

Minutes

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Regular meeting

5:30 p.m. December 1, 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. The presence of a quorum was confirmed.

2. Agenda changes and approval

There were no agenda changes presented.

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

Vote: 3-0.

3. Minutes review and approval

Minutes from regular meeting on September 10, 2025

Motion: Member Pace moved approval of the September 10, 2025, minutes as submitted. Member Black seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

4. Action items

A. Special Project & Partnerships Funding: Duke Small Town USA Photography Project

The board heard from Susie Post-Rust, a Duke University instructor who, since 2007, has facilitated her “Small Town, USA” course for students to perform in-depth narrative visual storytelling through partnering with figures and topics in Hillsborough. Over the years, the collection of the various photography projects has traced the development and evolution of Hillsborough’s identity through its residents and landmarks.

Post-Rust emphasized the importance of the project to both her students and the town as a whole and highlighted how both benefitted from the partnership. With recent budgetary constraints at the university, she found the program lacking the funds necessary to provide transportation to the students from campus to the town. She asked the board to consider providing \$3,500 in funding to cover those costs so that students can continue to document the unique stories of Hillsborough, and was eager to explore further collaboration, such as providing photography to be used for marketing purposes.

Motion: Member Pace moved to provide \$3,500 in funding for transportation costs for the project. Member Black seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

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Board members then discussed the health of the existing fund balance and whether to pull the funds for that request from the balance in anticipation of the other expected requests they will receive.

Motion: Member Black moved to do a budget amendment to pull the requested funds from the existing fund balance, if needed. Member Pace seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

B. Draft 2026 TDA Meeting Schedule

Manager Shannan Campbell presented a draft TDA meeting schedule for the upcoming year. While some members expressed concern that they may have future conflicts, they agreed to adopt the proposed schedule and remain flexible if dates need to be shifted.

Motion: Member Pace moved to adopt the draft 2026 TDA Meeting Schedule. Member Black seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

5. Monthly reports and Updates

A. Tourism Staff Updates & Occupancy Tax Report

Campbell provided updates on tourism activities and occupancy tax collections. The discussion began with questions about breaking down revenue sources between hotels and short-term rentals. Campbell noted that while she has provided this breakdown in past years, there aren't many differences to report.

Member Black observed that short-term rental prices have increased significantly, though they noted market saturation with many more properties now available. They commented on the general increase in costs across the board, questioning whether this reflects people doing well financially or other market factors.

Campbell explained challenges with short-term rental compliance, particularly with whole-home rentals where owners don't live on-site. She described difficulties tracking down property owners, especially when properties are owned by LLCs or trusts with registered addresses that don't accept mail, complicating code enforcement efforts. However, she noted that most properties visible on platforms like Airbnb are paying taxes, which generates revenue for the town.

The discussion turned to the potential Cycle NC Mountains-to-Coast Ride project, with Campbell expressing uncertainty about its feasibility. She had received their RFP requirements for hotel rooms and discovered they require non-smoking rooms only, which she hadn't factored into her initial room count calculations. Campbell was surprised to learn that smoking rooms still exist in some hotels and realized this requirement might further reduce available inventory.

Campbell expressed continued concerns about having sufficient hotel room capacity for the event, which would bring approximately 1,000 people, with about half expected to need hotel accommodations. She compared this to other events like the annual Last Friday art walk, which brings in a lot of people but encourages rather than requires, overnight accommodations.

The town currently has approximately 300 hotel rooms combined across the Colonial Inn, Holiday Inn Express, and Microtel properties. Campbell noted that hotels often have rooms out of service due to maintenance issues, further reducing available inventory. She was concerned about having to shuttle guests to Durham if local accommodations proved insufficient.

Discussion included the possibility of utilizing short-term rentals, though Campbell estimated only 25-30 are available in the immediate downtown area, with more in the periphery. The logistics of accommodating such

a large group remained challenging, particularly since the event falls on a Monday night when many local restaurants are typically closed.

Campbell planned to meet with event representatives on Thursday for an in-person assessment of local properties and accommodations. She had already contacted hotel property managers to determine actual available room inventory and expected commitments.

The restaurant capacity issue was discussed, with only Nomad and Los Altos typically open on Monday nights, though Antonia's has recently begun Monday operations. Campbell suggested the need to encourage all restaurants to open for the event and possibly arrange food trucks to supplement dining options, given that local restaurants cannot easily accommodate 1,000 diners either.

Campbell remained optimistic but acknowledged significant logistical challenges in hosting such a large event successfully. She said that she expected to learn a lot more from event organizers from Cycle NC soon.

B. TDA Member Comments & Updates

Board members did not have additional comments beyond what had been discussed.

6. Adjournment

Motion: Member Pace moved to adjourn the meeting. Member Black seconded.

Vote: 3-0.

Chair Darab adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dakotah Kimbrough
Planning Technician
Staff support to the Hillsborough Tourism Development Authority

Approved: April 15, 2026