

Minutes

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Regular meeting- Budget Public Hearing

5:30 p.m. May 21, 2025

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
Planning Technician Dakota Kimbrough

1. Call to order and confirmation of quorum

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

2. Agenda changes and approval

Motion: Member Dani Black moved to approve the agenda. Member Victoria Pace seconded.
Vote: 3-0.

3. Minutes review and approval

- A. June 6, 2024
- B. August 28, 2024
- C. February 12, 2025
- D. April 16, 2025

Chair Darab noted that the minutes were included in the packet. There were no changes requested.

Motion: Pace moved approval of all minutes as submitted. Black seconded.
Vote: 3-0.

4. Action/Discussion Items

A. Performing Arts Space opportunity at Eno Arts Mill (FY 2026)

Katie Murray presented an exciting opportunity for a performing arts space at the Eno Arts Mill. She provided a history of the need for performance space in Orange County and Hillsborough. Murray explained that the Eno Arts Mill, acquired in 2021, has been successful but primarily focused on visual arts. The community has consistently identified performance and rehearsal space as a high priority need.

Murray shared results from recent surveys indicating strong interest and support for a cultural arts facility in Hillsborough. She outlined the current challenges faced by performance groups in finding suitable venues and explained how this opportunity could address those needs.

The proposed space is the Cloth Mill event space at the Eno River Mill, offering 14,000 total square feet with a main event space of 11,000 square feet, outdoor courtyard, catering kitchen, and additional amenities. The space can accommodate 450 seated at tables or 700 standing.

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Murray discussed potential uses including theater, dance, film, concerts, cultural events, community gatherings, and private events. She emphasized the positive economic impact, estimating over \$64,000 per month in local spending based on conservative visitor projections.

The facility could also host an accessible youth theater program, which Murray highlighted as having significant positive impacts on participants. She noted the potential for conferences and events that could bring overnight visitors to Hillsborough.

Murray requested \$40,000 from the TDA to help with startup expenses, including acoustic treatments, a modular stage, and other necessary equipment. She explained that this support would strengthen the proposal when presented to the County Commissioners in September to see if they would also support the project.

Board members asked questions about parking, catering possibilities, and comparisons to other venues. They expressed enthusiasm for the project and its potential benefits to the community and tourism growth potential.

Motion: Pace moved to reallocate \$30,000 in funding for a proposed cultural and performing arts feasibility study and add \$10,000 from the fund to meet Murray's request of \$40,000. Black seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

B. Public Hearing for the draft FY 2026 TDA Budget

The board prepared to open the public hearing for the draft FY2026 budget.

Motion: Pace moved to open the public hearing for the draft FY2026 budget. Black seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

No members of the public were present to speak. The board then moved to close the public hearing.

Motion: Black moved to close the public hearing for the draft FY2026 budget. Pace seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

Campbell presented the overall marketing and ad budget by quarter for the TDA as planned in conjunction with the Alliance and the Tourism Board marketing budget. She explained that items in green were funded TDA ad buys, while items in red were desired but unfunded. The total projected spend for TDA ads was \$14,895, just under the \$15,000 budget.

Campbell highlighted a joint marketing opportunity with the tourism board for a social media influencer package with Discover Carolinas and QC Magazine. She also mentioned plans for advertising with Virginia International Raceway and WHUP.

Pace raised a question about discrepancies between the presented budget of \$17,500 and the draft budget numbers of \$15,000 for marketing. Campbell clarified that the difference was due to additional funds allocated for the Alliance for Historic Hillsborough to handle paperwork and ad creation. She explained that the Alliance would be paid \$2,500 for administration of the marketing campaigns.

Campbell also mentioned potential funding requests that may come to the TDA from unfunded tourism board grants, including a multicultural holiday nights event and an Indigenous Memories mural project.

The board discussed the budget and marketing plans, with members asking questions about specific initiatives and expressing support for the proposed strategies.

Motion: Pace moved to recommend approval of the budget to the town board. Black seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

5. Monthly Reports and Comments

A. Tourism Staff Updates

None.

B. TDA Member Comments & Updates

Board members engaged in a discussion about recent events, including the cancellation of Ixtapa Fest due to permit issues. Campbell provided context for the situation, explaining the town's concerns about safety, parking, restrooms, and proper planning for large events. The board expressed interest in helping events like Ixtapa Fest succeed in the future while ensuring proper permits and safety measures are in place.

6. Adjournment

Motion: Black moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:39 p.m. Pace seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

Chair Darab adjourned the meeting at 6:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dakotah Kimbrough

Planning Technician

Staff support to the Hillsborough Tourism Development Authority

Approved: September 10, 2026