

**Washington Tourism Development Authority  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, Apr 16th, 2026  
Washington Civic Center Conference Room  
*Minutes***

**ATTENDEES**

Andrew Kuhn

Linda Harrington

Blanche Gibbs Tillis\* (Secretary)

Mayor Pro Tem Fritz\*

Catherine Glover

Paula McCullough\*

Erin Ruyle

Shont'e Mason\* (Vice Chair)

Fred Watkins III

Stacy Jesso\* (Chair)

Henry Capogna

Susan Strickland\* (Treasurer)

\* WTDA Board Members

**Absent:** *none*

**CALL TO ORDER:**

WTDA Chair Stacy Jesso called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm.

Stacy moved to amend the agenda to add WTDA vacant roles to be filled, specifically the vice chair & treasurer positions. Paula seconded the motion, and the amended agenda was adopted.

Paula motioned to approve the amended March meeting minutes. Susan seconded, and the minutes were approved.

**GRANT PRESENTATIONS:**

**Washington Summer Festival:**

Catherine Glover, Executive Director of the Washington-Beaufort County Chamber of Commerce, presented the organization's grant request to the WTDA Board. The Chamber requested \$2,000 to support an overall event budget of \$75,000 for the 43rd Annual Washington Summer Festival. Funds would cover the cost for featured paid ads with WITN. (Vote on Page 3)

#### **Juneteenth Freedom Festival:**

Henry Capogna, Chair of the Human Resources Council, presented the Juneteenth committee's grant request to the WTDA Board. Capogna requested \$2,000 to support an overall event budget of \$15,000 for the City of Washington's Juneteenth Celebration. Funds would cover the cost of flyers, yard signs, banners, and other marketing materials. (Vote on Page 3)

### **REPORTS:**

#### **Finance Report:**

Tammy Swindell, the Director of Administrative Services for the City of Washington, couldn't attend the meeting. Erin Ruyle, the WTDA Executive Director, went over the finances briefly for the board.

#### **Civic Report:**

The Civic Center Manager, Charlotte Stubbs, is out on FMLA leave. Erin Ruyle presented the civic center report to the board.

#### **Director's Report:**

Erin presented her report to the board, reviewing key metrics and statistics from recent marketing efforts. Also updates the ongoing efforts to celebrate America's and Washington's 250th celebrations

Shont'e made a motion to approve all reports provided by Erin. Susan seconded the motion the reports were approved.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **Increase of Civic Center Rates:**

Erin shared that the City will likely not subsidize the Civic Center for the 2026–2027 due to budget cuts. The Board voted to increase the Civic Center rates effective July 1, 2026 based on the recommendations from the Civic Center Manager, Charlotte Stubbs. The Board also voted to decrease the non-profit rate from 40% to 25%, also effective July 1, 2026.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **TDA & Civic Center Budget FY: 26-27**

The WTDA board decided to table the budget review and vote until the May meeting due to time constraints.

### **Grant Request - Washington Summer Festival: Vote**

Susan made a motion to approve the \$2,000 grant request for the Washington Summer Festival. Shont'e seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The grant request was approved.

### **Grant Request - Juneteenth Freedom Festival: Vote**

Nick made a motion to approve the \$2,000 grant request for the Juneteenth Freedom festival. Shont'e seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The grant request was approved.

### **WTDA Position Appointments**

Stacy made a motion to appoint Shont'e Mason as the WTDA Vice Chair and Susan Strickland as the WTDA Treasurer. Nick seconded the Motion. The new appointments were approved.

## **INFORMAL DISCUSSION & PUBLIC COMMENT**

## **ADJOURN**

Shont'e motioned to adjourn the meeting; Susan seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.

The next board meeting is scheduled for 1:00 pm on May 14th, 2026, at the Washington Civic Center Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Kuhn

**Marketing & Outreach Coordinator**

Washington Tourism Development Authority