



**Minutes of Meeting
Tourist Development Council
St. Johns County, Florida
County Administration Building
500 San Sebastian View
St. Augustine, Florida 32084
April 21, 2025 - 1:30 p.m.**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Kass called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Present: Irving Kass, District 2, Chair
Troy Blevins, District 5, Vice Chair
Regina G. Phillips, District 2
Krista Joseph, BCC Representative
Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor, City of St. Augustine Representative
Dylan Rumrell, Mayor, St. Augustine Beach City Commission, Seat 2
Charles Cox, District 3
Michael Gordon, District 4

Absent: Michael Wicks, District 4

Staff Present: Dena Masters, Senior Tourist Development Council Program Specialist
Jesse Dunn, Deputy County Administrator
Lex Taylor, Deputy County Attorney
Artricia Allen, Deputy Clerk

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Kass led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

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

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

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

Nay: None

Absent: Wicks

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Rumrell, seconded by Cox, carried 8/0, with Wicks absent, to approve the minutes for the March 10, 2025, meeting, as submitted.

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

Nay: None

Absent: Wicks

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

7. REVENUE ANALYSIS REPORT

Masters provided the details of the revenue analysis report.

Discussion ensued on the Airbnb breakdown, the year bed taxes increased, trends compared to previous years, the amount of Tourist Development dollars spent per zip code, and peak season.

Dunn provided additional information on how the funds were appropriated by category and noted that collections could be monitored by zip code. He also stated that the trending amount was 2.5 percent higher than the previous year and would continue to be monitored through the budget process.

8. SPORTS TOURISM GRANT POLICY

Masters provided an overview of the project and introduced Teddy Meyer, Parks and Recreation Facility Manager, who presented details on the sports tourism grant policy update. Discussion ensued on excluding groups from funding if their events involved hotel stays outside St. Johns County as part of the evaluation process and on making videos and logos accessible to groups before submitting their grant applications.

Blevins informed the council that he had attended the Parks and Recreation workshop.

Public Comment: There was none.

Motion by Rumrell, seconded by Cox, carried 8/0 to approve the sports tourism grant policy, with item E, including hotels in St. Johns County, to know the application requirements upfront, as amended.

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

Nay: None

Absent: Wicks

9. NIGHTS OF LIGHTS UPDATE/DISCUSSION

Kass introduced David Birchim, City of St. Augustine Manager, who provided an update on the Nights of Lights event.

Discussion ensued on the presentation, noting that shuttle trips mirrored those of 2019 in terms of the number of people, differences between now and 2019, including the placement of staging stations for trash, the Smart Path systems, and staging areas for the medical and police departments to improve response times, hotel stays being the same as the previous year, managing local residents, having the project extended out, upcoming challenges related to the King Street bridge closure, and the timing of crosswalk lights near the Hilton. Birchim addressed the Council's concerns, mentioning plans to post a traffic guard, shuttle stops, keep the parking garage closed once occupancy reached its limit near the 200-car threshold, concentrate parking, enhance traffic controls on the north end, and manage pedestrian traffic on San Marco.

Chief Carlos Aviles of the St. Augustine Fire Department provided additional information on transport, future turnaround times, and the station's current workforce shortage.

Kass presented on the Nights of Lights, highlighting logistics and parking, operation and experience, and marketing and communication. He proposed extending the event to 78 days, suggesting that it could generate additional funding, positively impact the economy, and benefit both the community and visitors.

Dunn responded that although public safety expenses were generally not eligible for Tourist Development Tax (TDT) funding, they would be considered as the project progressed. Taylor suggested that they would look into defining it as an event versus day-to-day operations and clarified the Tourist Development Council's (TDC) role as an advisory board and providing technical support. He noted there were no new court cases permitting the use of TDT funds for public safety or event funding. He indicated that the City's request for additional parking days and event coverage could be funded through TDT.

Discussion ensued on collaborating with staff on funding, developing a local incentives and promotional plan, creating an active working plan, bus lanes, making permitting changes, park and ride incentives, and addressing more complex challenges related to the mobility plan.

Public Comment:

Steven Layt spoke in support of the Nights of Lights event and expressed concerns about residents' experiences downtown. He suggested a more substantial police presence and the implementation of street closures.

Tom Day expressed concerns about resident safety and suggested hiring the Red Jacket program.

Martha Mickler expressed safety concerns, thanked the Council for thinking of the event, and looked forward to helping with a solution.

Discussion ensued on safety concerns and how to fund safety without becoming a taxpayer burden.

MONTHLY REPORTS PROVIDED IN PACKETS

Susan Phillips, President of the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and The Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau (VCB) provided the VCB monthly report. She highlighted the upcoming State of the Tourism event on May 8th at the Embassy Suites in St Augustine Beach, noting that the advertising agency would be available to speak with the Council at this event and the Save The Summer campaigning event.

Jeff Potts, Executive Director of the Cultural Council, provided details of the St. Johns Cultural Council product development, highlighted grant funding events, and provided monthly cultural plan reports. He also responded to questions regarding the James Beard Foundation.

10. MEMBER COMMENTS

Rumrell thanked Masters for her new role on the Tourist Development Council (TDC) and offered to support the Mayor with Nights of Lights in any way he could. He announced the ribbon cutting for Fort Mose on May 9, 2025, and invited the Council to attend.

Sikes-Kline requested a report on how data is collected by zip code with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and asked for more granular reporting and flexibility in reporting it to the Council.

Blevins suggested that staff use the keyword "Exhibits" for events to help expand the city's efforts.

Phillips reported on the 130th Anniversary of the Excelsior High School construction project.

Cox advised reaching out to David and the City to move the Nights of Lights project forward and address any necessary concerns to serve visitors and residents better.

Gordon thanked the Council and staff for their efforts during the TDC meeting.

Joseph thanked the Council for the TDC meeting, progress, and steps moving forward.

Dunn formally announced that Dena Masters would be the Tourism Council Executive conducting the meetings. Masters thanked the Council and looked forward to working with the council members.

Dunn also informed the Council that the Budget workshops would be held during May.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

Kass stated that the next meeting was scheduled for May 19, 2025. He referred to the "five buckets" or "five different seasons" concept and expressed interest in further workshopping the idea at the May 19th meeting. He explained that if the concept proved valuable, it could help Susan develop the 2026 marketing plan in collaboration with the agency. If the idea lacked merit, it would be set aside. Kass noted that initial feedback had been positive and showed enthusiasm for exploring the potential of using the five buckets to create microbrands.

12. ADJOURN

With there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 4:04 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