

Minutes

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Regular meeting

5:30 p.m. April 16, 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

Chair Meaghun Darab called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. and confirmed the presence of a quorum.

2. Agenda changes and approval

The agenda was approved without changes.

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

Vote: 3-0.

3. Minutes review and approval

There were no minutes to review.

4. Action/Discussion Items

A. Special Project & Partnerships: Solstice Lantern Walk 2025 (FY 2026)

Heather Tatreau, Executive Director of the Hillsborough Arts Council, presented a proposal for support of the Solstice Lantern Walk and Market event. She reported that the event had around 6,000 attendees last year, with 5,000 coming from outside Hillsborough. Tatreau explained their data collection methods, including a registration model that allows them to gather demographic information and donations.

Tatreau outlined plans to make the event more of a weekend destination, including partnerships with local hotels and restaurants to offer specials and weekend packages. She mentioned collaborations with downtown merchants for shopping discounts and highlighted their marketing reach across the Triangle area.

The proposed budget for the event was presented, totaling nearly \$62,000. Tatreau requested \$15,000 from the Tourism Board, an increase from the usual \$10,000, to accommodate the event's growth and make necessary improvements.

Board members expressed enthusiasm for the event but raised questions about parking and potential overcrowding. Tatreau acknowledged these concerns and discussed plans for multiple entrances, dispersing crowds, and potentially implementing a shuttle system.

The board discussed the event's impact on local businesses and the importance of including restaurants and shops beyond just the downtown area. They also suggested expanding marketing efforts to reach areas like Raleigh and Greensboro to encourage overnight stays.

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Campbell clarified that this request was for the next fiscal year (FY 2026) and would be considered again during budget discussions. She said that it sounded like the board was supportive, so she would incorporate the request into the budget. The board members agreed.

B. Special Project & Partnerships: River Park Concert 2025 (FY 2026)

David Hays presented a proposal for the River Park Concert, requesting \$10,000 in funding from the Tourism Development Authority. He explained that the event, which has been running for seven years, attracts 5,000-7,000 attendees and has become a signature event for the town.

Hays outlined the event's budget, which is around \$52,000, and explained their fundraising efforts. He highlighted the event's economic impact, drawing people to Hillsborough for multiple days and encouraging family reunions around the concert.

The board discussed the event's timing, which has moved from spring to fall, and how this might affect occupancy tax revenues. They also talked about the event's safety measures and alcohol policies.

Motion: Pace moved to amend the FY 2025 budget to allocate \$10,000 of Special Project & Partnership funds to the River Park Concert. Black seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

C. Special Project & Partnerships: Town & TDA UPROAR Public Art Purchase (FY 2025 or FY 2026)

Campbell presented an opportunity for the TDA to partner with the town in purchasing another piece of public art. The town has about \$9,000 available, and Campbell requested an additional \$4,000 from the TDA. She explained that the art would be placed on the town hall lawn and highlighted the positive impact of previous public art installations.

The board discussed the benefits of public/private partnerships with art and the potential for creating an art scavenger hunt in town or similar. They also talked about the selection process for the artwork. Pace volunteered to serve on the committee that will select the piece of art.

Motion: Black moved to approve \$4,000 in either FY 2025 or FY 2026 budget to complement the town's donation for an art purchase. Pace seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

D. Integrating TDA & Tourism Board marketing through the Visitors Center for FY 2026

Campbell proposed combining TDA's marketing budget with the Tourism Board's marketing budget for a more comprehensive and effective marketing plan. She suggested allocating \$15,000 for marketing, with \$2,500 to the Alliance for ad placement and creation, for a total marketing budget of \$17,500.

The board discussed the proportionality of contributions between the TDA and Tourism Board, considering their respective overall budgets. They agreed that seeing a detailed marketing plan would help clarify the allocation of funds and how each board's funds would be spent.

Campbell agreed to work with the Alliance to create a detailed marketing plan showing how both TDA and Tourism Board funds would be used, to be presented before budget adoption.

E. Draft FY 2026 TDA Budget- First Look

Campbell presented a draft of the FY 2026 TDA budget. She noted that recent decisions made during the meeting would affect some of the numbers. Campbell also mentioned that the current fiscal year's occupancy tax revenues were down by about \$4,000, but she anticipated they would still come in around the \$100,000 mark for the year.

The board discussed economic uncertainties affecting travel and spending, as well as changes in event timing that might impact revenue. Campbell assured the board that the fund balance was healthy, but agreed that they may need to watch revenue numbers during the next fiscal year because travel may be impacted by the current political climate.

- F. Marketing idea for the remainder of FY 2025- Chatham Magazine
Campbell presented an opportunity to advertise in Chatham Magazine's summer upsize issue. The cost would be \$905 for a half-page ad (upgraded from a quarter-page as part of a promotion). Campbell suggested this would be a good way to market to the growing Chatham area, potentially encouraging overnight stays in Hillsborough.

The board agreed this was a good opportunity, especially considering Chatham's growth and proximity to Hillsborough. They indicated that Campbell should move forward with remaining budgeted advertising funds.

5. Monthly Reports and Comments

A. Tourism Staff Updates

Cultural Performing Arts Center

Campbell reported on a meeting with Artspace Consulting regarding a feasibility study for a cultural performing arts center. She explained the potential for a multi-use civic building that could include performing arts space, offices, and potentially serve as a transit hub.

Virginia International Raceway (VIR) Partnership

Campbell shared details of a promising meeting with VIR staff, who were open to various partnership opportunities. These could include signage at the track, hotel partnerships, and potential day trips for race attendees' partners to visit Hillsborough.

Occupancy Tax Report

Campbell reported that occupancy tax revenues were down by about \$4,000 compared to the previous year but expressed hope that this could be made up in the remainder of the fiscal year.

TDA Member Comments & Updates

Board members expressed gratitude for the various events and projects discussed during the meeting. Pace inquired about the board's thoughts on a splash pad in Hillsborough, to which Campbell explained some of the maintenance and logistical challenges that made such a project unlikely.

6. Adjournment

Darab adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dakotah Kimbrough

Planning Technician

Staff support to the Hillsborough Tourism Development Authority

Approved: Month X, 202X