

**Washington Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, April 16th, 2025,
Washington Civic Center
*Minutes***

ATTENDEES

Andrew Kuhn

Jonathan Russell

Anthony Tyre* (City Council Liaison)

Linda Harrington*

Bobby Clark*

Manfred Alligood* (Vice Chair)

Catherine Glover

Paula Stephenson

Charlotte Stubbs

Renee Moore*^

Donald Sadler (Mayor)

Scott Sachs

Franz Holscher

Tammy Swindell

Fred O. Watkins III* (Chair)

Tom Richardson*^

Gail Baird

* Board Members

*^Sign Interpreter

Absent: *Dee Patel*

CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Fred Watkins III called the meeting to order at 12:01 pm. Bobby motioned to adopt the agenda; Liaison Anthony Tyre seconded the motion, and the agenda was adopted. Linda motioned to approve the March meeting minutes; Bobby seconded, and the minutes were approved.

HPOW TERRA CEIA TULIP MURAL GRANT PRESENTATION:

Gail Baird and Scott Sachs, members of the Historic Port of Washington (HPOW), presented their grant request to the board. They are seeking \$2,000 to help cover part of the total cost of \$8,800 for a mural that features a postcard from the 1930s showcasing the Terria Ceia Tulip fields. This would be their fifth mural project for downtown Washington. The purpose of the mural is to highlight the city's history and promote Washington as a historic destination. The mural will be painted on the entire building, located at 140 W Main St, Washington, NC, directly across from the visitor center.

The mural is scheduled to be unveiled during the 2025 Smoke On The Water festival. During the event, three tables will be set up in front of the mural. The area above Table 1 will feature sketched tulips, allowing community members to participate in painting the mural. Table 2 will display artifacts from the library, and Table 3 will have tulips available for sale to the public.

Mayor Donald Sadler inquired whether the building owner is aware of the mural project. HPOW confirmed that the owner is aware of the project and that the necessary paperwork has been completed. Once a draft of the mural is ready, they will contact the building owner, the city, and the Historic Preservation Office to obtain approval for the mural on the historic building.

Bobby asked why this particular mural was chosen and how it relates to Washington. HPOW explained that their original idea was to feature a Dr. Pepper mural, as one had previously existed on the building. However, the building owner was not particularly enthusiastic about that concept. Instead, they reviewed old postcards, and the owner discovered the Tulip Fields and fell in love with that idea.

The history behind this mural dates back to the 1920s, when over 200 Dutch farmers relocated to the area and helped construct some of the buildings that still stand today. During the 1930s and 1940s, the Dutch became the world's leading wholesalers of

flowers. They also hosted a Tulip Festival in downtown Washington from 1937 to 1941. HPOW has colorized a film that showcases the parade that took place in downtown Washington during that period.

Johnathan Russell, the City Manager of Washington, noted that the building is looking to expand into a restaurant/bar. The owners plan to cut two openings in the wall, which may limit HPOW's available space. HPOW indicated this wouldn't be a significant concern since they plan to paint around existing windows on the building.

(Vote on page 6)

VISITOR CENTER UPDATE:

Catherine Glover noted that the visitor center has seen an uptick compared to April last year. There are a lot of day visits and trips. A lot of the visitors have recently come due to weddings in Washington.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

Directors Report:

Paula Stephenson, the Tourism Development Director, presented the director's report. In her presentation, she highlighted her previous blog posts published on our website and WRAL's "Hometown Carolina." Paula reviewed our social media platforms, newsletters, and website metrics. She also discussed the community meetings she attended, including the Committee of 100, the Juneteenth celebration, and the Crab Drop event.

Additionally, she presented quarterly visitor analytics for January to March, including data on visitors' origin, their accommodations, and year-to-year differences. This analysis focused on the Washington Harbor District and included a radius of over 50 miles. Paula also shared event statistics from the 5K and Pub Crawl, which experienced an increase of over 800 visitors compared to last year.

City Manager Johnathan Russell noted that the increase in visits from Rocky Mount is mainly due to the ongoing construction along Highway 17 between Williamston and Washington. The contractors are from the Rocky Mount area and have needed accommodations for extended periods.

Paula then mentioned that Visit NC's Familiarization (FAM) tour is returning to Washington early next month. She has been working on a list of places for the writers to visit.

Manfred motioned to accept the Director's report; Bobby seconded, and the report was approved.

Treasurer's Report:

Tammy Swindell, the Director of Administrative Services for the City of Washington, presented the March finance report to the board. The Cash was under \$44,000, but that is due to the admin charges to the city and the Chamber contract being caught up. She mentioned that the occupancy taxes have been collected by 77% according to the budgeted amount, and we're only 75% through the year, and the balance is up by \$60,000+ through 8 months.

Manfred motioned to accept the Treasurer's report; Wanda seconded, and the report was approved.

Civic Center Report:

Charlotte Stubbs, the Venue and Event Manager, reviewed the report and discussed the outlook for 2026. So far, 58 events have been booked, including 9 weddings and 49 other events (Nonprofit fundraisers, high school reunions, proms, corporate meetings, etc.). She went over available Fridays and Saturdays for people to book in 2026. Charlotte then

reviewed facility updates, including the bathroom stalls, trash cans, floor, and deck restoration.

Manfred motioned to accept the Civic Center report; Bobby seconded, and the report was approved.

ONGOING BUSINESS

OLD BUSINESS

Revised WTDA Grant Application (Vote)

The board reviewed the proposed changes from last month's meeting regarding the WTDA Grant Application. The following updates were made to the application:

- The WTDA logo and the revised date were added to the footer.
- The current fiscal year was included under the document title.
- In the section "Application Specifications & Guidelines," the following items were crossed out:
 - "from areas more than 100 miles distant... and during times other than peak tourism season."
 - "Projects performed under this program must be entirely focused on travel promotions and may not contain any material or information unrelated to destination marketing."

Bobby motioned to accept the revised WTDA Grant Application, Manfred seconded the motion, and the application was approved.

NEW BUSINESS

15th Street Plan/Grant Request

The board motioned to table the 15th Street Plan Grant Request until someone present was able to represent the request. Bobby Motioned and Liaison Anthony Tyre seconded.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The WTDA board inquired about updates regarding the History Museum. Paula reported that a few items remain in the storage area between the office space and the civic center. The plan is to relocate the remaining storage to the old police station.

GRANT APPLICATIONS (Vote):

Because of an error in the agenda, the WTDA board held a closed session to discuss and vote on the HPOW grant application. Chairman, Fred Watkins looked for a motion to exit the closed session to continue discussing and voting on the application. Bobby Clark motioned and Linda seconded.

HPOW TERRA CEIA TULIP MURAL

Bobby Clark discussed why a tourist would visit Washington to look at a mural, mentioning he doesn't know how it would bring a visitor. Manfred responded that the mural adds to the beautification of the city; while visitors may not be coming specifically to see the mural, it creates a positive impression.

Linda added that the mural can serve purposes beyond attracting historic visitors. She mentioned that it could provide a backdrop for bridal and wedding pictures, which is another reason people might come to Washington. Additionally, she noted that supporting a project like this demonstrates community involvement to the board.

Wanda stated that approving the mural could indirectly enhance the visitor experience, but she recognized that it might not be a direct draw for tourists to Washington.

Liaison Anthony Tyre pointed out that the WTDA board might find itself in a predicament. Should the focus be on beautification for the area, or remain committed to the goal of keeping "heads in beds" for visitor stays?

The Chairman, Fred Watkins then asked for a show of hands in favor of the HPOW Grant application. Three votes were in favor (Tyre, Linda, and Manfred) and three against (Wanda, Fred, and Bobby). The motion did not carry.

The board requested additional information from HPOW about the mural's inclusion in the historic walking tour.

ADJOURN

Manfred motioned to adjourn the meeting; Bobby seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.

The next board meeting is scheduled for noon on May 21st, 2025, at the Washington Police Department Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Kuhn

Marketing & Outreach Coordinator

Washington Tourism Development Authority