

**JOHNSTON COUNTY TOURISM AUTHORITY
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
12 Noon, March 11, 2026**

**Present: J Hoke, J Lassiter, K Pickett, A Whitehurst, M Smith, J Cobb,
N Youngblood**

Zoom: WE Andrews, P Boucher

Absent: J Pritchett, C McLamb

Staff: A Mullins, A Phillips

I. Call to Order – J Hoke, Chairperson

J Hoke called the meeting to order at 12:19 pm and stated that a quorum was present. J Hoke asked for any possible Conflict of Interest concerning the agenda. None were heard.

J Hoke introduced new board member, Nicole Youngblood, who was appointed by the Johnston County Board of Commissioners.

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

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

II. Finances – January Financial Reports – A Mullins

Month-to-date revenue for February was \$150,620.05. Month-to-Date Operation Expenses were \$217,569.28. The net variance for the month was -\$66,949.23. Year-to-date revenue was \$1,396,942.96. Year-to-date Operation Expense was \$1,441,559.42. The Year-to-Date net variance was -\$44,616.46. January Johnston County 3% revenue was \$90,718.20, Smithfield's 2% revenue was \$26,859.96, Selma's 2% revenue was \$5,927.81, Kenly's 2% revenue was \$2,659.14, Benson's 2% revenue was \$7,251.83, and Clayton's 2% revenue was \$4,476.41.

III. Executive Committee – J Hoke, Chairperson

No report was given.

IV. Special Projects Committee - WE Andrews

WE Andrews noted that the bureau had received a matching marketing grant for "Casino Night at the Grande Magnolia". After confirming that the sponsor organization had been approved for a grant in the past, WE Andrews requested that the board approve the grant.

K Pickett motioned to approve Casino Night Matching Marketing Grant as presented by the Special Projects Committee. M Smith seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Marketing Committee

P. Boucher, Chair of the Marketing Committee, participated via Zoom from the NC Main Street Conference in New Bern, NC. P. Boucher shared video from the event and stated that the NC Main Street Conference is the largest of its kind in the United States.

Representatives from the towns of Smithfield, Benson, Four Oaks, and Selma were in attendance. It was recommended that the Bureau become involved in future conferences as well. This would be strategic from a tourism standpoint and would help promote experiences throughout Johnston County.

VI. Staff Report - A Mullins

E. Dean, Creative Director, shared that the Bureau had made an offer to a new Digital Production Specialist. The candidate has 15 years of experience and brings creativity, energy, and talent to the position.

C. Arena shared about attending the Lead Her Ship Women's Forum, sponsored by the Triangle East Chamber of Commerce. She noted that March is International Women's Month, and the event provided valuable insights on personal and professional development. She spoke about the strength women bring and the vital roles they play in the workplace, home, and community.

K. Radford, Sales Director, and N. Youngblood announced a project they are developing titled "Exclusive Farm Itinerary." K. Radford explained that the project could position Johnston County as a motor coach destination, offering exclusive farm tours for group travel. N. Youngblood noted that the initiative would also support storytelling and guided experiences on working farms. A. Mullins added that connecting visitors with agriculture will help tell the county's story and expand agritourism opportunities. This initiative will begin as a pilot project, with a projected launch in May 2027.

VII. New Business

No new business was discussed.

VIII. Old Business

Following discussion at the February board meeting about hosting meetings in different locations around the county, A. Mullins shared a recommendation to hold three off-site meetings during the remainder of 2026.

Proposed locations include:

- May: Clemmons Educational State Forest
- September: Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center
- December: Tobacco Farm Life Museum

Staff will confirm the availability of these locations and provide an update at the April board meeting.

IX. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Smith, Secretary/Treasurer

**Next Meeting
Johnston County Tourism Authority
Wednesday, April 8, 2026
Visitors Bureau Administrative Offices - 12 Noon**