

**JOHNSTON COUNTY TOURISM AUTHORITY  
BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
12 Noon, April 8, 2026**

**Present: J Hoke, J Lassiter, K Pickett, A Whitehurst, M Smith, J Pritchett,  
WE Andrews, P Boucher, N Youngblood**

**Absent: J Cobb, C McLamb**

**Staff: A Mullins, A Phillips**

**I. Call to Order – J Hoke, Chairperson**

J Hoke called the meeting to order at 12:29 pm and stated that a quorum was present. J Hoke asked for any possible Conflict of Interest concerning the agenda. K Pickett requested to abstain from the Ava Gardner Matching Marketing Grant and J Pritchett requested to abstain from the Acorn Festival Matching Marketing Grant.

J Hoke asked for a motion to accept the March minutes that were previously sent to the board.

***K Pickett motioned to accept the March minutes as presented. M Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.***

**II. Finances – March Financial Reports – A Mullins**

Month-to-date revenue for March was \$163,481.60. Month-to-Date Operation Expenses were \$160,436.95. The net variance for the month was \$3,044.65. Year-to-date revenue was \$1,560,424.56. Year-to-date Operation Expense was \$1,601,996.37. The Year-to-Date net variance was -\$41,571.81. February Johnston County 3% revenue was \$101,510.59, Smithfield's 2% revenue was \$28,268.01, Selma's 2% revenue was \$5,543.53, Kenly's 2% revenue was \$2,184.64, Benson's 2% revenue was \$7,276.70, and Clayton's 2% revenue was \$3,645.69.

**III. Executive Committee – J Hoke, Chairperson**

J Hoke stated that the Executive Committee had not met. Hoke took the opportunity to congratulate Paul Boucher for being recognized by the North Carolina Department of Commerce as Certified North Carolina Destination Businesses, a designation aimed at encouraging tourism and strengthening small businesses. This program was launched last year by the North Carolina Main Street & Rural Planning Center.

WE Andrews asked K Pickett to give an update on the Smithfield Tobs baseball team. K Pickett shared that the Smithfield Town Council unanimously voted Tuesday night to halt plans for a \$6 million baseball stadium and instead pursue a long-term lease for the Smithfield Tobs to play at the American Legion baseball field on Pitchi Street off N. Bright Leaf Boulevard. If finalized, the Legion field would become the future home of the Smithfield Tobs, replacing the Community Park stadium plan approved just months earlier.

**IV. Special Projects Committee - WE Andrews**

WE Andrews noted that the bureau had received two matching marketing grants:  
105<sup>th</sup> State Annual Singing Convention and Acorn Festival

***WE Andrews motioned to fund the matching marketing grant for the State Annual Singing Convention for \$1,000 as presented. K Pickett seconded. The motion passed unanimously.***

***WE Andrews motioned to recommend to the full board to fund the Four Oaks Acorn Festival Matching Marketing Grant for \$3,000. K Pickett seconded. The motion passed with J Pritchett abstaining.***

WE Andrews also stated the Special Projects Committee had received a Capital Grant application for Ava Gardner Museum – Conservation Grant.

***WE Andrews made a motion accepting the recommendation by the Special Projects Committee to approve the Capital Grant application for the Ava Gardner Museum – Conservation Grant for the amount of \$10,000 for FY 27. N Youngblood seconded. Motion approved. The motion passed with K Pickett abstaining.***

**V. Marketing Committee**

No meeting was had.

**VI. Staff Report - A Mullins**

Mullins shared that he along with A Brame, A Davis, K Radford recently attended the NC Governs Conference in Asheville. He said there were a lot of good take-aways and sharing. Mullins also attended the 2026 CEO Summit – Destinations International. The conference was valuable and offered networking and connecting with Destinations International and other CEO's from NC. Much of the focus was on authentic storytelling, partnerships with chambers and elected officials, agritourism, sports, AI, trip planning, 3<sup>rd</sup> party validation and working with PR, video and podcasting. J Lassiter asked about the bureau's partnership with other state tourism offices. Mullins said we are always looking for opportunities. We currently partner with the state, surrounding counties and across the country. WE Andrews asked that the bureau look to ways to build out ambassador relationships with other countries. Whitehurst agreed.

Brame shared that she was able to obtain a Media One AI Package at the NC Governs Conference. This package will perform an AI audit of the Johnstoncountync.org website, checking content and creatives.

A Brame is also working with Todd Johnson on the Johnston County America 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration. Johnston County will mark America's 250th anniversary in 2026 with a series of commemorative events, heritage programs, and community celebrations designed to honor the nation's founding while highlighting the county's own historic legacy and cultural traditions.

**VII. New Business**

No new business was discussed.

**VIII. Old Business**

The next board meeting will be held offsite on May 13<sup>th</sup> at  
**Clemmons Educational State Forest**  
**2256 Old US 70, Clayton**

**IX. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 1:20 pm.

***Respectfully submitted,***  
***Maria Smith, Secretary/Treasurer***

**Next Meeting**  
**Johnston County Tourism Authority**  
**Wednesday, May 13, 2026**  
**Clemmons Educational State Forest - 12 Noon**