

**MOTIONS PASSED AT THE COMBINED BOARD MEETING, Tuesday, October 14, 2025**

Approved Sept 09, 2025, Meeting Minutes

**Mr. Johns Moved; Seconded by Mr. Patronis**

Approved Consent Agenda

**Mr. Dibenedictis Moved; Seconded by Mr. Register**

Action Item A.

**Ms. Johns Moved; Seconded by Mr. Walsingham**

COMBINED BOARD MEETING  
Bay County Tourist Development Council  
Panama City Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.  
Panama City Beach

Tuesday, Oct 14, 2025

09:00 a.m.

Council Room, PCB City Hall

**I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Chairman Pease called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Board Members:

Jason Branks

Jeff DiBenedictis

Reggie Johns (Vice-Chair)

Clair Pease (Chairman)

Yonnie Patronis (Treasurer)

Ethan Register

Gary Walsingham

Seven Members Present at the time of Roll Call.

Mr. Phillips and Mr. Jarman were absent

- A. Invocation  
Mr. Johns
- B. Pledge of Allegiance  
Ms. Pease
- C. Approve Sept 09, 2025, Meeting Minutes  
**Mr. Johns Moved; Seconded by Mr. Patronis to approve**  
**Motion passed unanimously.**

**III. REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE BOARD ON AGENDA ITEMS (3 Minutes)**

**IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

A. Approve and recommend to the Bay County Board of County Commissioners to reimburse the City of Panama City Beach and the Bay County Sheriff's Office for certain public safety expenditures related to increased tourism on Panama City Beach (CVB/TDC)

Mr. Rowe read the consent agenda into the record.

**Mr. Dibenedictis Moved; Seconded by Mr. Register to approve**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

**V. PRESENTATIONS**

A. TDC Operations Update, Dan Rowe

Mr. Rowe stated that this is the time of year where we pivot out of the summer and we have some exciting things that we are up to. He said he wanted to give an overview of where we are and where we're headed. He said we really do lean in to the Real Fun Beach brand and you can see all the versions of it from sports to diving to pups to news.

He introduced the new employee, Erin Graham who is our new Coastal Resource Manager and Artificial Reef Coordinator. Mr. Rowe said, first thing that Erin did was she went to the marketing department and say, Hey look, we need to lean into this a little bit more. And so the first thing she got done is our logo changed to extend the brand and now you can also see a little coral in the A, which I really think is one of those things that kind of highlights what we do and how we all do it. The other thing that Erin did is she started working on getting a boat. This is a movie set from the movie Pirates of the Caribbean, that's the Black Pearl, which was Johnny Depp's ship in the movie The Boat Pirates Ship in the movie.

And it's a little bit stark, but she's also been reaching out to secure this vessel for us to be able to sink in one of our SARS area, which is one of the small area artificial reef zones where we're approved and it'll be relatively close to shore in state waters for divers to be able to dive. But she then went on further to say, now we need to adorn this ship with other things to make it more pirate like. So she's been talking to the folks Walter Marine that actually have the ship as well as Haney Technical College to say, can we weld things onto this vessel to make it really more fun, whether it's the captain's wheel, whether it's a plank, a treasure chest really to heighten what the divers will experience when they dive this ship. So we're in the process of securing it and it will be the first thing that we sink since taking over the artificial reef program. Mr. Rowe said, we think it is a really cool way to wade into the artificial reef waters.

Mr. Rowe states that this is the beginning of our special event season. This weekend we had the Pirates and Renaissance Fest. And again, the team is leaning in to how do we continue to make this brand special to give people excuses to come back to the beach. We have been doing the Pirates Festival ever since the Deep Water Horizon Oil spill, but every year our team says, how can we do more? How can we really bring it together? And it is a light year's difference now than where it was when we first started. And again, it's all about fun. Also completed is the new pavilion that we built for the city at Aaron Bessant Park. And we are leasing the block building as well. The reason we're leasing that from the city is so that we will have a mailing address that during unwined we'll be able to do off-premise package sales of beer and wine so that the wine vendors that are coming to have their bottle sampled, then the patrons will be able to go over to the pavilion, buy the wine and take it home. We think that will really help elevate the event yet again and really deepen what we're doing with special events

He said that for the Pirates Fest, we also added a kid's craft area that was in use all day long, every day really again to make sure that it is fun. Everybody who's coming to our events just has a great time with our winter resident program. Last year we introduced Beachcomber Berry as we transitioned away from the Sandman into what's coming next. And this year we're actually going to create Barry's bucket list, which is a list of places around Panama City Beach that Barry Ainsley has approved for our winter residents to go do. And it really does help encourage engagement with our winter residents to make sure that the top of mind is there in word of mouth to help them continue to grow and strengthen what we do and just to keep them engaged with what we are and who we are. And it will help us get folks around the beach and we're really excited about how that continues to be an organic marketing opportunity for us.

Mr. Rowe stated that Richard is not leaving quietly in the middle of his last 90 days work. He is managing the renovation of the three grass soccer fields into multipurpose artificial turf fields. And then as you're aware, Richard came up with a new sponsorship category called The Legacy Wall where there's 15 people, companies that are able to invest \$5,000 a year for five years and have their plaque at the Legacy Wall. And so far, Richard has been successful in selling 12 of the 15. So, he really has been leaning in to help create new revenue opportunities for us as he is leaving.

Mr. Rowe said, then the work we do, we win awards, and we've won the Flagler awards for Pirates of the High Seas. We're also all over international festivals and events. The stuff that we do at your direction really does move the needle and we're very excited that we're continuing to push forward. The changes we did to the Beach Ball drop last year I think are phenomenal. And then you've got to give props for the special events team. They really have done just such a great job of bringing home a lot of awards for all the events. And that's just a highlight and quick overview of how we're doing it.

He said we are always leaning in to make sure that we're doing everything possible to make sure that we're driving economic opportunity and really moving Panama City Beach forward.

## **VI. ACTION ITEMS**

A. Discuss and Consider for Approval, the FY 2026 Marketing Communications Plans, Jayna Leach

Ms. Leach stated that this is all about moving us forward and getting visitors here to Panama City Beach. So today we're excited to share our strategic plans for the new fiscal year across public relations, media and creative. Each one of those is specifically designed to keep our destination top of mind to the travelers and audiences year round so that we will continue to become a 12 month destination and also extending our brand, the Real Fun Beach. We continue to evolve the brand. She then introduced the PR agency, Lou Hammond group. They have been with us for more than 16 years, and they really are an extension of us as they have embraced the real fun beach.

Ms. Gina Stoffer presented the PR plan. She stated that this past year we had a really great solid year and our media, we've increased our impressions we're over 3 billion now. I remember when we kind of had a party when we hit 1 billion impressions in a year. Now we're over three and our estimated ad value continues to increase as well, which means the quality of the coverage is going up each year. She said we had some great exposure in a RP Washington Post.

The story that was placed, Jill Walker will be celebrating her 100th triathlon here in Panama City Beach in a couple of years, and she had pitched it out after she completed her 99th Triathlon and with Ironman and Washington posted a whole feature on Jill and why she runs in PCB. And the clever part of the pitch was that Jill focuses on the race, not necessarily her time, because she stops to pet dogs every way on the way. We've got a nice placement in the New York Post talking about our new nonstop flights from LaGuardia. Some media this past year are great freelancers who contribute to a number of outlets. So, when they come and stay for a weekend or a long weekend, they produce in multiple outlets.

She said our initiatives for this coming year, all tie back to our strategy of increasing economic vitality, community vibrancy, and industry leadership. Certainly, on the leadership side, the takeover program that was presented a couple of months ago, that will be a big part of what we're doing in this next year and positioning Dan as a leader as well with that.

Ms. Stoffer stated that we know immersive travel is on the up and up and we'll be seeing more and more of it in the coming years. One that's an easy enough one to put together to take something so great about the destination that you already have and impact it up in a new way. In our top media for 2026, we're incredibly excited that St. Andrews State Park is celebrating at 75th anniversary and for us to be able to make a story out of that and receive placements and interest, that's going to begin with Park Ranger led storytelling. She said that we will be really using them as experts and being able to show the then and now talking about the history and what's taken place over time, insider tips for ways to experience the destination and then taking that one step further again with something that we're able to send to media so we can spark that interest at home, really convince their kids to start begging them to come take them on vacation. To Panama City Beach, we had 75 Ways to Explore St. Andrew's. That's a kit that's really engaging for children. It has shell identification cards; wildlife spotting really gets you up to speed on what San Andrew's has to offer that you might not know just straight on the surface.

Ms. Leach then introduced Sarah Rabin with our Wataga Media team. Ms. Rabin stated that we put a lot of work into evaluating last year's plan and putting together a strategic and effective plan for FY 26. Our objective is to enhance brand awareness and perception of PCB among our target audiences and our core emerging markets. Some things we'll be prioritizing this year supporting our Combating takeovers initiative, which we talked about a couple months ago when we were here. Again, like Jayna said, prioritizing a digital first approach across all channels. Implementing that flexible buying approach that's proven successful for us for the past couple of years. It allows us to dial up or back as needed based on external impacts and anything we see that we want to take advantage of. We're going to continue to maintain our competitive conquering efforts and we're going to use our learnings in real time.

She said this is truly a performance-based plan where we can evaluate and make optimizations as we go throughout the year. The measurement of success for our media will be new impressions to the website and our engagement metrics, reaching our key audience segments, continuing to reach our important segments. This is all about seasonality and timing and making sure we're reaching these people during their unique planning windows. You'll see some of our families who are tied to the school calendar, some who are not new for this year. We'll be reaching teen families as part of our evolution of the MIY brand. We're going to continue to support all of our pulse campaigns and events.

She reviewed the media plans for double red flags, red snapper season, and sports marketing.

They then answered questions for the board.

Next to speak was Lucky, the creative team. Kelsey stated that our four marketing objectives, starting with how we maintain the ongoing initiatives. This is really supporting not only the things that you guys bring forward, the visit PCB team and then across all of the internal team sales events, sports, constantly supporting them, but then also bringing new ideas, that elevate the destination overall. We're always focused on increasing frequency by driving repeat visitation. Once people come to Panama City Beach, we want them to continue to come back. So what are those things that we can bring forward that ensure that they continue to come back? As everyone has stated, competitive contrasting is one of our big key initiatives. So, there's constant creative and messaging and things that we're doing to evolve and really highlight the differentiators that really set Panama City Beach apart. She discussed the winter resident and holiday campaigns as well as additions to the website to drive winter business. She then answered questions from the board.

Ms. Pease asked for a motion to approve.

**Mr. Johns Moved; Seconded by Mr. Walsingham to approve**

**Motion passed unanimously.**

## **VII. PRESIDENTS REPORT**

Mr. Rowe stated that our next meeting is going to be on November the fifth. We're moving it up because Veteran's Day falls on the 11th of November. He said we are continuing to lean in on an act of Congress, the Kids Online Safety Act. I've been working with Mr. Davis on language for our congressional delegation and we have seen that the time is now. Now is the time because Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram announced this morning that they are starting to throttle data given sent to young kids so that children will get PG 13 levels of information as they go online, which is one of those steps in the right direction as we look to change how youth are consuming media and being able to stop the viral nature of posts that are designed to put kids at risk.

And we think that is a very huge step in our ability to combat takeovers. And so that progress is continuing to move forward, and we think this is a year to get it done. Policy updates. Cole and I are also working on reviewing all of our policies that we have, everything from our employee handbook to our purchasing policies, to our procurement policies, just to make sure that with a new firm that we are staying on top of things as we are in the age. And then Mr. Register, I do want to thank you for bringing up AI because that's one of the policies that we really have to lean into to make sure that we're utilizing it in a good way because AI can take over so much as things go on. We're also going to be looking for an additional office. I have tasked Terri to find additional offices for us within about a half mile of this building, just so, because we need to expand our space because with Aaron's arrival and with Richard's retirement, Richard is currently housed at the public sports park, but the person we bring in to help us with sponsorship development and destination stewardship needs to be in the office with the team and not at the sports park.

He also said that we're going to be looking to move our admin folks to a new office and we're in that process right now. We're also in the process of continuing the negotiations with Tourism Economics, which is the company we've identified to really help us with our ROI and Economic impact calculators, just to make sure that everything that we're doing is transparent and that we're really focused on making sure that we're spending our dollars wisely. And with Brand science, that's the branding organization that is helping us to make sure that we are putting our brand forward in the end. We had some issues in the past with the number of drownings we've had in the last few years, plus the takeovers. We have to make sure that it is positioned well and that we're able to morph it to be able to really take advantage of different things. We're in the final stages of finalizing the installation of the first 10 walkovers. Terri has also been working very closely with DAG and fabricators to make sure that we get the best product at the best price. We're getting ready to cross that bridge and start to the installs within the coming weeks. The digital flag warning system, we have received the unit from Bosnia. It is currently in traffic engineering, and it will be installed the first week of November, and we're very excited about that project coming and moving forward. And we're also finalizing RFQ for a new website company just to make sure that we push that forward and when we will bring that RFQ back to you either at the November or December meetings for your consideration.

Mr. Rowe also stated that we had shifted lifeguards out of the 10% for public safety. Mr. Davis and I are meeting with the city and the county representatives to determine their needs for FY 26 because we're able to use up to 10% of the church development tax for public safety initiatives. And we also have a three and a half million public safety reserve. So I just wanted to make sure that you guys were aware that we are starting those conversations

because with lifeguards coming out of public safety, it gives us some opportunities to doing some interesting things to continue to keep visitors safe and to move Panama to the beach forward.

**VIII. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Ms. Pease stated that Thunder Beach is coming really soon. We've had a lot of construction on the beach and we've got some potholes that are popping up all over the place from the trucks and materials and all being delivered. So you guys remember to use that click and fix and if you see a pothole, try to go ahead and get that to us immediately before Thunder Beach gets here. I've noticed, and I've already turned in a few, right at the Harley dealership and several others, so please remember that they're not as easy on motorcycles as they are of cars, but if you guys could remember to use that app, it's easy.

**IX. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION**  
NONE

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Respectfully submitted,  
Sharon Cook, Recording Secretary