

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

ATTENDEES

Andrew Kuhn

Fred Watkins III

City Councilmember Anthony Tyre

Shont'e Mason* (Vice Chair)

Blanche Gibbs Tillis* (Secretary)

Stacy Jesso* (Chair)

Erin Ruyle

Susan Strickland* (Treasurer)

* WTDA Board Members

Absent: *Paula McCullough*

CALL TO ORDER:

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

Shont'e motioned to approve the agenda, Susan seconded the motion, and the agenda was adopted. Shont'e motioned to approve the amended April meeting minutes. Susan seconded, and the minutes were approved.

REPORTS:

Tammy Swindell, Director of Administrative Services for the City of Washington, and Charlotte Stubs, Civic Center Venue Manager, were unable to attend the meeting. Erin Ruyle, Executive Director of the WTDA, presented all three reports, including the Civic Center Report, Finance Report, and Executive Director's Report.

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

OLD BUSINESS:

Sponsorship Package: Vote

Andrew reviewed the WTDA Special Events Sponsorship Package for the upcoming fiscal year. The board had previously reviewed the original proposal earlier in the year and conducted a final review prior to the end of the fiscal year.

Shont'e made a motion to approve the Sponsorship Package. Susan seconded the motion, and the proposal was approved.

Civic Center Lease Discussion:

The board discussed options regarding the Civic Center lease agreement. Currently, the City owns the Civic Center, while the WTDA manages its operations. Board members expressed concerns about the Authority operating a City-owned facility without funding (subsidy) from the City that serves as a management fee. Additionally, the City has decided not to subsidize the venue during the upcoming fiscal year.

Susan made a motion to decline approval of the Civic Center lease agreement. Blanche seconded the motion. The motion passed; Shont'e Mason abstained.

NEW BUSINESS:

Catalyst Contract: Vote

Catalyst presented their proposals to a few members of the board earlier in the month. Erin provided a recap for those not present during the meeting. The proposal the board wanted to go with was \$40,000 which included, a brand hype video, authentic story telling reels, full video asset library rebuild, and inventive AI video production in the next fiscal year.

Shont'e motioned to approve the Sponsorship Package. Susan seconded, and the proposal was passed.

Our State Contract: Vote

Erin reviewed the Our State Magazine advertising proposal, which totaled \$25,450. The contract includes print advertisements through NC Coast Host, as well as digital advertising components for the upcoming fiscal year, including a reel relaunch, two newsletter sponsorships, and a paid article relaunch.

Shont'e made a motion to approve the Our State Magazine contract. Susan seconded the motion, and the proposal was approved.

Waterway Guide Contract: Vote

Erin reviewed the Waterway Guide advertising proposal, which totaled \$9,835.50. The contract includes a featured listing in the "Marina Close-Up" magazine. Washington will also be highlighted as a preferred destination through an email campaign, four new articles, social media promotions, and a print article.

Shont'e motioned to approve the waterway guide contract. Susan seconded, and the proposal was passed.

FY 26-27 TDA Budget: Vote

Erin went over the WTDA budget for the upcoming 2026 - 2027 fiscal year.

Shont'e motioned to approve the WTDA Budget. Susan seconded, and the budget was passed.

FY 26-27 Civic Center Budget:

The board decided to table the meeting for the next meeting for further discussion.

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 June 17th, 2026, at the Washington-Warren Airport Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Kuhn

Marketing & Outreach Coordinator

Washington Tourism Development Authority