

Minutes

TOURISM BOARD

Regular meeting

5:30 p.m. December 2, 2024

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



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

Absent: Smita Patel, Victoria Pace

Staff: Planning and Economic Development Manager Shannan Campbell

1. Call to order

Vice Chair Megan Kimball called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m and noted that Chair Victoria Pace was absent and she would be Chair for this meeting.

2. Agenda changes and approval

Kimball asked if anyone had any changes to the agenda. Seeing none, she called for a motion to approve the agenda.

Motion: Member Meaghun Darab moved to approve the agenda. Member Barney Caton seconded.
Vote: 6-0.

3. Minutes review and approval

Kimball asked for any comments or changes to the minutes. Seeing none, she called for a motion to approve the minutes.

Motion: Darab moved approval of the June 3, 2024 minutes as submitted. Caton seconded.
Vote: 6-0.

4. Presentations

A. Contract partner quarterly reports

1. Alliance for Historic Hillsborough (Visitors Center)

Amanda Boyd presented the Alliance's Q1 report. She provided a handout with visitor numbers for July, August, and September, noting a bump in September due to the Outlandish Hillsborough Scottish Festival.

Boyd discussed the tours conducted during the quarter, including collaborations with Ayr Mount and Moorefields, which sold out. She also mentioned historical walking tours and a Revolutionary War tour.

Events highlighted included the Friday Night Ceilidh and the Outlandish Hillsborough Scottish Festival. The Ceilidh, sponsored by North Carolina's A250 initiative, attracted 450-500 people despite weather challenges.

101 E. Orange St., PO Box 429, Hillsborough, NC 27278
919-732-1270 | www.hillsboroughnc.gov | @HillsboroughGov
www.visithillsboroughnc.com | @HillsboroughNC

The Scottish Festival met its sustainability goal with over 4,000 attendees, surpassing the 2019 event's numbers.

Boyd reported on Visit Hillsborough marketing efforts, noting growth in social media following and website users. She also mentioned increased outreach from potential collaborators.

Other initiatives discussed included:

- Heritage education efforts, including work on the Replica Village with new interpretive signage and a brochure.
- The "Telling the Full Story" project, an interpretive map featuring Black and Indigenous stories, which received additional funding for expansion from an outside grant.
- Community projects, including increased field trips and a partnership with the Orange County News to digitize their collection.
- The November 30th tree lighting event, which was reported as a success with 528 visitors to the center and an estimated 175 attendees at the tree lighting.

2. Burwell School Visitor Services

Emma Vadney presented the Burwell School's Q1 report. She highlighted four events held during the quarter:

- A talk by Burwell School Commissioner Rodney Mayo about his ancestor who worked at the Burwell School.
 - A star party in August, which had to be rescheduled due to a tropical storm, held in collaboration with in collaboration with Whit's Frozen Custard and the Chapel Hill Astronomy Society.
 - A lecture by research committee members about teachers at the Burwell School.
- The fall festival in September, which saw about 400 attendees, doubling the previous year's attendance.

Vadney reported over 1,000 visitors for the quarter, with 690 in September alone. She noted a 50% increase in visitor numbers for their 2023-2024 annual report period compared to the previous year.

Other updates included:

- Ongoing display of the 2024 special exhibit "Working for a Living: A History of Trades in Orange County."
- Receiving a federal grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences to fund the production of four historic comic books.
- Grounds improvements funded by a grant from the Hillsborough Garden Club and restoration work on the brick schoolhouse.

Upcoming events mentioned included holiday tours in December and a bourbon tasting fundraiser in January.

3. Hillsborough Arts Council Events/Visitor Services

Heather Tatreau presented the Hillsborough Arts Council's Q1 report. She reported on staffing changes, including the addition of a part-time staff member and an expansion of their internship program to four interns. The council had over 100 volunteers contributing more than 1,000 volunteer hours in the quarter.

Tatreau discussed the Last Fridays and Art Walk events, which featured live local musicians, a maker's market, puppet shows, and free art tables. Despite two of the three events being rained out, they estimated about 4,000 attendees for the quarter. She also mentioned collaborations with Living Arts Collective for events in River Park and partnerships with 24 local businesses for the Art Walk.

The gallery and gift shop generated over \$12,000 in direct artist income, showcasing 65 local artists. They reported 2,700 visitors to the gift shop, with 68% from outside Hillsborough and 54% from outside Orange County.

Marketing efforts were highlighted, including promoting other local art events and creating a "choose your own adventure" menu for Last Fridays. Tatreau also mentioned their partnership with Triangle Artworks for a Happy Hour event in Hillsborough, and discussed the Solstice Lantern Walk, for which safety and accessibility improvements were being implemented.

4. Orange County Historical Museum

Catie Atkinson presented the Orange County Historical Museum's Q1 report. She reported 1,073 total visitors served for the quarter, including 683 on-site visitors, 330 engaged through programs and events, and 60 from field trips.

Atkinson highlighted two major programs:

- The launch of the Churton Street mapping website on July 10th, which maps businesses in the main section of Churton Street from Hillsborough's beginning to the present.
- A dinner theater fundraising event in September and October, which also served as a book launch for their exhibiting programs coordinator.

She also mentioned the museum's participation in the Outlandish Hillsborough event, where they had a table offering crafts and giving away hats.

Other activities included speaking engagements by staff member Courtney at various locations and the development of new educational activities for field trips.

Upcoming events mentioned included a holiday party and a new special exhibit on youth sports in Orange County opening in April.

5. Discussion/Action items

A. 2025 Tourism Board Regular Meeting Schedule Review/Adoption

Shannan Campbell presented the proposed meeting schedule for 2025. After discussion, the board agreed to move the April 7th meeting to April 14th due to a conflict with the Visit NC conference. The September meeting was moved from September 2nd to September 3rd to avoid the Labor Day holiday.

Motion: Czechlewski moved to approve the 2025 meeting schedule. Cabbage seconded.

Vote: 6-0.

B. VisitNC365 Conference Attendance

Campbell informed the board about the VisitNC 365 Conference in Hickory from April 6-8, 2025. She explained that the board has a budget to send a couple of members, with an estimated cost of \$1,200 per person. This includes registration, per diem meals, mileage, and hotel accommodations.

Several board members expressed interest in attending, including Eryk Pruitt and Rainbow Cabbage. Caton suggested prioritizing the chair and co-chair if they haven't attended before. Member Victoria Pace mentioned it might be challenging for her to attend on those dates. The board agreed to consider the options and make a decision later.

C. Upcoming Board Vacancy

Campbell informed the board about an upcoming vacancy for a food and beverage taxpayer seat. She asked board members to refer potential candidates to her. The board discussed various local food and beverage businesses that might be good candidates, including Samantha's Pupusas, Big Bob's City Grill, Village Diner,

and several others. Campbell agreed to reach out to some of these businesses and encouraged board members to promote the opportunity as a fun, engaging civic position.

6. Monthly reports and comments

A. FY24 Final and FY25 In-progress F&B Tax Reports

Campbell provided an update on the food and beverage tax reports. She noted a change in how the town's finance department is deducting their 6% fee for collection and enforcement, which is now being taken monthly instead of at the end of the fiscal year. This change affects the year-to-year comparison between FY24 and FY25. Campbell also mentioned that September showed a 13% increase, possibly due to the Outlandish event, and went on to express concern about potential decreases in December due to cold weather affecting business.

7. Adjournment

Motion: Kimball adjourned the meeting at 6:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dakotah Kimbrough
Planning Technician
Staff support to the Hillsborough Tourism Board

Approved: June 2, 2025