

Agenda

Hillsborough Tourism Development Authority

5:30 p.m. March 4, 2026

Town Board Meeting Room, 105 E. Corbin St.



1. Call to order and confirmation of quorum

2. Agenda changes and approval

3. Minutes

- A. December 1, 2025
- B. March 4, 2026

4. Discussion/Action Items

Special Projects and Partnership Funding Requests:

- A. Alliance Outlandish Festival Shuttle Sponsorship- \$5,000 (FY27)
- B. HAC Solstice Lantern Walk Sponsorship- \$10,000 (FY27)
- C. HAC Handmade Parade Sponsorship- \$10,000 (FY27)
- D. Draft FY 2027 TDA Budget – in progress

5. Monthly Reports and Updates

- A. Tourism Staff Updates & Occupancy Tax Report
- B. TDA Member Comments & Updates

6. Adjournment

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 X, 2026

Minutes

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Regular meeting

5:30 p.m. March 4, 2026

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



Present: Chair Meaghun Darab and Victoria Pace

Absent: None

Staff: Planning and Economic Development Manager
Shannan Campbell
Planning Technician Dakotah Kimbrough

1. Call to order and confirmation of quorum

Chair Meaghun Darab called the meeting to order at 5:41 p.m. A quorum was present with two board members in attendance because there is a vacant seat, though they noted needing one more person for a full board.

2. Agenda changes and approval

Chair Darab asked if there were any changes to the agenda. Hearing none, a motion was made to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion: Member Pace moved to approve the agenda. Chair Darab seconded.

Vote: 2-0.

3. Discussion/Action Items

Special Projects and Partnership Funding Requests:

A. Town of Hillsborough A250 Event Partnership- \$12,500

Matt Efird, Assistant Town Manager, presented the request for matching funds for a Fourth of July event celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The town has committed \$25,000 and is requesting \$12,500 from the Tourism Development Authority. Efird explained they are working with the Orange County Arts Commission and Greg Bell, formerly of Festival for the Eno, to organize the event.

The event aims to blend Hillsborough's historic, arts, and small-town family-friendly atmosphere into a free community celebration that drives foot traffic and overnight visitation. Efird noted they are coordinating with the OCVB and other events throughout the weekend to encourage visitors to make it a weekend experience, particularly since it falls on a Saturday.

Chair Darab expressed some concern about the cost given the Tourism Development Authority's smaller budget compared to the town's but noted this is a once-in-a-lifetime event for Hillsborough's 250th anniversary celebration. She also inquired about coordination with Colonial Inn and other lodging sites to create a comprehensive weekend experience.

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Shannan Campbell, Planning and Economic Development Manager, explained that the board would potentially need to dip into fund balance for this and other requests.

Board members agreed this was an important investment given the significance of the anniversary and the fact that other parties had already committed funding. They noted there is typically no Fourth of July event in Hillsborough.

Motion: Member Pace moved to make a budget amendment, if needed, to fund the full \$12,500 amount requested, from the Special Projects and Partnerships line item. Chair Darab seconded.

Vote: 2-0.

B. Riverpark Concert Event Partnership- \$10,000

David Hays presented the annual request for the Riverpark Concert sponsorship, noting it follows the same successful format as previous years. He reported that last year's event was tremendously successful, with the Tourism Development Authority's sponsorship helping them advertise meaningfully. The event generated 200,000 Facebook views in the 90 days leading up to the event and resulted in over 40 hotels being booked.

Hays shared exciting news that they have already secured a headliner for this year's October 24th event. He noted the band has over 155,000 followers on Spotify and recently added a female fiddler to their lineup. The band will also be playing at the Merlefest Bluegrass Festival and the Lincoln Theatre in April, which should generate additional buzz.

Hays explained that they lost \$20,000 worth of sponsors last year due to his departure from Cisco but were able to manage the shortfall and continue the event thanks to the Tourism Development Authority's support. He emphasized that they are working to find ways to backfill sponsorships to become more self-sufficient, having established credibility with eight concerts behind them.

The headliner's contract terms are more favorable this year, requiring no payment until September 24th rather than the typical 50% down payment. They also have an inclement weather policy that allows them to move the event to a future date within six months without losing the deposit.

Board members expressed familiarity with the event and its positive economic impact, with one member sharing an anecdote about randomly meeting people at an airport who came to the concert from Greensboro after hearing about it.

Campbell clarified whether this would be a budget amendment for the current fiscal year or next year's budget. Hays explained that the organizers would like the funds before July 1st to promote the concert effectively, but could also take them after July 1st.

Motion: Member Pace moved to make a budget amendment, if needed, to fund the full \$10,000 amount from the Special Projects and Partnerships line item. Chair Darab seconded.

Vote: 2-0.

C. Moorefields Jazz Festival Partnership- \$2,000

Cecily Nisbet, Executive Director of Moorefields, and Danielle Rose from WHUP presented their collaborative request for a new spring jazz festival. Nisbet explained that following Moorefields' successful tenth anniversary Bluegrass Festival last fall, there has been significant demand from audiences for more outdoor events and music. Rather than another bluegrass festival, they decided to try something different, noting that there was historically a jazz festival at Moorefields.

The collaboration between Moorefields and WHUP demonstrates community building by bringing together different segments of Hillsborough rather than just serving individual pockets. They explained that they have secured nationally recognized performers.

The event is strategically timed for later in the evening with an official after party downtown to drive visitors to restaurants and encourage overnight stays. They have partnered with Colonial Inn to offer prorated rates for jazz festival attendees who book rooms there, with advanced ticket rates as an incentive. They are also working with Holiday Inn on a similar arrangement.

The festival is capped at 750 attendees and features an artisan market focused on Hillsborough vendors and food trucks, primarily from the Piedmont Food Processing Center. Eno River Brewing will serve as the official beer sponsor, further supporting local businesses.

Chair Darab appreciated the hotel partnership component, which addresses how to generate overnight visitation despite Moorefields being outside Hillsborough proper. The later timing and after party downtown create a natural flow for visitors to experience more of the community.

Nesbit noted they have been successful with fundraising so far and hope to eventually become self-sustaining or grow into a multi-day event. This initial festival serves as their blueprint to determine future potential.

Motion: Member Pace moved to make a budget amendment, if needed, to fund the full \$2,000 request from the Special Projects and Partnership line item. Chair Darab seconded.

Vote: 2-0.

D. Draft FY 2027 TDA Budget

Campbell presented the draft FY 2027 budget, noting it looks similar to FY 2026. She anticipated that the Hillsborough Arts Council will likely return to request funding for the Solstice Lantern Walk, which was helpful for their previous event. They are working on gathering data about out-of-town versus local attendance and any room nights generated.

Campbell proposed continuing the \$10,000 annual investment in holiday decorations, noting that while they have acquired fiberglass present boxes and decorations that will last long time, it would be beneficial to add items each year since children particularly enjoy the large decorations.

Chair Darab brought up the concept of more extensive lighting displays, referencing an out of state comprehensive building lighting show that has gained regional recognition. Campbell noted that the Hillsborough Arts Council partners with a company called "Get Lit" for lighting installations, though downtown Hillsborough faces challenges with limited electrical outlets due to the town's age.

The budget includes \$30,000 for performing arts center exploration, assuming the Orange County Arts Commission may return with requests after settling into the mill and completing flood damage cleanup from Hurricane Chantal. Campbell noted that Uproar doesn't occur this year, so those funds wouldn't need programming until FY 28, though there may be a cost share need in FY 27 for promoting the FY 28 event.

Chair Darab questioned the proposed Riverwalk entrance shelter, expressing concerns about the cost-benefit ratio for what would essentially serve 12 or so people under a \$36,000 pavilion. She suggested the southern side location might be more appropriate and questioned whether the expense was justified given existing

mature tree shade and nearby shaded areas like the picnic table on the hill and the heavily shaded riverwalk itself.

Campbell explained that the shelter concept stems from the need for third spaces where people can congregate comfortably, particularly during increasingly hot North Carolina summers. She noted that Weaver Street market had previously used sun sails before trees matured and suggested this might be a cheaper alternative they could explore with Public Space. Campbell emphasized this was just a draft with several months before budget adoption, allowing time for more information gathering.

The budget also includes funding for Calvin Street and Nash Street kiosk signs, which had been planned pre-COVID but delayed. Campbell noted fabrication costs have increased significantly, so they're focusing on the most essential locations - Nash Street for west hillsborough businesses and Calvin Street for the newest Greenway entrance, which many visitors may not know exists.

Board members agreed the budget looked good overall and appreciated having advance notice of the draft proposal.

4. Monthly Reports and Updates

A. Tourism Staff Updates & Occupancy Tax Report

Campbell presented occupancy tax data through December, showing the occupancy tax revenue is down but otherwise seeing typical monthly fluctuations. She anticipates FY 26 results will fall between FY 24 and FY 25 performance levels, hoping to get closer to FY24 numbers now that Colonial Inn has new management and has resolved previous HVAC and operational issues that affected FY 25 performance.

Campbell noted the significant growth trajectory from FY 17 to FY 24, reflecting increased activities and lodging options in Hillsborough. The fund balance remains healthy, providing adequate resources for approving tourism investment and spending.

Campbell shared promising news about recent meetings with a hotel company interested in potentially building a new hotel with small conference center space in Hillsborough. She noted the town's attractiveness to developers due to having two interstate exits and two interstates running through the area, which hotel companies prefer for their investments.

B. TDA Member Comments & Updates

Board members had no additional comments or updates to share.

5. Adjournment

Motion: Chair Darab moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:20 p.m. Member Pace seconded.

Vote: 2-0.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Approved: April X, 2026

HILLSBOROUGH

Background

The Outlandish Hillsborough Scottish Festival will return to Hillsborough on September 26th, 2026. As the third iteration of this festival (second since the COVID-19 Pandemic) we are looking forward to continuing to expand and improve upon what proved to be an immensely popular festival in 2024.

The Outlandish Festival is a one-of-a-kind celebration of Scottish heritage and culture, highlighting the historic roots of our Hillsborough community while offering an unforgettable experience for visitors of all ages. From traditional music and storytelling to clan history, artisan vendors, and local brews, this event blends education, entertainment, and community in a way that is truly unique.

In 2024, the festival drew over 2,700 attendees, featured 41 vendors and nonprofit partners, and welcomed 25 local businesses and entertainment acts.

The Alliance for Historic Hillsborough is seeking Tourism Development Authority support in sponsoring our shuttle system for the festival. This \$5,000 investment will play a key role in ensuring attendees can move efficiently between key areas in town and the festival grounds at Ayr Mount (376 St. Mary's Rd. Hillsborough, NC 27278).

Concept

The shuttle system for the Outlandish Hillsborough Scottish Festival is designed to accommodate the needs of festival attendees while encouraging patronage of local businesses and remaining sensitive to the impacts of event parking on downtown businesses.

The Alliance for Historic Hillsborough has secured 3 shuttle buses from Carolina Livery at a cost of \$5000. Details on bus sizing below:

- 1 - Category C Mid-size Bus (Seating up to 30 passengers) and
- 2 - Category D Mid-size Buses (Seating up to 40 passengers each)

1 Category D and 1 Category C bus will run on a loop between Downtown Hillsborough (utilizing Court St) and Ayr Mount. Additionally, 1 Category D bus will run on a loop from the Orange High School parking lot to Ayr Mount. Shuttles will be free for festival goer use from 9am-5:30pm.

Two shuttles are designated for Downtown Hillsborough to encourage attendees to park and take a shuttle from the Downtown area in hopes that they will shop, dine, and stay at local stores, restaurants, and hotels. We are working with local businesses to create a one-sheet of businesses offering specials during the Outlandish Weekend. Weekend activities will include the Saturday festival, our free Friday Night Ceilidh, and other partner events in the works. The Friday Night Ceilidh will take place from 5:30-8:30pm at the Hillsborough Visitor Center in partnership with the Hillsborough Arts Council's September 2026 Last Friday's & The Art Walk.

The third shuttle looping to and from the Orange High School lot is designed to allow for an additional parking location intended to alleviate the pressure that event parking places on Downtown merchants. This lot allows a parking option for attendees who are interested only in attending the festival for the day without taking up valuable parking locations for non-festival attendees visiting town.

We plan to emphasize that there is much more to the weekend than the single festival and hope that the majority of attendees will choose to park Downtown which is why we will have an additional shuttle and thus a shorter wait time.

All attendees will receive the full list of activities, specials, and a shuttle schedule when tickets go live at the end of May 2026. This will allow interested parties to more efficiently plan their time and encourages making a full weekend trip around the festival. We plan to create graphics emphasizing a weekend long stay highlighting the Colonial Inn and local AirBnbs and will highlight the shuttle as a key reason to stay in town during the weekend festivities.

Budget Category	Estimated Total
Marketing	\$4,580.00
Site (Includes \$5,000 for Shuttle)	\$12,730.72
Administration	\$1,085
Programs	\$7,700
Event Total	\$26,095.72

The shuttles comprise nearly 50% of our largest budget category aimed at meeting site needs. This category is dedicated to attendee experience including tent, stage, and sanitation rentals. With the Tourism Development Authority supporting our shuttle system we will be better able to serve our attendees and ensure they have the best experience possible while visiting Hillsborough.

Shuttles are an integral part of our festival, particularly for attendee experience. These shuttles will allow us to foster an environment that seamlessly moves attendees to and from the festival while encouraging longer stays and more time spent at local businesses.

Hillsborough Tourism Development Authority FY27 Special Project/ Partnership Funding Request: SLW



Organization Information		
Organization Name: Hillsborough Arts Council		
Contract Contact Person and Title: Heather Tatreau, Executive Director		
Contact Person Email: director@hillsboroughartscouncil.org	Contact Person Phone: 919-593-4295	
Organization Street Address: 102 S Churton St		
City: Hillsborough	State: NC	ZIP Code: 27278
Organization's Annual Operating Budget: \$ 371,760		
Amount of TDA funding being requested: \$ 10,000	FISCAL YEAR: FY27	
General Information		

Outline/Overview of the requested proposal:

The Solstice Lantern Walk & Market (SLW) is one of the most widely known cultural events in Hillsborough, as demonstrated by a feature in Our State Magazine. This event has a strong track record of bringing thousands of tourists to town to enjoy the handmade lanterns and share their own creations on the Winter Solstice. We have helped make Hillsborough a holiday cultural destination with the expansion of the successful Solstice Artist Market, the addition of food trucks, incorporating entertainment elements into the event, and having greater collaborations with local merchants, restaurants, and hotels. Visitors can look at handmade giant puppet lanterns in River Park, listen to live music at the Farmer's Market Pavillion while grabbing a bite to eat and doing some last minute holiday shopping at the artist market, and participate in or view the 1.3 mile procession of lanterns on River Walk.

This event has grown in recent years as we expanded our marketing outreach around the Triangle. We estimate that around 5,500 people attended in 2024 and again in 2025. Last year, 73% of attendees reported that they resided outside of Hillsborough (4,000), with 43% of attendees residing outside of Orange County (2,400). Folks who registered for the SLW left us comments like these:

“We timed our visit to Hillsborough specifically so we can attend.”

“The best part of the season - thank you!”

“This is a family tradition in our household.”

We made some small alterations in 2025 that seemed to have a positive impact on attendance. We held the event on the Saturday night closest to Solstice, allowing more visitors to attend on a weekend. We partnered with The Alliance to offer a circulator bus to disperse parking around town and into West Hillsborough. We also created a “Make it a Weekend” campaign to encourage overnight stays during the SLW. This consisted of flyers around town, social media content, and a website landing page with links to all the local hotels. Additionally, we partnered with The Colonial Inn to offer a discount. We also brought SLW brochures to the Holiday Inn and Microtel in Hillsborough to promote return stays.

In FY27, we would like to grow our “Make it a Weekend” campaign by working more with local hotels, Airbnbs, and restaurants to encourage tourists to stay in Hillsborough overnight by offering hotel specials and weekend brunch deals. Since Durham County is responsible for 25% of our SLW participants, we would like to capitalize on this even more by increasing marketing efforts in Durham.

We are requesting TDA funding for a portion of our marketing costs and staff salary support in order to promote the Solstice Lantern Walk as a weekend Hillsborough destination.

Please explain how the proposal will promote tourism in Hillsborough:

Through robust data collection methods during the registration process, we have shown that the annual Solstice Lantern Walk & Market boosts tourism in Hillsborough. This well known event allows us to promote town visitation through far-reaching publications like IndyWeek and Our State Magazine as well as radio interviews and advertisements with The Hill WCHL and WUNC-Fresh Air. We regularly receive feedback from Hillsborough merchants and restaurants that they see economic benefits from this boost in tourism.

Up until last year, we only promoted SLW as a one night event. Last year, we began to extend our marketing to encourage overnight stays, weekend in-town brunch, and downtown holiday shopping. We also partnered with Visit Hillsborough and the Chamber to offer combined efforts around the holiday season. We would like to build on last year's successes and expand our "Make it a Weekend" campaign in FY27. We believe that Hillsborough can be more than an evening destination for the Solstice Lantern Walk. Our strong relationships with local businesses, lodging establishments, and community partners have paved the way for taking this to the next level.

Tourism Impact

Please estimate the number of residents this proposal will serve: 1,500

Please estimate the number of tourists this proposal will bring to town: 4,000

If this proposal has been held or done before, please describe how the actual number of residents and tourists were counted (ie. registration/pre-registration, ticket sales either prior to the event or at the event gates, via turnstile data, counters from volunteers, wristband tracking, counts at the site):

For the 2025 SLW, we communicated in marketing efforts that online pre-registration was free but *required*. This prompted 3,653 people to register. In the registration form, we asked for information about town and county residence so that we could collect geographical data.

We hired a drone photographer for the event. This allowed us to survey snapshots of the crowd and informed our attendance data. Based upon consultations with the police department in the past, our staff is skilled in estimating crowd sizes. All of this taken together helped us determine that our day-of attendance was an estimated 5,500 attendees.

Please describe how you plan to partner with local hotel/motels on this proposal:

We plan to partner with the Colonial Inn again this year to offer a special for lodging the night of the SLW. We have also been in communication with downtown Airbnbs that would like to offer discounts to participants. We will create a "Make it a Weekend" landing page on our website that points to these specials as well as other in-town lodging options such as the Holiday Inn Express and Microtel Inn & Suites.

To encourage overnight visitation, we will partner with downtown restaurants offering weekend brunch options and specials on the morning after the SLW. This would give us an opportunity to promote a variety of mix and match lodging and brunch packages to out-of-town guests.

Please describe how you plan to partner with local business/non-profits/governments on this proposal:

In preparation of the Solstice Lantern Walk & Market, we will begin sharing "Save the Date" messaging with all of our partners in early October. We will work with The Chamber and Visit Hillsborough to combine and boost messaging around holiday weekend activities in Hillsborough. Downtown merchants can also offer discounts all weekend if patrons show proof of SLW registration, which incentivises registering for this free event and helps us collect data and donations. This is a model we have used before, so local businesses are familiar with it. We also encourage businesses to reach out to us if they want help brainstorming ways to participate, or if they have ideas for further collaboration in lead-up to the event.

The Tourism Board has supported the SLW as a contract partner for the past four years and we anticipate continued support. They see the value of this event as a significant driver of tourism and a contribution to our local economy.

We will also partner again with the Alliance in organizing a circulator bus to shuttle attendees around town. This helps alleviate parking issues and encourage tourists to explore more of Hillsborough. We could include several of the in-town lodging options on the route. Snow Approach Foundation has also been a great partner. They have offered to host our free make-and-take lantern activity indoors during November’s Last Friday again this coming year. They are always happy to donate space for our community building activities and offer an indoor back up plan for weather related issues.

Please [calculate the overall economic impact](#) of this proposal (if applicable):

ARTS & ECONOMIC PROSPERITY 5 CALCULATOR

INSTRUCTIONS

Provide the information below to calculate the economic impact of your organization (or a group of organizations).

Population of your community:

Total Expenses: \$

Total Attendance:

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	FTE JOBS	HOUSEHOLD INCOME	LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE	STATE GOVERNMENT REVENUE
ORGANIZATION(S):	<input type="text" value="\$57,984"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="\$37,902"/>	<input type="text" value="\$1,647"/>	<input type="text" value="\$2,943"/>
AUDIENCES:	<input type="text" value="\$164,100"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="\$71,129"/>	<input type="text" value="\$6,784"/>	<input type="text" value="\$9,774"/>
TOTAL:	<input type="text" value="\$222,084"/>	<input type="text" value="5"/>	<input type="text" value="\$109,031"/>	<input type="text" value="\$8,431"/>	<input type="text" value="\$12,717"/>

Please outline how you plan to make this proposal financially sustainable over time:

This event draws significant revenue from a combination of business sponsorships, registration donations, and Tourism Board contract partner support. We have created a successful donation model for the Solstice Lantern Walk & Market by offering an opportunity for a suggested donation during online registration. Last year, we raised \$18,000 in this way. We also earn revenue through the sale of lantern kits and lantern making workshops leading up to the SLW. A new method of revenue for us has been increased business sponsorships specifically for this event. The popularity of the SLW and our marketing reach outside of Hillsborough has recently attracted larger sponsors. We need time to grow this revenue opportunity to work toward sustainability. With the support of the TDA in the coming year, we hope to get closer to sustainability.

Detailed Special Project/Partnership Budget: SLW					
a. Item	b. Amount Requested via Grant Funds (for each item)	c. Amount Contributed by Organization (for each item) <i>*Info provided here reflects all other earned & contributed revenue sources from HAC budget</i>	c. Other Funding Sources & In-Kind Donations		d. Total Budget (add columns b-d)
			Amount	Source	
1. Sanitation	\$0	0	\$800	Town of Hillsborough	\$ 800
2. Equipment rental: Lighting/Heating	\$0	0	\$1,000/ \$600	Town of Hillsborough/Tourism Board	\$1,600
3. Performance Services	\$0	\$1,225	\$1,275	Tourism Board	\$2,500
4. Workshop Instructor Fees & Supplies	\$0	0	\$960	NC Arts Council	\$960
5. Supplies (lantern kits, ground luminaries, wayfinding signs, etc.)	\$0	\$545	\$815/ \$240	Tourism Board / NC Arts Council	\$1,600
6. Permits (Town, County, Signage, Vendors)	\$0	\$355	\$475	Tourism Board	\$830
7. Marketing Services , Advertising, & Promotions	\$960	0	\$960	Tourism Board	\$1,920

8. Administrative expenses & overhead allocated for SLW (including printing & copying, insurance, office/storage/retail space, technology services)	\$0	\$4,244	\$875	Tourism Board	\$5,119
9. Portion of Staff Salaries Specifically Required to Operate SLW	\$9,040	\$28,615	\$5,000	Tourism Board	\$42,655
TOTALS (sum of each column)	\$10,000	\$34,984	\$1,800/ \$10,000/ \$1,200	Town of Hillsborough/ Tourism Board/NCAC	\$57,984 TOTAL PROGRAM INVESTMENT COSTS

** PLEASE PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF THERE IS NOT ENOUGH ROOM TO ACCOMMODATE YOUR FULL BUDGET **

Total Project Funding Requested from TDA	\$10,000
Percentage of Matching Funds Provided (by either 'In-Kind Donations' or 'Other Sources'):	83%
Dollar amount of Matching Funds Provided (by either 'In-Kind Donations' or 'Other Sources'):	\$ 47,984

X Check this box acknowledging that all funds must be used for the program/event as outlined in the budget and that the tourism logo and tourism partnership should be acknowledged and displayed on all promotional materials (flyers, tshirts, banners, social media posts) where other sponsors are listed or promoted.

4/6/26
Date

Heather L. Tatreau



Signature & Printed Name

Hillsborough Tourism Development Authority FY27 Special Project/ Partnership Funding Request: HMP



Organization Information		
Organization Name: Hillsborough Arts Council		
Contract Contact Person and Title: Heather Tatreau, Executive Director		
Contact Person Email: director@hillsboroughartscouncil.org	Contact Person Phone: 919-593-4295	
Organization Street Address: 102 S Churton St		
City: Hillsborough	State: NC	ZIP Code: 27278
Organization's Annual Operating Budget: \$ 371,760		
Amount of TDA funding being requested: \$ 10,000	FISCAL YEAR: FY27	
General Information		

Outline/Overview of the requested proposal:

The Handmade Parade (HMP) is a biannual, community-created tradition that is uniquely Hillsborough. This Mardi Gras-style walking parade was first created in 2008 by Tinka Jordy through a collaboration with the Hillsborough Arts Council. This event has attracted visitors from all over the country with its procession of giant puppets, music, costumes, painted faces, dancers, and circus performers. The last Handmade Parade took place in 2024, drawing a crowd of over 1000 people. Based upon registration, we estimate that 41% of attendees were from outside of Hillsborough with 21% traveling from outside of Orange County.

Last year was scheduled to be a Handmade Parade year, but we made the decision to postpone it due to limited staff bandwidth. This has also given us time to build interest in the parade by hosting multiple puppet workshops in partnership with the Scrap Exchange. This collaboration allowed us to expand our reach into Durham by using the Scrap Exchange facility. We also created a puppet building manual last year (located as a resource on our website) to inspire community participation.

The next Handmade Parade will take place on April 17, 2027 (rain date 4/24). Traditionally, HAC had our own giant puppets to bring to the parade. However, these large puppets were lost to mold and flooding in our storage facility. As a result, we will contract Paperhand Puppet Intervention and 1,2,3 Puppetry to bring more of their puppets to the event than they have in past years. We will hire musical groups, such as Bataala drummers, and circus performing groups to walk in the parade and create a festive mood. Our puppet making workshops and DIY manual will also be inspiring community members to build their own puppets and participate in the parade. Anyone with a handmade puppet or costume is invited to join in the procession, creating a true blending of art, culture, and community.

The event will be staged on the lawn of the Burwell school and proceed down Churton St to the Old Courthouse Lawn. At the conclusion of the parade, we will host a puppet pageant where community participants can showcase their creations.

Please explain how the proposal will promote tourism in Hillsborough:

For the 2024 Handmade Parade, we experimented with free registration for the first time. This method had been used successfully for the Solstice Lantern Walk and allowed us to collect data during the registration process, as well as ask for donations. Through this data collection method, we were able to show that the Handmade Parade boosts tourism in Hillsborough, with 41% of registrants residing outside of Hillsborough.

This beloved event allows us to promote town visitation through far-reaching publications like IndyWeek and Our State Magazine as well as radio interviews and advertisements with The Hill WCHL and WUNC-Fresh Air. We often hear from residents that they first encounter the HMP as a tourist and that is why they relocated to Hillsborough.

For the 2027 parade, we would like to replicate the “Make it a Weekend” campaign we have run successfully for the Solstice Lantern Walk. We will work with local hotels, Airbnbs, and restaurants to encourage tourists to stay in Hillsborough overnight by offering hotel specials and weekend brunch deals. We are requesting TDA funding for a portion of our marketing costs and staff salary support in order to promote the Handmade Parade as a weekend Hillsborough destination.

Tourism Impact

Please estimate the number of residents this proposal will serve: 885

Please estimate the number of tourists this proposal will bring to town: 600

If this proposal has been held or done before, please describe how the actual number of residents and tourists were counted (ie. registration/pre-registration, ticket sales either prior to the event or at the event gates, via turnstile data, counters from volunteers, wristband tracking, counts at the site):

For the 2024 HMP, we encouraged free online pre-registration but did not require it. This prompted 146 people to register as walkers in the parade and 316 people to register as watchers. In the registration form, we asked for information about town and county residence so that we could collect geographical data. This is how we determined that an estimated 41% of attendees were from outside of Hillsborough with 21% traveling from outside of Orange County. Chapel Hill and Durham drew the next largest crowds and several participants even came from out of state to attend the HMP. One California resident recently contacted us to find out the date of the next parade so they could time their visit to Hillsborough!

Even though online registration only yielded 462 registrants, we estimated that at least 1,000 people actually attended. We hired a drone photographer for the parade and were able to estimate event attendance through crowd photos. This number, combined with registration numbers and comparisons to our other large events like the Solstice Lantern Walk helped us arrive at our final estimate. We anticipate that with increased marketing efforts and staff bandwidth, we can grow attendance in 2027.

Please describe how you plan to partner with local hotel/motels on this proposal:

We plan to use a similar model as we do with the Solstice Lantern walk by partnering with the Colonial Inn and Airbnbs to offer specials for lodging the weekend of the HMP. We will create a "Make it a Weekend" landing page on our website that points to these specials as well as other in-town lodging options such as the Holiday Inn Express and Microtel Inn & Suites. We will also distribute flyers to local hotels.

To encourage overnight visitation, we will partner with downtown restaurants offering weekend brunch options and specials. This would give us an opportunity to promote a variety of mix and match lodging and brunch packages to out-of-town guests.

Please describe how you plan to partner with local business/non-profits/governments on this proposal:

In August and March, we will hire Sol Ramirez of 1,2,3 Puppetry to hold puppet making workshops in partnership with the Scrap Exchange in Durham to build interest and extend our reach beyond Hillsborough. We will share "Save the Date" messaging with all of our partners by October as we begin our marketing campaign. We will work with The Chamber and Visit Hillsborough to engage local merchants, encouraging businesses to participate in HMP collaborations. All are invited to walk in the parade and promote their business with a themed puppet. For example, Monarch Movement Company is interested in creating butterfly puppets to dance with in the parade while wearing branded t-shirts for the dance studio.

The Tourism Board has supported the HMP as a contract partner for several years and we anticipate continued support. They see the value of this event as a significant driver of tourism and a contribution to our local economy.

Please [calculate the overall economic impact](#) of this proposal (if applicable):

ARTS & ECONOMIC PROSPERITY 5 CALCULATOR

INSTRUCTIONS

Provide the information below to calculate the economic impact of your organization (or a group of organizations).

Population of your community:

Total Expenses: \$

Total Attendance:

[CALCULATE](#) →

[RESET](#) →

[PRINT](#) →

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	FTE JOBS	HOUSEHOLD INCOME	LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE	STATE GOVERNMENT REVENUE
ORGANIZATION(S):	<input type="text" value="\$28,477"/>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="\$18,615"/>	<input type="text" value="\$809"/>	<input type="text" value="\$1,445"/>
AUDIENCES:	<input type="text" value="\$44,755"/>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="\$19,399"/>	<input type="text" value="\$1,850"/>	<input type="text" value="\$2,666"/>
TOTAL:	<input type="text" value="\$73,232"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="\$38,014"/>	<input type="text" value="\$2,659"/>	<input type="text" value="\$4,111"/>

Please outline how you plan to make this proposal financially sustainable over time:

This event draws revenue from a combination of business sponsorships and registration donations as well as support from the Tourism Board and Town of Hillsborough. We have just begun to experiment with using a donation model for online registration and plan to grow this effort. Our last parade raised \$2,132 in this way. A new method of revenue for us has been increased business sponsorships specifically for this event. The popularity and visibility of the Handmade Parade offers an opportunity to target more sponsors during a donation campaign organized around the event. We need time to grow this revenue opportunity to work toward sustainability. With the support of the TDA in the coming year, we hope to get closer to sustainability.

Detailed Special Project/Partnership Budget: HMP					
a. Item	b. Amount Requested via Grant Funds (for each item)	c. Amount Contributed by Organization (for each item) <i>*Info provided here reflects all other earned & contributed revenue sources from HAC budget</i>	c. Other Funding Sources & In-Kind Donations		d. Total Budget (add columns b-d)
			Amount	Source	
1. Sanitation	0	0	\$450	Town of Hillsborough	\$ 450
2. Workshop fees	0	\$800	0		\$800
3. Performance Services	0	0	\$8,000	Town of Hillsborough/ Tourism Board/ OCAC	\$8,000
4. Supplies	0	0	\$400	Town of Hillsborough	\$400
5. Permits	0	0	\$150	Town of Hillsborough	\$150
6. Marketing Services , Advertising, & Promotions	\$1,000	0	\$920	Tourism Board	\$1,920
7. Portion of Staff Salaries Specifically Required to Operate SLW	\$9,000	\$5,677	\$2,080	Tourism Board	\$16,757

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY					
OBJECT		FY26 BUDGET	FY27 BUDGET	FY28 BUDGET	FY29 BUDGET
Audit Fees		5,000	5,000	6,000	6,000
Attorney Fees		350	350	350	350
Training/Conferences/Conventions		2,600	2,600	2,600	2,600
Advertising		20,300	21,300	24,300	24,300
	<i>Ad Buys/Tourism Marketing/Photography</i>	17,500	18,500	21,500	21,500
	<i>Budget Public Hearing Ad</i>	300	300	300	300
	<i>WHUP Underwriting</i>	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Data Processing Services		3,200	3,600	3,600	3,600
C.S./Town Of Hillsborough		13,000	13,000	13,000	13,000
	<i>Support Staff; salaries + benefits</i>	13,000	13,000	13,000	13,000
Dues & Subscriptions		-	-	-	-
Insurance		1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
	<i>Bond Insurance</i>	180	180	180	180
	<i>Liability Insurance</i>	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020
Miscellaneous		3,500	3,000	6,200	6,200
Special Projects/Partnerships		67,000	84,000	46,000	42,000
	<i>Hillsborough Arts Council - Solstice Lantern Walk Event Sponsorship</i>	10,000	10,000	-	-
	<i>Hillsborough Arts Council- Handmade Parade Sponsorship</i>		10,000		
	<i>Alliance_ Outlandish Shuttle Sponsorship</i>		5,000		
	<i>Uproar Festival of Public Art cost Share (ToH, TB, OC)</i>		8,000		
	<i>Riverwalk Entrance Shelter cost share (ToH, TB, TDA)</i>		12,000		
	<i>Calvin/Nash St Kiosk Sign Cost Share (ToH, TB, TDA)</i>		9,000		
	<i>Holiday Decor</i>	10,000	10,000	-	-
	<i>*Performing Arts Center Exploration</i>	-	10,000	-	-
	<i>Town/TDA Uproar Public Art Purchase (FY26, FY28)</i>	4,000	-	4,000	-
	<i>River Park Concert Marketing Sponsorship(FY26)</i>	10,000.00			
	<i>Town of Hillsborough A250 Event Sponsorship (FY 26)</i>	12,500.00			
	<i>Moorefields JazzFest Sponsorship (FY 26)</i>	2,000.00			
	<i>Uproar Supplemental Sponsorship (FY 26)</i>	5,000.00			
	<i>Flushfest Sponsorship (FY 26)</i>	10,000.00			
	<i>Small Town USA Photography/Sponsorship (FY 26)</i>	3,500.00			
	<i>Unassigned</i>	-	10,000	42,000	42,000
3% Holdback Occupancy Tax		-			-
Starting in FY26 finance started taking percentage at revenue collection					
	GRAND TOTAL	116,150	134,050	103,250	99,250
	Anticipated Revenues	100,000	115,000		
	Fund Balance Needed		19,050		

Requested but not funded items for FY27

*Item deferred for several years due to staff capacity and TS Chantal
 Approx. Fund balance \$496,398

Gross Receipts Revenues- 3% Occupancy Tax
Hillsborough TDA- FY 26

Month	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY 19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	% change	\$ change
July	\$6,412.32	\$6,622.14	\$5,604.00	\$6,267.28	\$6,797.64	\$4,855.98	\$8,181.56	\$8,132.51	\$10,687.85	\$10,647.47	\$10,848.85	1.9%	\$201.38
August	\$6,335.36	\$6,458.94	\$6,094.39	\$5,288.34	\$6,390.74	\$4,381.47	\$9,090.84	\$11,288.27	\$7,286.14	\$11,088.07	\$10,118.93	-8.7%	-\$969.14
September	\$5,428.49	\$5,401.73	\$4,985.52	\$9,242.30	\$6,265.60	\$4,685.04	\$9,688.30	\$9,105.77	\$9,921.99	\$10,655.44	\$7,742.65	-27.3%	-\$2,912.79
October	\$6,208.61	\$7,925.60	\$7,028.33	\$7,774.28	\$5,598.44	\$5,117.90	\$9,918.92	\$11,250.80	\$16,372.05	\$11,966.48	\$11,400.31	-4.7%	-\$566.17
November	\$5,742.22	\$6,209.44	\$5,492.54	\$6,095.06	\$6,516.02	\$4,496.83	\$8,168.62	\$9,249.59	\$12,043.98	\$9,624.11	\$10,392.08	8.0%	\$767.97
December	\$4,100.27	\$3,201.66	\$4,238.66	\$4,569.26	\$2,608.42	\$4,191.23	\$5,791.34	\$6,406.47	\$8,236.79	\$7,919.84	\$9,451.59	19.3%	\$1,531.75
January	\$3,505.92	\$3,923.49	\$4,469.38	\$3,437.93	\$3,203.58	\$4,616.82	\$6,258.71	\$9,472.21	\$8,429.19	\$6,655.05	\$6,159.01	-7.5%	-\$496.04
Feburay	\$4,235.02	\$4,375.99	\$4,144.12	\$3,611.76	\$6,783.07	\$6,257.41	\$7,003.14	\$7,608.99	\$7,279.30	\$7,380.99	\$8,123.29	10.1%	\$742.30
March	\$5,403.98	\$5,266.85	\$5,263.71	\$5,285.74	\$4,023.83	\$6,947.85	\$7,977.29	\$11,422.90	\$11,806.95	\$10,171.33			
April	\$7,136.84	\$6,718.14	\$7,299.26	\$6,523.68	\$3,501.62	\$7,200.18	\$12,473.66	\$11,248.82	\$13,679.95	\$10,902.97			
May	\$2,834.44	\$6,800.03	\$5,149.78	\$6,948.12	\$3,916.17	\$8,718.04	\$11,221.93	\$12,615.64	\$13,537.25	\$11,431.33			
June	\$10,502.66	\$5,698.33	\$8,967.06	\$5,984.40	\$4,333.70	\$9,943.45	\$9,813.66	\$13,049.55	\$11,084.78	\$9,320.32			
YTD total	\$67,846.13	\$68,602.34	\$68,736.75	\$71,028.15	\$59,938.83	\$71,412.20	\$105,587.97	\$120,851.52	\$130,366.22	\$117,763.40	\$74,236.71		\$943.68

****NOTE BEGINNING FY25 THE 3% HOLDBACK IS DEDUCTED FROM OUR MONTHLY PAYMENT.
AMOUNT ON CHART IS THE ACTUAL TAX COLLECTED FOR THE MONTH.**