Washington Tourism Development Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
Thursday, September 17th, 2026
Havens Wharf
Minutes

ATTENDEES

Andrew Kuhn

Betsy Hester*

Paula McCullough*

Shont'e Mason* (Vice Chair)

Susan Strickland* (Treasuer)

* WTDA Board Members
Absent: *City Council Liaison Joe Davis, Blanche Gibbs, & Stacy Jesso.*

CALL TO ORDER:

WTDA Vice Chair Shont'e Mason called the meeting to order. Betsy Hester then proposed amending the agenda to add the following item:

- Letters To Santa Proposal (Zach Settewongse)

Betsy motioned to approve the amended agenda, and Susan seconded the motion. The amended agenda was adopted.

MINUTES APPROVAL:

Shont'e proposed to add comments made by City Council Member Max Perrault during the previous WTDA Board of Director's Meeting on August 20th, 2026. Those comments included:

- Under the "SPECIAL EVENTS GRANT PRESENTATION: Hispanic Heritage: Color of our Culture"
    - "*City Councilman Max Perrault asked whether the event would compete with the City's Hispanic Heritage: Colors of Our Culture event scheduled for October 3 and whether the City would provide funding for both events.*"

Sarah Godley and Abby Cabrera clarified that the City is solely organizing the "Hispanic Heritage: Colors of Our Culture" event, which has a different date, time, and location from the other event. The other event is being organized independently by private citizen Oscar Rodriguez and is separate from the City. They further explained that if the City were to consider providing funding or support for the event, the organizers would need to contact the appropriate City departments to discuss available resources and assistance."

- Under the "Informal Discussion & Public Comment"
    - "*City Council Member Max Perrault provided an update on the future of the WTDA, including the latest information regarding legislation introduced by Senator Brinson.*
      Max stated that the City Council was not fully aware of the separation between the City and the WTDA until everything that happened with the former City Manager John Rorie, who pursued the separation independently.
      Max further shared that Senator Brinson received a request regarding changes to the occupancy tax. According to Max, the request did not originate from the City Council, and Senator Brinson indicated that the request had been rejected."

Susan motioned to approve the amended August 2026 meeting minutes. Betsy seconded, and the amended minutes were approved.

REPORTS:

Financial Report:

Tammy Swindell, the City of Washington's Ex-Officio Finance Officer, was unable to attend the meeting. Andrew Kuhn, Interim Director, provided a brief overview of the financial report.

Total expenses of $71,045 currently exceed revenue of $55,725. Andrew noted that this is expected at the beginning of the fiscal year, as several marketing contracts were paid early, totaling approximately $50,056.

Occupancy Taxes for July 2026:

Budget: $55,356 Actual: 49,302 Loss of: 6,054

Paula motioned to approve the financial report. Susan seconded the motion. The financial report was approved.

Director's Report:
Andrew Kuhn, Interim WTDA Executive Director, presented the WTDA Director's Report. He reviewed the organization's social media metrics and provided an update on the video shoot that took place on August 18 and 19.

Andrew also provided an update on the launch of the new website, including features that are still being added, as well as the one-on-one extranet training that has begun with business owners and tourism partners.

Future marketing efforts were discussed, including a feature in Our State Magazine's "What's New in NC" newsletter highlighting Washington's Museum of the Pamlico.

Susan made a motion to approve the Director's Report. Betsy seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

OLD BUSINESS:

Open House Discussion:
Andrew mentioned discussions with the Washington-Beaufort Chamber of Commerce regarding having the WTDA featured at a "Wake Up Washington" event in December.

The event would begin at 8:00 a.m. and conclude around 9:30 a.m., providing WTDA staff with an opportunity to introduce themselves and connect with local business owners and tourism partners. Potential dates discussed were December 3 or December 10.

The Board expressed a preference for December 3. Andrew will follow up with local venues to determine availability to host the event.

NEW BUSINESS:

Northern VA Magazine:

Andrew presented a proposal from Northern Virginia Magazine, which included three web page advertisements and six newsletter advertisements featured in the magazine's Food & Drink and Travel newsletters. The total quoted cost was $9,430.

Betsy motioned to approve the authorizations. Shont'e seconded the motion. The authorizations were approved.

Office Furniture:

Andrew informed the Board that new office furniture was needed for the new office space. He proposed purchasing a filing cabinet and table at an estimated total cost of $350.

Letters To Santa Proposal (Zach Settewongse):

Betsy Hester presented a concept for a "Letters to Santa" mailbox that Zach Settewongse is interested in creating. The mailbox would be featured throughout the holiday season, including during WTDA's Light Up the City event on November 24.

Betsy asked whether Zach could apply for a WTDA grant to help cover the cost of constructing the mailbox. Andrew noted that the project could potentially qualify under the Special Projects Grant; however, the Board has not yet approved official program guidelines or an application. The Board has only approved a maximum grant amount of $5,000, as discussed on June 18, 2026.

Andrew stated that he could prepare the Special Projects Grant guidelines for consideration and approval at the next Board meeting on November 19.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION & PUBLIC COMMENT

ADJOURN

Paula motioned to adjourn the meeting; Susan seconded, and the meeting was adjourned. The next board meeting is scheduled for 12:00 pm on October 15th, 2026, at the Washington-Warren Airport Conference Room.

Submitted by,

Andrew Kuhn

Interim Executive Director

Washington Tourism Development Authority