



Minutes of Meeting
Tourist Development Council
St. Johns County, Florida
County Administration Building
500 San Sebastian View
St. Augustine, Florida 32084
December 11, 2023 - 1:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Gordon called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

Present: Michael Gordon, Chair
Regina Phillips, Vice Chair
Sarah Arnold, BCC Representative
Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor, City of St. Augustine Representative
Irving Kass, District 2
Michael Wicks, District 4
Charles Cox, District 5
Troy Blevins, District 5

Absent: Don Samora, Mayor, City of St. Augustine Beach Representative

Staff Present: Tera Meeks, Tourism and Cultural Development Director
Dena Masters, Tourist Development Council Administrative Coordinator
Jalisa Ferguson, Assistant County Attorney
Saundra Hutto, Deputy Clerk

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Gordon led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

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

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Yea: Sikes-Kline, Blevins, Gordon, Arnold, Kass, Phillips, Cox, Wicks
Nay: None
Absent: Samora

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Meeks stated that the requested changes for the September 18, 2023, meeting minutes had been changed and were back on the Agenda for approval.

Motion by Sikes Kline, seconded by Blevins, carried 8/0, with Samora absent, to approve the minutes for the September 18, 2023, meeting as submitted.

Yea: Sikes-Kline, Blevins, Gordon, Arnold, Kass, Phillips, Cox, Wicks
Nay: None
Absent: Samora

Motion by Sikes Kline, seconded by Blevins, carried 8/0, with Samora absent, to approve the minutes for the October 16, 2023, meeting as submitted.

Yea: Sikes-Kline, Blevins, Gordon, Arnold, Kass, Phillips, Cox, Wicks
Nay: None
Absent: Samora

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment: Albert Syeles (Exhibit A) provided public comment.

7. PRESENTATION OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT TAX RESERVES

Jessie Dunn, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, provided an overview of the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) Fund Reserves. He reviewed the St. Johns County Board of County Commission Administrative Code, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 TDT amended budget, and the FY 2024 TDT Fund Reserves. Discussion ensued on retaining minimum and maximum reserves, reserve budget categories, utilization of reserve funds, examples of Special Revenue Funds, and the Capital Improvement Program process with respect to Special Revenue Funds.

Discussion continued on the TAG! Children's Museum and the Zora Neale Hurston Statue funding recommendations and category allocations, accumulation of reverses, maintaining reserves, future use of reserves, including the future expenditure for the St. Johns County Ocean Pier, and on the concern with growth trend of occupancy.

8. TAG! CHILDREN'S MUSEUM FUNDING REQUEST

Meeks provided an overview of the background of the funding request.

Discussion ensued on the total cost of the project, funds raised, the use of Tourist Development Tax (TDT) funds regarding future projects, establishing a process or policy for the use of reserves,

the use of funds for county owned projects or facilities, the process of reallocations of funds, including the addition of the fifth penny, the budget process, tabling the request to the February 5, 2024, and future projects for further discussion, releasing funds for advertisement to raise funds for nonprofit organizations, and grant guidelines regarding funding.

Public Comment: Tara Massey provided public comment.

Motion by Sikes-Kline, seconded by Blevins, carried 8/0, with Samora absent, to recommend the Board of County Commissioners, to table the TAG! Children’s Museum and Zora Neale Hurston Statue funding request until February 5, 2024, meeting, or any future funding request until the Tourist Development Council is able to establish a policy or procedure.

Yea: Sikes-Kline, Blevins, Gordon, Arnold, Kass, Phillips, Cox, Wicks

Nay: None

Absent: Samora

9. ZORA NEALE HURSTON STATUE FUNDING REQUEST

The item was tabled until February 5, 2024.

10. TOURISM MARKETING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Meeks provided the update on the RFP Working Group. Discussion ensued on pursuing a marketing contract with an external agency, and on the composition of the marketing working group.

11. MONTHLY REPORTS PROVIDED IN PACKETS

Meeks stated that the monthly reports were provided in the agenda packet.

Susan Phillips, President and CEO of the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau (VCB), provided an update on the VCB monthly report and what to expect for the coming year. Discussion ensued on providing long term occupancy rate trend data, what to expect in future monthly reports, providing vacation rental data from the St. Johns County Tax Collector’s Office, pursuing a Nights of Lights economic impact study, and inviting Dennis Hollingsworth, St. Johns County Tax Collector, to present information to the Council on bed tax collections.

Christina Parrish Stone, Executive Director of the St. Johns County Cultural Council (SJCC), provided details of the SJCC monthly report. Discussion ensued on event impacts to St. Johns County residents and the support that the SJCC provided regarding quality-of-life, and on Category 2 reserve funds.

12. MEMBER COMMENTS

Wicks requested past studies on cultural arts and sports tourism. Meeks stated that she would send the following to Council members: 1) strategic plan, 2) sports tourism development plan, and 3) a performing arts center study.

Phillips spoke in support of the Zora Neale Hurston Statue funding request.

Sikes-Kline wished everyone a happy holiday.

Blevins requested Phillips to speak on the Florida Black History Museum. Phillips provided information on the museum. Arnold suggested that the VCB showcase a presentation of the museum, at the next scheduled Tourist Development Council meeting, and suggested establishing a survey, for the State Legislature, on museum location to be established in St. Johns County.

13. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting was scheduled for February 5, 2024.

14. ADJOURN

With there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 3:53 p.m.

Approved _____, 2024

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: _____
Chair

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

By: _____
Deputy Clerk