

**Washington Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, June 18th, 2025,
Washington Civic Center Conference Room
*Minutes***

ATTENDEES

Andrew Kuhn

Jonathan Russell

Anthony Tyre* (City Council Liaison)

Linda Harrington*

Bobby Clark*

Manfred Alligood* (Vice Chair)

Charlotte Stubbs

Paula Stephenson

Donald Sadler (Mayor)

Renee Moore*^

Franz Holscher

Tom Richardson*^

Fred O. Watkins III* (Chair)

Wanda Geisen* (Treasurer)

Garleen Woolard

* Board Members

*^ Sign Interpreter

Absent: *Dee Patel*

CALL TO ORDER:

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

MAC HODGES MUSIC FESTIVAL GRANT PRESENTATION:

Garleen Woolard, chair of the Mac Hodges Music Festival, presented their grant application to the board. The Festival honors the late Mayor Mac "Bear" Hodges and celebrates his love of music, as well as his dedication to creating inclusive events that bring people together.

This year marks the third anniversary of the Festival, which will take place on October 11, 2025, in Festival Park. The event will feature live music from two local bands and another artist from Raleigh, NC. Other entertainment includes a West Coast Swing dancing group, along with food trucks and a selection of beer and wine.

The Festival will serve as a fundraiser for Festival Park. In its first year, a bear statue was added to the park as a tribute to Mac Hodges. This year, the festival committee is collaborating with the City of Washington to explore potential upgrades to the stage.

Wanda asked whether they considered any larger events occurring that weekend. She remembered that one year, the Mac Hodges Festival coincided with another event.

Garleen mentioned that they checked for an ECU football game on that weekend, stating the importance of ensuring that a home game does not fall on the same date. This year, the game is scheduled for Thursday night.

Bobby asked if the WTDA would be included in sponsorship promotions. Garleen replied that all sponsors will be publicly acknowledged and thanked.

(Vote on page 6)

VISITOR CENTER UPDATE:

Catherine Glover was unable to attend the meeting, but she sent an update for Paula to present to the board.

The visitor center is currently seeing over 50 visitors per day, with guests signing in from South Carolina, New Jersey, Virginia, California, and Arizona.

On the Chamber side, the Summer Festival was great despite Friday being canceled due to inclement weather. They are working on rescheduling the festivities from Friday night sometime soon.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:

Directors Report:

Paula Stephenson, the Tourism Development Director, presented the director's report. In her presentation, she highlighted her previous blog posts, which were published on our website and WRAL's "Hometown Carolina." Paula reviewed our social media platforms, newsletters, and website metrics. She also discussed mentions of Washington, including Southern Living Magazine.

Paula mentioned that she and City Council Liaison Anthony Tyre will be interviewed by Channel 12 News for the upcoming Juneteenth festival. She has also been coordinating with Lessa Jones from the Underground Railroad Museum regarding applications for Pomeroy Historic Markers.

The WTDA will become a member of NC Coast Host, a group that promotes tourism along the East Coast. The organization had been dormant since COVID, but they have begun obtaining memberships again. Uplift has provided a grant for TDAs across the state to join NC Coast Host if they choose to do so.

Anthony announced the unveiling of a Heritage Marker at 136 W 6th Street on June 25th. The marker will highlight Dr. Haywood Dowdy, Beaufort County's first and only Black dentist.

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

Treasurer's Report:

Tammy Swindell, the Director of Administrative Services for the City of Washington, was unable to attend the meeting. Jonathan Russell, the City Manager, presented the financial report.

He discussed occupancy taxes, noting that in April, the revenue was \$8,000 above the projected budget. The WTDA is expected to finish the year with close to \$100,000. Johnathan also mentioned that overall operational expenses appear to be in good shape for both the WTDA and the Civic Center.

Linda motioned to accept the Treasurer's report; Bobby 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, 68 events have been booked, including 18 weddings and 50 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 provided updates on the facility repairs, noting that the floor repairs in the ballroom and on the stage have been completed. However, she encountered some challenges with the restoration of the deck. While the contractors were repairing the deck, their equipment broke. She is currently obtaining new quotes from three different contractors to address the repairs. All three contractors have indicated that the old concrete will need to be removed and replaced.

Fred asked if she had contacted the contractors from the previous renovations to see if they could patch the holes to save some money. Charlotte replied that she and Mac Daniels are exploring all options before proceeding with the removal of the concrete.

Linda motioned to accept the Civic Center report; Wanda seconded, and the report was approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

WTDA Chair Fred Watkins announced his resignation as WTDA Chair, effective June 19th, 2025. He then distributed the letter to the other board members.

Fred opened the nominations for the position of WTDA Chairman for a one-year term. Bobby Clark nominated Wanda Geisen. After asking if there were any other nominations and hearing none, Fred closed the nominations. He then stated that since only one person had been nominated, the chairman declares that the nominated person has been elected.

City Council Liaison Anthony Tyre mentioned that this appointment was not on the agenda. He then inquired whether the By-Laws addressed this matter and looked to City of Washington attorney Franz Holscher for legal guidance. Franz clarified that he is not the attorney for the WTDA but would need to review the By-Laws, house bills, and other relevant documents to ensure that everything was in accordance with the rules.

Franz noted that the City wanted all boards to adhere to a specific set of rules and procedures to ensure consistency. This standard is based on the third edition of Robert's Rules of Order, which includes the suggested Rules and Procedures for Small Boards and Committees. Fred replied that he was following Robert's Rules of Order.

Franz then brought up that in the City of Washington's Code of Ordinances under
ARTICLE XVIII. - TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Section 2-482 - Membership

(D) *"Within thirty (30) days after appointment, the authority shall elect its chair from among the members and create and fill other offices as it wishes. The term of chair shall be one (1) year with eligibility for reelection. No member may serve as chairman more than two (2) one-year terms in succession. The authority shall meet at the call of the chair or of any three (3) members and shall adopt rules of procedure to govern its meetings in accordance with [section 2-532](#)."*

Anthony then stated that the new chair appointment may not align with the current rules in place.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION AND PUBLIC COMMENT:

Wanda asked if the WTDA board is still recessed regarding the old business concerning the Crab Drop grant application. City Council Liaison Anthony Tyre stated that the vote on the application is not part of the agenda. He added that the agenda was accepted and adopted as is, and there was no old or ongoing business included for the meeting. Anthony asked Paula if she had reached out to the board and asked them if they had anything they wanted to add to the agenda. She said she does.

GRANT APPLICATIONS (Vote):

Mac Hodges Music Festival Grant Application (vote)

The grant application requested \$5,000, while the total budget for the event is \$25,000. Bobby Clark expressed some reservations about the amount requested, noting that it constitutes a significant portion of their budget. He also mentioned that he would like to see the WTDA focus on individuals who lack the resources to access grants. His recommendation was to reduce the amount to \$2,000.

Bobby Clark made a motion to reduce the grant amount to \$2,000 for further discussion. City Liaison Anthony Tyre seconded the motion. During the debate, Anthony stated that based on the WTDA's grant application criteria outlined in Section 4 of the Application Specifications and Guidelines, the Mac Hodges grant application meets the necessary

criteria. Wanda agreed, stating that the bands could attract a following of fans or families. WTDA Chair Fred Watkins then called for a vote on the motion to accept the grant request of \$2,000. The motion did not carry.

Following this, Anthony made a motion to approve the grant application as originally requested for \$5,000. Wanda seconded this motion, and the grant application was ultimately approved.

ADJOURN

Wanda motioned to adjourn the meeting; Linda seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.

The next board meeting is scheduled for noon on July 16th, 2025, at the Washington Civic Center Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Kuhn

Marketing & Outreach Coordinator

Washington Tourism Development Authority