurred.

There was some discussion of how SleepyFest and FlushFest might provide more data about attendance. Pace noted the Solstice Lantern Walk asks attendees to register, and the registration process seemed easy. Pace and Black said it will be interesting to see how the new format for FlushFest will affect their attendance and fundraising numbers this year. Darab said she was comfortable with the \$40,000 budgeted for special projects and partnerships for FY2025. Asked if the board should vote on the budget, Campbell said no, it will be voted on at the next meeting when the public hearing is scheduled.

Black shared an idea for funding a project. She said she knows of a program that Coastal Horizons does in conjunction with Orange County Correctional, which holds a Parents' Day, where prisoners get to spend time with their families. She said many come to Hillsborough, but most family members come from hours away and can't afford to stay overnight. She said the board might provide hotel vouchers for the group to make them feel more welcome to town. Pace noted the Tourism Board had received a request for funds to largely to pay hotel costs for a conference, so there is a precedent. Campbell suggested the board could also fund activities for the families during the visitation or some such. Black said she would talk with the organization to see if they wanted to submit a proposal.

5. Monthly reports

A. FY24 Gross Occupancy Tax Report

Darab asked if some of the increase in occupancy tax revenues was due to inflation and cost of living raises. Campbell said that might be. There was discussion of the 35% drop in revenues in August. Pace suggested it might reflect a decline in the number of weddings held that month. Black suggested the jump in revenues in October might reflect a delay in collection of revenues from August, noting there was often a significant lag between the time Airbnb collects the occupancy tax and when it pays the tax to the town. Campbell concurred and said that it's hard to say month to month.

B. Board comments

Darab said a resident had shared the view that the recent River Park concert didn't reflect the diversity of the town by way of performers or attendees. Campbell said the Hillsborough Arts Council had addressed diversity issues in the past and had found that much depends on the performers or the acts and how diverse they are. There was some discussion of where concert organizers had placed their flyers to reach a broader audience. Pace noted the diversity in Hillsborough differed from that in surrounding communities. Pace mentioned a hip hop group that had recently performed locally that drew a diverse audience. She said the responsibility to promote diversity doesn't rest solely on the shoulders of event organizers, but also lies with the entire local community, which should be welcoming and inviting to the wider community. Black shared that there will be a first time shanty-pub sing at the Second Friday in May at the Colonial Inn, adding that many young people have shown an interest in attending. Campbell said she would share the recommendation for more diverse

performers to the organizers of River Park Concert as well as note that the tourism logo be more prominently displayed.

6. Adjournment

Darab adjourned the meeting at 6:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shannan Campbell', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Shannan Campbell
Planning and Economic Development Manager
Staff support to the Hillsborough Tourism Development Authority

Approved: June 6, 2024