

**JOHNSTON COUNTY TOURISM AUTHORITY
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Noon, March 12, 2025**

Present: WE Andrews, J Hamilton, J Jenkins, J Hoke, J Lassiter, J Pritchett
Zoom: M McDonnell, M Smith, K Pickett
Absent: C McLamb, B Cook
Guest: Austin Cross, Johnston County Parks & Open Space
Staff: D Bailey-Taylor, A Phillips

I. Call to Order – J Hoke, Secretary/Treasurer

J Hoke called the meeting to order at 12:13 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 asked for a motion to accept the February minutes that were previously sent to the board.
J Pickett motioned to accept the February minutes as presented. WE Andrews seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

J Hoke welcomed Austin Cross with the County Parks & Recreation Open Space department to the meeting. A Cross gave a presentation on the PARTF grant application for Phase II of the Johnston County Regional Park project including scope and budget, and gave the board a look into the future for Phase III and IV. Following the presentation A Cross asked for a recommendation of support for the application.

WE Andrews motioned the JCVB to support the PARTF grant application for the Johnston County Regional Park. J Hamilton seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Finances – February Financial Reports – D Bailey-Taylor

Month-to-date revenue for February was \$142,012.99. Month-to-Date Operation Expenses were \$132,611.88. The net positive variance for the month was \$9,461.59. Year-to-date revenue was \$1,283,417.02. Year-to-date Operation Expense was \$1,253,318.93. The Year-to-Date net negative variance was -\$29,679.80. January County 3% revenue was \$84,713.07, Smithfield's 2% revenue was 24,275.78, Selma's 2% revenue was \$5,068.06, Kenly's 2% revenue was \$2,483.26, Benson's 2% revenue was \$6,498.86, and Clayton's revenue was \$2,522.99.

III. Executive Committee – J Hoke, Secretary/Treasurer

D Bailey-Taylor gave an update on the CEO search informing the board that there were eight applicants at this time.

IV. Special Projects Committee - WE Andrews

WE Andrews stated that the Bureau received a Matching Marketing Grant from Activate Selma for the Rockin' on Raiford Concert Series.

WE Andrews motioned to fund the Rockin' on Raiford Concert Series Matching Marketing Grant application for \$1,000. J Lassiter seconded. The motion passed with J Hamilton abstaining.

D Bailey-Taylor spoke with the Ham & Yam organizers on submitting their grant application. D Bailey-Taylor stated with the next board meeting in April, the application would not be 90 days out.

WE Andrews motioned to fund the Ham & Yam Festival Matching Marketing Grant for \$3,000 pending receipt of the application. J Jenkins seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Marketing Committee – M Smith

M Smith stated that the Marketing Committee met on February 19 for the FY26 Marketing Budget presentation by the staff. D Bailey-Taylor reviewed Visitor Spending Reports from Placer.ai and the benefits of using the software to determine top markets for ad campaigns. The committee reviewed the ROI numbers for the Bureau's new campaign with Expedia, data on campaigns with iHeart Media and the success of editorial content with *Our State* Magazine. D Bailey-Taylor recommended to end the contract with LocaliQ, reduce spending with MNTN CTV and to cancel local market print and radio advertising as these efforts were not producing high measurable KPIs. The bureau staff recommends continuing social media ads, the hotel coupon book co-op, and the VisitNC Marketing Co-op Programs. The bureau will add back marketing for the group tour and the wedding markets which had been reduced since COVID.

M Smith made a motion for the board to accept the committee recommendation of \$350,000 for the JCVB FY26 marketing budget. J Pritchett seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Sports Council - J Jenkins

Next Meeting – March 19th @ noon.

VII. Staff Report - D Bailey-Taylor

D Bailey-Taylor met with the new Selma Town Manager, Alexis Carter and the new community engagement staff, Jenna Evans and requested that their budget be submitted to the bureau by April 1st, so the Tourism Authority can review and vote on it. D Bailey Taylor is completing meetings with all other Town Managers concerning their 2% marketing budgets.

The JCVB staff has worked on several marketing projects for the Bentonville Reenactment which is scheduled for March 15-16. The Ham & Yam microsite is up on the website and staff is working with Heidi on marketing support. The *Our State Magazine* look ahead article on strawberry farms in JoCo is running now and our farmers have been very pleased with the article. This is JCVB sponsored content which includes all farms, and has highlights on Pace Family Farm, Sonlight Farms, and Penny's Produce.

Top Facebook/Instagram posts, promotions and clicks – it has been all about Bentonville this month with 6,303 clicks, 391,306 impressions on just two social campaigns. The microsite for the event had 12,375 clicks in February. Inventory and edits for the next Visitors Guide has started with K Radford and E Dean, so for the next 30-60 days the guide will be in design, then delivered a couple of weeks after proofs are reviewed and approved. Expect delivery of the new guide in June.

VIII. New Business

None.

IX. Old Business

None.

X. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

James Hoke, Secretary/Treasurer

**Next Meeting
Johnston County Tourism Authority
Wednesday, April 9, 2025
Visitors Bureau Administrative Offices - 12 Noon**