

**Washington Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, October 16th, 2024,
Washington Civic Center
*Minutes***

ATTENDEES

Andrew Kuhn

Jonathan Russel

Anthony Tyre* (City Council Liaison)

Linda Harrington*

Bobby Clark*

Manfred Alligood* (Vice Chair)

Catherine Glover (WCC)

Paula Stephenson

Charlotte Stubbs

Renee Moore (Sign Interpreter)

Donald Sadler (Mayor)

Stephen Farrell

Fred O. Watkins III* (Chair)

Tom Richardson (Sign Interpreter)

Jeanne Harris (Assistant Finance Director)

Wanda Geisen* (Treasurer)

* Board Members

Absent: Dee Patel

CALL TO ORDER:

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

TOURISM PARTNER GUEST SPEAKER:

Stephen Farrell, the reference specialist and genealogist at the George H. & Laura E. Brown Library, gave a presentation to the board. His presentation covered the history of the Pamlico River and the Washington area. Stephen highlighted the history room, which features a collection of artifacts that have been donated or discovered over the years. So far this year, the history room has attracted over 900 visitors. He emphasized the importance of preserving Washington's history and finding ways to showcase it for everyone to appreciate.

Annual Audit Report - Martin Starnes

Tommy Harkley presented the 2023 - 2024 Audit Report via teams to the board. He mentioned revenue increased by over \$80,000, a 12% increase from last year. An increase of \$200,000 in expenses, partially due to the visitor center renovations. After the presentation, Tammy Swindell broke down the report in more detail for the board.

VISITOR CENTER UPDATE:

Catherine presented a flyer to the board designed by two employees from the Visitor's Center. She noted that visitors generally prefer to have a physical item in their hands rather than something digital when they arrive. In September, there were over 750 visitors, including a few from Poland and Germany.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Treasurer's Report:

Tammy Swindell, the Director of Administrative Services for the City of Washington, presented the finance report. So far, the numbers look positive for both the TDA and Civic Center. Occupancy taxes have exceeded the budgeted amounts to date.

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

Civic Center Report:

Charlotte Stubbs, the Venue & Event Manager, reviewed the report. Two wedding packages are available for 2025 (July 26 and December 20). She has also begun booking nonprofit events for 2026, with 17 dates already secured. Charlotte expressed her intention to consolidate all documents, including rental guides and contracts, into a single document for clients. She noted that having all policies in one contract is the industry standard.

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

Directors Report:

The Tourism Development Director, Paula Stephenson, presented the director's report. During her report, she showcased her previous blogs written on our website and WRAL's "Hometown Carolina." Paula then went over social media, newsletter, and website metrics. She reviewed the upcoming events in Washington and the new business openings.

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

OLD BUSINESS**Next Tourism Partner Guest:**

Fred and Wanda said the board wants to invite new guest speakers, like Stephen, from the library. This is part of a new effort to hear from community members.

NEW BUSINESS**Strategic Planning Recap:**

The facilitator of the strategic planning meeting sent Paula the notes. Wanda suggested that the board postpone this until they receive a full recap for review

INFORMAL DISCUSSION AND PUBLIC COMMENT

Paula informed the board that she recently met with Leesa Jones at the Underground Railroad Museum to discuss ideas for marketing diversity. She mentioned that the TDA could apply for preliminary markers to highlight Washington's diverse history, including figures such as Sarah Keys and Sing Lee.

City Council Liaison Anthony Tyre requested an update on the Grant Resource Program. Wanda stated that the TDA would continue to use the old program until a new one is developed. She also noted that a few items needed to be removed from the old program and suggested having legal review it. The Mayor recommended that the WTDA Board consult with the City Attorney.

ADJOURN

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

The next board meeting is scheduled for noon on November 20th, 2024, at the Washington Civic Center Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Kuhn

Marketing & Outreach Coordinator

Washington Tourism Development Authority