

**Washington Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, November 18th, 2024,
Washington Civic Center
*Minutes***

ATTENDEES

Andrew Kuhn	Jonathan Russel
Anthony Tyre* (City Council Liaison)	Linda Harrington*
Bobby Clark*	Leesa Jones
Bob Parker	Manfred Alligood* (Vice Chair)
Catherine Glover	Paula Stephenson
Charlotte Stubbs	Renee Moore*^
Darell Kanipe	Tammy Swindell
Dee Patel*	Tom Richardson*^
Franz Holscher	Wanda Geisen* (Treasurer)
Fred O. Watkins III* (Chair)	

* Board Members

*^Sign Interpreter

CALL TO ORDER:

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

TOURISM PARTNER GUEST SPEAKER:

Bob Parker, the General Manager of the Washington Yacht & Country Club (WYCC), spoke to the board about the club's recent developments. The WYCC has expanded its facilities to accommodate more weddings and corporate events, including a recent event hosted by Domtar. Bob expressed his desire for their board to become more involved with the community and emphasized the importance of partnering with other organizations, such as the WTDA.

PRESENTATION OF NEW PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS: DARREL KANIPE

Darrel Kanipe from Kanipe Creative presented the latest marketing campaigns for our social media platforms. Two videos were showcased: the first featured Chef Jamie Davis from The Hackney in a segment titled "Meet the Makers." The second video introduced a new concept to attract a different audience to Washington, NC, called "Antiquing in Washington," which follows a lost traveler seeking assistance with antique shopping in Southern Nest.

Additionally, Darrel provided insights into the WTDA website, offering a comprehensive look at who is visiting our site and where they are coming from.

LEESSA JONES

Leesa Jones from the Underground Railroad Museum spoke to the WTDA board about promoting diverse historical tourism in Washington. One idea she proposed was to establish a historic African American Walking Tour that extends beyond downtown Washington. Additionally, she suggested adding four state markers along various streets to highlight the city's historical diversity. Some sites she mentioned include the first Chinese laundry, established in 1896, and the first African American-owned bank on Gladden Street.

VISITOR CENTER UPDATE:

Catherine mentioned the Visitors Center is fully staffed and has seen a steady amount of visitors coming in.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Treasurer's Report:

Tammy Swindell, the Director of Administrative Services for the City of Washington, presented the finance report for November. She noted that expenses appear higher primarily due to the front-loaded costs of contracts with various parties. In September, occupancy taxes increased by \$14,000. So far this year, there has been a total increase of \$25,000 within the first three months of the fiscal year.

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

Civic Center Report:

Charlotte Stubbs, the Venue and Event Manager, reviewed the report. One wedding package is available for December 20, 2025. She has also begun booking nonprofit events for 2026, securing 17 dates so far and booking one wedding package. Charlotte mentioned that 2026 will likely see more dates booked due to potential engagements during the holidays. Additionally, she highlighted that the carpets will receive a refresh, with plans to be cleaned soon.

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

Directors Report:

The Tourism Development Director, Paula Stephenson, presented the director's report. During her presentation, she highlighted her previous blogs published on our website and

WRAL's "Hometown Carolina." Paula then reviewed metrics from social media, newsletters, and our website. She also mentioned that the WTDA has begun collaborating with groups such as the WHDA and the Committee of 100.

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

ONGOING BUSINESS

Next Tourism Partner Guest

Susan Squires from the Economic Development Commission and Chair of the Committee of 100

Strategic Planning Recap:

Paula mentioned that the Strategic Planning recap is ready and asked when the board could meet. The Board agreed to schedule it for January 6th, 2025, at 10:00 AM in the Civic Center Conference Room.

OLD BUSINESS

Washington History Museum

Paula presented an idea to the board that Jonathan Russel, the City Manager for the City of Washington, had proposed. The proposal suggested that Stephen Farrell, the library's Reference Specialist and Genealogist, take over the WTDA office space and transform it into a History Museum for Washington. The WTDA location has more space than the library's current setup. The WTDA would relocate to the Senior Center Office Suites on the second floor in this arrangement.

The board expressed their support for the idea. Jonathan mentioned he would allow Stephen to explore the proposal further, utilizing his expertise.

NEW BUSINESS

Funding Request from the City

The board discussed a funding request from the city of Washington to add additional Christmas lights around town. One area of interest was the gazebo in Festival Park. The board agreed to the request, with the condition that funding not exceed \$5,000. Manfred made the motion, and Dee seconded it.

Grant Program

The WTDA board discussed funding amounts for the Grant Program. Wanda went over past approved grants/sponsorships. The WTDA board discussed the funding amounts for the Grant Program. Wanda reviewed the amounts for previously approved grants. The board agreed to allocate \$20,000 from the fund balance to increase our budget. Wanda made a motion, and Manfred seconded it.

City Attorney Franz Holscher noted some changes in the old application.

(The changes included:

- A change in the director's name
- The timeframe was changed from 60 days to 90 days
- A sentence was added to reiterate existing language in the application specifications about promoting tourism and attracting overnight visitors.
- A sentence was removed regarding the WTDA being listed as an event sponsor to avoid liability.)

INFORMAL DISCUSSION AND PUBLIC COMMENT

Linda proposed the idea of creating more interactive areas along the waterfront boardwalk and Main Street. Some of her suggestions included dance squares, hopscotch, and kissing squares, all designed to encourage people to interact with one another in these designated spaces.

ADJOURN

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

The next board meeting is scheduled for noon on December 18th, 2024, at the Washington Civic Center Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Kuhn

Marketing & Outreach Coordinator

Washington Tourism Development Authority