Agenda

Hillsborough Tourism Board

5:30 p.m. November 2, 2026
Town Annex Board Meeting Room, 105 E. Corbin St.

1. **Call to order and confirmation of quorum**

2. **Agenda changes and approval**

3. **Presentations**
   Contract Partner Quarterly Updates
   A. Burwell School
   B. Alliance (Visitors Center)
   C. Orange County Museum
   D. Hillsborough Arts Council

4. **Regular Discussion/Action Items**
   A. Special Project/Partnership Request- 'Word on the Street' Literary Arts Festival ($4,000)
   B. Open discussion with contract partners about how the contracting partnership(s) are going
   C. Adoption of 2027 Meeting Calendar

5. **Monthly Reports and Comments**
   A. Tourism Staff Updates
      - Halloween Weekend (Last Fridays, Merchant Trick or Treat, HPD Trunk or Treat)
      - Upcoming winter markets/events
      - Staffing announcement for the OCVB interim director
      - F&B Tax report

   B. Tourism Board Member Comments & Updates

6. **Adjournment**

Interpreter services or special sound equipment for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act is available on request. If you are disabled and need assistance with reasonable accommodations, call the Town Clerk's Office at 919-296-9443 a minimum of one business day in advance of the meeting.

Hillsborough Tourism Board
FY27 Special Project/
Partnership Funding Request

Organization Information		
Organization Name: Word on the Street NC		
Contract Contact Person and Title: Melora Fern (founder)		
Contact Person Email: melorafern@gmail.com	Contact Person Phone: 214-457-2558	
Organization Street Address: 404 W Queen St		
City: Hillsborough	State: North Carolina	ZIP Code: 27278
Organization's Annual Operating Budget: $ 28,100		
Amount of funding being requested: $ 4,000.00		FISCAL YEAR: FY27

General Information

Outline/Overview of the requested proposal:

Hillsborough has long been home to a remarkable concentration of writers, poets, storytellers, and literary artists. Word on the Street is a free multiple-day literary arts festival, scheduled for March 19-21, 2027, that's designed to celebrate that heritage and to honor the writers who have shaped the cultural identity of Hillsborough and the greater Orange County area. Designed as a literary mosaic, the festival features author readings/panels—spanning genres and voices—held at different business locations at scheduled times throughout downtown Hillsborough. The format brings together writers and readers, strengthens community connections, and reflects the full diversity of literary expression and styles that make this region distinctive.

Word on the Street NC is a collaborative endeavor of four Orange County literary artists: Dale Edwards, Melora Fern, Steven Petrow and Patricia Sullivan. **We are working with Triangle Arts Council to function as our non-profit fiscal agent because the grant we received from Orange County Arts Commission was specifically for artist individuals or artist groups, not a non-profit organization.**

Friday Evening Kickoff:

Author Reception

The festival unofficially opens Friday evening with a gathering for all the participating authors. This reception is an opportunity for local authors to meet and network, bringing together well-established authors with emerging writers in Orange County. This will be held after hours at the Orange County Public Library in Hillsborough and several local restaurants/food businesses have agreed to donate food and drinks for the event. We expect at least 200 people.

Saturday & Sunday:

Opening Ceremony: Keynote Address / Featured Author Conversation / Author Tribute

To officially launch the event on Saturday morning we will begin with a keynote address and/or moderated conversations or readings with distinguished local authors. A tribute to honor the legacies of Hillsborough authors will also be incorporated into this festival opening. Venue to be determined. It's free and open to the public; we expect at least 250-400 people.

Readings Throughout Hillsborough Businesses

Throughout Saturday afternoon and Sunday, literary readings will be held at various venues throughout Hillsborough. Author panels/readings will be at scheduled times across both days and coordinated based on themes. A complete schedule of all the author related events will be available online, thru marketing and with volunteers so those attending the festival can choose their preferred authors and subjects. Author readings/panels will be held Saturday 1–5 p.m. and Sunday 12–4 p.m. The more organic and unscripted aspect of the festival: As people in Hillsborough go about their day visiting local businesses, they may unexpectedly find themselves listening to a story or poem from a local author. Venues are currently being determined, and we already have 20 Hillsborough businesses confirmed. They include galleries, historical sites, restaurants, pubs, and other local businesses. Since these events are scheduled for most of the day on both Saturday and Sunday, we expect that people will be eating meals at local restaurants. We expect 300-500 people.

Orange County Library: Book Sales, Signings & Children's Programming (Saturday & Sunday)

The Orange County Library in Hillsborough will serve as a hub for the festival's more formal programming: book sales and signings featuring participating authors, as well as dedicated children's author readings for families and more.

Closing Reception: Last Lines (Sunday)

To close the festival, participating authors will gather at a venue (we're working with Eno River Brewery) for an informal late afternoon reading. Each author will read the last line from one of their works for a fun and creative exchange to end the event. This is also open to the public and all the participating local authors. Venue to be finalized. We expect 200-250 people.

Please explain how the proposal will promote tourism in Hillsborough:

This is a multiple-venue, multiple-day event, so we expect that visitors from all over Orange County and beyond will attend the various events throughout the weekend of March 19-21, 2027. Since the events run throughout both Saturday and Sunday, visitors will need local places to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

This is our first event of this kind, so we do not have history to fall back on, but we expect at least 300-600 people (and hopefully more!) to be in and around Hillsborough throughout the weekend of the festival. Since well-known authors have already committed to be involved, they will be a draw, as well as the appeal of a unique and "never-been done" Literary Arts Festival. At least 100 authors will be involved with the panels, readings, and book sales and signings, so they each will be promoting the festival and will help bring in their followers as well.

Word on the Street is supported by a grant from the Orange County Arts Commission, as well as receiving endorsement from:

- Representative Renée Price
- Mayor Mark Bell of Hillsborough
- Hillsborough Arts Council
- *News of Orange County*
- Hillsborough/Orange County Chamber of Commerce
- Orange County Public Library
- Friends of the Orange County Public Library
- Purple Crow Books
- Snow Approach Foundation
- Lee Smith, Jill McCorkle, John Claude Bemis, Jaki Shelton Greene and Elizabeth Matheson, among other local authors

This level of early support speaks to both the responsiveness of the project to community interests and the benefit to our local businesses.

Tourism Impact	
Please estimate the number of residents this proposal will serve: at least 200-500	Please estimate the number of tourists this proposal will bring to town: 200-500

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

This type of Literary Arts weekend festival has not been done before in Hillsborough

Please describe how you plan to partner with local restaurants/pubs on this proposal:

We are partnering with local restaurants/pubs as in-kind or cash sponsors and as venues to host the author readings/panels. Please refer to the list below of local restaurants/pubs that have already committed to Word on the Street NC.

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

We are partnering with local businesses, non-profits and governments as in-kind or cash sponsors and as venues to host the author readings/panels. We are in the process of meeting with local businesses so the list of participants will increase.

These are the local businesses that have committed to be involved with Word on the Street NC as sponsors and/or as venues:

- Anne & Arthur Fine Art Supplies
- Blair Publishing
- C3 Hillsborough
- Colonial Inn
- Curated
- Elizabeth Keckley Center/Burwell School
- Eno Arts Mill Gallery
- Eno River Brewing
- Firefly Farm
- Hillsborough Arts Council Gallery
- Hillsborough Bakeshop
- The Alliance for Historical Hillsborough
- Janet L Flowers
- Leland Little
- Melissa Designer Jewelry
- New Hope Market
- Purple Crow Book Store
- Skylight Gallery
- Snow Approach Foundation
- Starfish Bakery
- The Nomad
- The Rookery

- Thomas Stevens Gallery
- UNC Press
- Yonder Bar

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

INSTRUCTIONS

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

Population of your community: Less than 50,000

Total Expenses: $ 26761

Total Attendance: 300

CALCULATE → RESET → PRINT →

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

	TOTAL EXPENDITURES	FTE JOBS	HOUSEHOLD INCOME	LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUE	STATE GOVERNMENT REVENUE
ORGANIZATION(S):	$26,761	1	$17,493	$760	$1,358
AUDIENCES:	$8,951	0	$3,880	$370	$533
TOTAL:	$35,712	1	$21,373	$1,130	$1,891

Please outline how you plan to make this proposal financially sustainable overtime or indicate if it's going to be a 'one-time' project:

Although this is the first ever Literary Arts Festival for Orange County, our goal is for Word on the Street NC to be a bi-annual event. We plan to make it financially sustainable by sponsorships and grants because we intend for this to continue being a free event for the public.

Please note, that since this is the first time for this event, our budget is based on well-researched estimates!

Detailed Special Project/Partnership Budget				
a. Item	b. Amount Requested via Tourism Board (for each item)	c. Other Funding Sources & In-Kind Donations		d. Total Budget (add columns b-d)
		Amount	Source	
Ex: Revolutionary War Re-enactors	Ex: $1,000	Ex: $300	Ex: State Historical Society	$1,800
1. Orange County Arts Commission artist grant	$	$2,100	Orange County Arts Commission	$2,100
2. Festival Sponsors	$	$20,000	Various Businesses and Individual donors – see list above	$20,000
3. Festival special project grant request from TDA	$	$2,000	Towards venue rental – to be considered after request is made	$2,000
4. Festival special project grant request - Tourism Board	$1,000	$	Towards literary artist (author) stipends	$1,000
5. Festival special project grant request- Tourism Board	$1,000	$	Towards sound equipment, consultation, installation	$1,000
6. Festival special project grant request – Tourism Board	$2,000	$	Towards marketing expenses such as printing posters, flyers, advertising in local news sources	$2,000
7.	$	$		$
8.	$	$		$
9.	$	$		$
10.	$	$		$
11.	$	$		$
12.	$	$		$
13.	$	$		$
14.	$	$		$
15.	$	$		$
16.	$	$		$

17.	$	$		
TOTALS (sum of each column)	$ 4,000	$ 24,100		$ 28,100
** PLEASE PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SHEETS IF THERE IS NOT ENOUGH ROOM TO ACCOMMODATE YOUR FULL BUDGET **				
Total Project Funding Requested from TB $ 4,000				
Percentage of Matching Funds Provided (by either 'In-Kind Donations' or 'Other Sources'): 86 %				
Dollar amount of Matching Funds Provided (by either 'In-Kind Donations' or 'Other Sources'): $ 24,100				

☒ 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, t-shirts, banners, social media posts) where other sponsors are listed or promoted.

___10/22/2026_____ _Melora Fern Leiser_____

Date Signature & Printed Name

Meeting Schedule: 2027
TOURISM BOARD

Meetings start at 5:30 p.m. in the Board Meeting Room of the Town Hall Annex, 105 E. Corbin St., unless otherwise noted.

Times, dates and locations are subject to change.

Regular meetings
Regular meetings typically occur the first Monday of the month.

Jan. 4
Feb. 1
March 1
April 5
May 3
June 7 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING MEETING
NO JULY MEETING
Aug. 3
*Sept. 7 (Tuesday) or Monday Sept. 13th?
Oct. 4
Nov. 1
Dec. 6

DRAFT