



Minutes of Meeting
Tourist Development Council
St. Johns County, Florida
County Administration Building
500 San Sebastian View
St. Augustine, Florida 32084
January 27, 2025 - 1:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Phillips called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

Present: Regina G. Phillips, Chair
Irving Kass, Vice Chair
Krista Joseph, BCC Representative
Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor, City of St. Augustine Representative
Dylan Rumrell, Mayor, St. Augustine Beach City Commission, Seat 2
Michael Wicks, District 4
Charles Cox, District 5
Troy Blevins, District 5

Absent: Michael Gordon, District 4

Staff Present: Sarah Maxfield, Economic Development Director
Dena Masters, Tourist Development Council Program Specialist
Jessie Dunn, Deputy County Administrator
Rich Komando, Interim County Attorney
Lex Taylor, Deputy County Attorney
Jalisa Ferguson, Assistant County Attorney
Artricia Allen, Deputy Clerk

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Phillips led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Council members introduced themselves: Phillips, Cox, Wicks, Kass, Blevins, Sikes-Kline, Rumrell, and Joseph. Phillips also requested that the staff members introduce themselves: Sarah Maxfield, Dena Masters, Jesse Dunn, Lex Taylor, Jalisa Ferguson, and Rich Komando.

Additionally, Masters called the roll. Council members Phillips, Joseph, Sikes-Kline, Rumrell, Kass, Wicks, Cox, and Blevins were present. Gordon was absent.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Rumrell, seconded by Joseph, carried 8/0, with Gordon absent, to approve the Agenda, as submitted.

Yea: Rumrell, Joseph, Phillips, Kass, Sikes-Kline, Wicks, Blevins, Cox
Nay: None
Absent: Gordon

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Phillips requested that the October 21, 2024, minutes for Regular Agenda Item 7 be corrected to reflect that Howard Holley is from Evolve Magazine.

Motion by Rumrell, seconded by Joseph, carried 8/0, with Gordon absent, to approve the minutes for the October 21, 2024, meeting, as amended.

Yea: Rumrell, Joseph, Phillips, Kass, Cox, Sikes-Kline, Blevins, Wicks
Nay: None
Absent: Gordon

Motion by Rumrell, seconded by Blevins, carried 8/0, with Gordon absent, to approve the minutes for the November 18, 2024, meeting, as submitted.

Yea: Rumrell, Blevins, Phillips, Kass, Joseph, Cox, Wicks, Sikes-Kline
Nay: None
Absent: Gordon

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tom Reynolds recommended moving Agenda Item 11 up before the mayor had to leave the meeting (Exhibit A).

7. SELECTION OF NEW CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Maxfield reviewed the procedures and process for selecting the chair and vice chair. Phillips called for chair and vice chair nominations.

Motion by Blevins, seconded by Wicks, carried 8/0, with Gordon absent, nominating Irving Kass as Chair.

Yea: Blevins, Wicks, Phillips, Joseph, Cox, Rumrell, Kass, Sikes-Kline
Nay: None
Absent: Gordon

Motion by Cox, seconded by Kass, carried 8/0, with Gordon absent, nominating Troy Blevins as Vice Chair.

Yea: Cox, Kass, Phillips, Sikes-Kline, Rumrell, Wicks, Joseph, Blevins

Nay: None

Absent: Gordon

Kass expressed his appreciation to Maxfield for her services to the Tourist Development Council (TDC). He noted that the council would focus on driving revenue, and the Council was more exceptional than any other consultant. He preferred relying on the TDC instead of outside consultants. Sikes-Kline thanked Phillips for her service to the TDC as Chair and other organizations, with Blevins seconding the remarks.

8. SPORTS TOURISM GRANT APPROVALS

- Matanzas 500, recommended - \$1,221
- St. Augustine Race Week Sailing Regatta, recommended - \$10,125
- Pickleball Veritas, recommended - \$5,188
- ACGA Redfish Bash Fishing Tournament, recommended - \$4,500
- PG North Florida Super Regional, recommended - \$5,175
- Conference USA Woman's Golf Championships, recommended - \$16,774
- JFC Battle at the Beach Soccer Tournament, recommended - \$2,499
- Game On! PV Beach Triathlon, recommended - \$3,600
- PG Battle at the Beach, recommended - \$4,950
- PG Sunshine State Championships, recommended - \$4,950
- River City Wrestling Con, recommended - \$20,250
- Old School Kingfish Shoutout, recommended - \$20,250
- ACGA 2025 Kingfish Challenge, recommended - \$9,000
- Game On! St Augustine Triathlon, recommended - \$3,600
- NWCA Convention, recommended - \$27,000
- Florida Elite Soccer Tournament Series, recommended \$10,125
- Ancient City Karate Championships, recommended \$6,241
- JFC 33rd Annual Labor Day Shootout, recommended \$2,700
- AJGA The Junior Players Championship, recommended \$8,775

Maxfield provided details on the request. Rumrell thanked Teddy Meyer, Parks and Recreation Facility Manager, for ensuring that grant funding organizations related to hotel rooms were located in St. Johns County.

Blevins requested that Item K, River City Wrestling Con, be removed from the list to align with the organization's name being associated with St. Johns County. Council members expressed their positions on the request. Meyer responded that the Council had previously approved the company and would contact the applicant regarding the request.

Discussion ensued regarding the company name and labeling, as well as a rule or policy that states any event related to Jacksonville would be a non-starter and not considered for grants in the future.

Public Comment: There was none.

Motion by Blevins, seconded by Cox, carried 8/0, with Gordon absent, to recommend the Board of County Commissioners approve the Sports Marketing Grants for Fiscal Year 2025.

Yea: Blevins, Cox, Kass, Joseph, Sikes-Kline, Wicks, Rumrell, Phillips

Nay: None

Absent: Gordon

Meyer provided an update on International Billiards, stating they had 1,329 attendees over eight nights at the Renaissance in November and planned to return next year.

9. FISCAL YEAR 2026 ARTS CULTURAL AND HERITAGE (ACH) GRANT GUIDELINES RECOMMENDATION

Maxfield presented the details of the grant guidelines' recommendations. Brenda Swann, St. Johns County Cultural Council Interim Executive Director, responded to the Council members' questions regarding the timeline, score ratings, waiting for the March Council meeting, peak periods, and time-sensitive.

Kass recommended having five sub-brands for St. Johns County: 1) History from February 1 to April 15, 2025, 2) Cultural from April 15 to June 30, 2025, 3) Family from July 1 to August 31, 2025, 4) Sing Out Loud from September 1 to November, and 5) Night of Lights in December.

Discussion ensued on sub-brands, ensuring that no groups or marketing perspectives were eliminated, and the possibility of combining multiple events into one, grant guidelines, factoring recurring grants into scoring to reduce long-term marketing and programming costs, and addressing challenges faced by nonprofit organizations. It was recommended to hire a coordinator or liaison to manage the sub-brands and their groupings, create a spreadsheet listing all events and the years they were funded, and the total amount of funding the organization had received. Additionally, there was a suggestion to cap the grants that could be awarded.

Public Comment:

Albert Syeles spoke about the Romanza nonprofit organization and expressed support for the seasonal branding approach.

Tom Reynolds expressed that no further grant funding should be received for any 503(c)4 political action committee.

Motion by Rumrell, seconded by Wicks, carried 8/0, with Gordon absent, to approve ACH Grant Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2025 as presented.

Yea: Rumrell, Wicks, Blevins, Cox, Phillips, Sikes-Kline, Kass, Joseph

Nay: None

Absent: Gordon

Rumrell requested that Agenda Item No. 11 be heard next, as Sikes-Kline needed to leave the Council meeting at 3:00 p.m.

10. TDC MEMBER APPLICATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Maxfield presented the details of the application recommendations. Taylor provided the Council with rules regarding the consideration of late applicants, recommending reopening the application process with a new deadline, partially filling the position, and then reopening it. Kass then opened the floor for further recommendations.

Public Comment:

Tom Reynolds spoke about reaching out to the River and Fort group.

Blevins nominated Charles Cox for another term, which Wicks seconded.

Public Comment: There was none.

Motion by Blevins, seconded by Wicks, carried 7/0, via roll call vote, with Gordon and Sikes-Kline absent, to recommend that the Board of County Commissioners approve Charles Cox for another term on the Tourist Development Council.

Blevins: Yes
Cox: Yes
Joseph: Yes
Kass: Yes
Phillips: Yes
Rumrell: Yes
Wicks: Yes
Gordon: Absent
Sikes-Kline: Absent

Joseph nominated Catherine St. Jean for the vacant seat, which was not seconded.

Kass nominated Troy Blevins for another term, which Cox seconded.

Motion by Kass, seconded by Cox, carried 7/0, via roll call vote, with Sikes-Kline and Gordon absent, to recommend the Board of County Commissioners to approve Troy Blevins for another term on the Tourist Development Council.

Blevins: Yes
Cox: Yes
Joseph: Yes
Kass: Yes
Phillips: Yes
Rumrell: Yes
Wicks: Yes
Sikes-Kline: Absent
Gordon: Absent

Rumrell nominated to reopen the Tourist Development Council application process and support Michael Wicks, which was seconded by Cox, as amended.

Public Comment: There was none.

Motion by Rumrell, seconded by Cox, carried 7/0, via roll call vote, with Sikes-Kline and Gordon absent, to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners to reopen the Tourist Development Council vacancy, as amended.

Blevins: Yes

Cox: Yes

Joseph: Yes

Kass: Yes

Phillips: Yes

Rumrell: Yes

Wicks: Yes

Sikes-Kline: Absent

Gordon: Absent

Discussion ensued regarding the accommodation of both categories for the open seats, with applicants on the list not needing to reapply, the timing for when the item would appear before the Board, and how long the application should remain open.

Joanne Spencer, Senior Assistant to the Board of County Commissioners, stated that the application would need to remain open for another 30 days and would be brought before the Board at the March 4, 2025, meeting.

11. NIGHTS OF LIGHTS UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

Maxfield provided an update on the Nights of Lights event and requested guidance on how to better accommodate both residents and visitors. Discussion ensued on being informed throughout the planning process, a survey among local downtown store owners with customer involvement and purchases during this event, and funding additional safety personnel directing cars and tourists.

Rumrell provided his recommendation for assisting with the Nights of Lights events, suggested designated parking spots to accommodate parking, monitor trash pickup and restroom caddy, utilizing the Resource Officers and Police Service Assistant (PSA), and that staff working downtown to park at Flagler College utilizing their garage and shuttle to bring them to the plaza, parking at Francis Field and charging \$50 per spot would fund other things that need to be done. Discussion ensued on opening shuttle lanes, control pedestrian traffic, bathrooms, blocking off roads, and figuring out how to change the resident's behavior by taking public transportation instead of driving into town.

Sikes-Kline expressed gratitude for the input provided by residents and staff. She discussed the contradiction regarding parking, data, whether money had been spent, the need for designated lanes, and crowd management. She mentioned looking for support and expertise from the Tourist Development Council (TDC), highlighting the need for leadership and funding. She also inquired

about how TDC dollars could be used for the PSA, event management, and ensuring jobs were not lost. Discussion ensued on raising revenues, improving communication, finding revenue sources, and using Google Maps for travel. Maxfield informed the Council that she would consult with the County Attorney's office to determine whether it was possible or not and then provide guidance to the Council members.

Public Comment:

Albert Syeles spoke on the allocation of additional funds to advertise Nights of Lights early and whether any allocation was set aside to address the consequences, market tourism products, and support the required services.

Tom Reynolds spoke on ongoing traffic concerns related to the Nights of Lights and expressed concerns about bicyclists on the Bridge of Lions.

12. PARKS AND RECREATION REQUEST TO RELOCATE PIER VISITORS INFORMATION CENTER (VIC) INTO GIFT SHOP

Maxfield and Jamie Baccari, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director, presented the details of the request. Discussion ensued on utilizing the dead space, maximizing the entire area, and setting up a booth outside on Wednesday to attract tourism to St. Augustine. Council members expressed their support for the request.

Public Comment:

Tom Reynolds spoke in support of the request and suggested that they receive customer service training.

Motion by Rumrell, seconded by Blevins, carried 7/0, with Gordon and Sikes-Kline absent, to approve the renovations recommended by the Parks and Recreation department.

Yea: Rumrell, Blevins, Kass, Arnold, Phillips, Wicks, Cox

Nay: None

Absent: Sikes-Kline, Gordon

13. MONTHLY REPORTS PROVIDED IN PACKETS

Maxfield stated that the monthly reports were provided in the agenda packet. Susan Phillips, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau Director, provided an update on the advertising Request for Proposal (RFP) for the management advertisement contract. She proposed that once the contract was signed, it would go out immediately, as the current contract was set to expire at the end of March, put together a bridge program, and referenced that a recent study was included in the agenda packet and to not pressure the new advertising market agency to make a decision but allow them time to review.

Brenda Swann, St. John County Cultural Council Interim Executive Director, provided an update on the goals and Tourist Development Council (TDC) grant-funded programs and events. Discussion ensued on gathering information, speaking with the Board of County Commission,

hiring a consultant, and questioning the TDC involvement. She also provided additional information on the Council's involvement with the St. Johns County Cultural Plan.

14. MEMBER COMMENTS

Joseph thanked the Council members for the meeting and expressed looking forward to marketing and advertisement efforts.

Rumrell spoke about the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Constitution, and he mentioned that the Daughter of the American Revolution wanted to organize a parade on July 4th and suggested considering a large firework display in the City of St. Augustine to celebrate the 250 years.

Phillips stated that they were celebrating 100 years of the Excelsior High School Museum building and being nominated for the second year as the best small-town museum in America. She also thanked the Council for the opportunity to serve as the Tourist Development Council (TDC) chair and expressed her excitement about serving this year.

Blevins thanked the hospitality staff and recognized James Beard, a culinary chef, and the great culinary experience in St. Johns County.

Wicks asked Phillips to update the council on the Black History Museum, expectations moving forward, and how the TDC could assist in moving the process forward. Phillips stated that she could provide more details at the next meeting.

Cox expressed his agreement with Kass concept regarding the sub-brands on marketing and advertising.

Kass expressed appreciation to Phillips for the great job she had done over the last year as Chair of the TDC.

15. NEXT MEETING DATE

Maxfield stated that the next meeting was scheduled for March 10, 2025.

16. ADJOURN

With there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

Approved _____, 2025

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: _____
Irving Kass, Chair

ATTEST: BRANDON J. PATTY,
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT & COMPTROLLER

By: _____
Deputy Clerk