



Minutes of Meeting
Tourist Development Council
St. Johns County, Florida
County Administration Building
500 San Sebastian View
St. Augustine, Florida 32084
February 23, 2026 - 1:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Present: Troy Blevins, District 5, Vice Chair
Regina G. Phillips, District 2
Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor, City of St. Augustine Representative
Beth Sweeney, Mayor, St. Augustine Beach City Commission, Seat 2
Michael Wicks, District 4
Charles Cox, District 3
Michael Gordon, District 4

Absent: Irving Kass, District 2, Chair
Sarah Arnold, BCC Representative

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

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Blevins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Sweeny, seconded by Cox, carried 7/0, with Arnold and Kass absent, to approve the Agenda, as submitted.

Yea: Blevins, Cox, Gordon, Phillips, Sikes-Kline, Sweeny, Wicks

Nay: None

Absent: Arnold, Kass

5. SELECTION OF NEW CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

L. Taylor reviewed the procedures and process for selecting the chair and vice chair. Blevins called for nominations for chair and vice chair.

Public Comment: There was none.

Motion by Sweeny, seconded by Gordon, carried 7/0, with Arnold and Kass absent, nominating Troy Blevins as Chair.

Yea: Blevins, Cox, Gordon, Phillips, Sikes-Kline, Sweeny, Wicks

Nay: None

Absent: Arnold, Kass

Motion by Phillips, seconded by Gordon, carried 7/0, with Arnold and Kass absent, nominating Charles Cox as vice chair.

Yea: Blevins, Cox, Gordon, Phillips, Sikes-Kline, Sweeny, Wicks

Nay: None

Absent: Arnold, Kass

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Phillips, seconded by Sweeny, carried 7/0, with Arnold and Kass absent, to approve the minutes for the November 17, 2025, meeting, as submitted.

Yea: Blevins, Cox, Gordon, Phillips, Sikes-Kline, Sweeny, Wicks

Nay: None

Absent: Arnold, Kass

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Sandra Parks spoke on the history of the Tourism Development Act, highlighting the collaboration among the hospitality, arts, and county sectors, and urged the Council to fulfill the original promised funding whenever making tourism budget decisions.

Joe Kistel highlighted the economic benefits of fishing and diving in Florida and proposed using advanced underwater filming to showcase St. Johns County's artificial reefs for conservation and tourism promotion.

8. ST. JOHNS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESENTATION

Isabelle Renault, President and CEO of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, presented the details of the Ponte Vedra Culture and Heritage website and introduced Chris Norman, who spoke on the history of Culture and Heritage and displayed a video.

Alex Barr, Community Engagement Coordinator for the Public Library System, expressed gratitude for the feature in “Explore Ponte Vedra” and highlighted upcoming monthly mobile visitor pop-ups to promote culture, heritage, and the arts.

Berta Owen spoke in support of the Ponte Vedra website and venue for showcasing the community’s attractions, highlighting the opportunities to promote local businesses without focusing on rankings.

Discussion ensued on the Ponte Vedra Naturally website's development and promotion, including visitor access, marketing strategies, and partnerships with Guana Tolomato Matanzas Research Reserve, and tracking website impacts on tourism.

9. SPORTS TOURISM GRANT APPROVALS

- Ancient City Redfish Bash, \$2,500 recommended
- Southern Pickleball Association, Inc., - St. Augustine Shamrock Smash, \$2,200 recommended
- St. Augustine Race Week 2026, \$7,500 recommended
- Advanced Sports Media Group - St. Augustine Spring Classic, \$1,563 recommended
- Veritas Pickleball Tournament presented by Holey Ballz!, \$2,000 recommended
- Jacksonville Football Club Battle at the Beach Soccer, \$1,500 recommended
- St. Augustine Boating Club Annual Fishing Tournament, \$670 recommended
- Game On! Ponte Vedra Beach Triathlon, \$4,000 recommended
- Old School Kingfish Shootout, \$22,500 recommended
- Game On! St. Augustine Triathlon-Summer, \$4,000 recommended
- Florida Elite Soccer Pre-Season Girls and Boys Invitational Tournament, \$11,250 recommended
- 2026 Ancient City Karate Championship, \$3,573 recommended
- AJGA The Junior Players Championship, \$9,375 recommended
- Jacksonville Football Club, Labor Day Shootout, \$3,000 recommended

Jaime Baccari, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director, presented the details of the grant requests.

Discussion ensued regarding funding for two youth sport events, highlighting concerns about event titles, identical hotel stay counts, duplicate applications, and perceived inaccuracies. The Council members expressed their positions on the requests.

Public Comment:

Donna France requested that the Council restore funding for the Ancient City Redfish Tournament to last year’s level, highlighting the organization’s long contributions to local tournaments and community events.

Blevins suggested reallocating funds from the lower-funded Battle of the Beach event to the Ancient City Redfish Bash.

Motion by Wicks, seconded by Phillips, carried 7/0, with Arnold and Kass absent, to recommend that the Board of County Commissioners approve the Sports Tourism Grants for fiscal year 2026, with the exception of removing the lower-funded Jacksonville Football Club application and reallocating those funds to the Ancient City Redfish Bash.

Yea: Blevins, Cox, Gordon, Phillips, Sikes-Kline, Sweeny, Wicks

Nay: None

Absent: Arnold, Kass

Public Comment:

Donna France thanked the Council and staff for their support.

10. FISCAL YEAR 2027 ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE (ACH) GRANT GUIDELINES RECOMMENDATION

Brenda Swann, St. Johns County Cultural Council Executive Director, presented the grant guidelines and stated that the reports were included in the agenda packet.

Discussion ensued on minor revisions to the grant scoring, including refining peak-period rules with the new provision that would allow events during peak periods to avoid a 5-point deduction if they add a Thursday or Monday stay to encourage additional weeknight hotel occupancy.

Public Comment: There was none.

Motion by Cox, seconded by Gordon, carried 7/0, with Arnold and Kass absent, to approve ACH Grant Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2027, as presented.

Yea: Blevins, Cox, Gordon, Phillips, Sikes-Kline, Sweeny, Wicks

Nay: None

Absent: Arnold, Kass

11. MONTHLY REPORTS PROVIDED IN PACKETS

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

Susan Phillips, President and Chief Executive Officer of the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and the Beaches Visitors Convention Bureau, presented the monthly report for the Visitors and Convention Bureau, noting that the Nights of Lights study would be presented at the March 16, 2026, meeting, highlighting St. Johns County's involvement in America 250 celebration events that St. Johns County would be included in the production of. She provided a recap of the Fiscal Year 2026 St. Johns County Day at the Capitol.

Discussion ensued on advertising campaigns targeting families, the designation of the first annual St. Johns County Day, state tourism spending, and analytics on vacation rental tax growth and compliance. Sikes-Kline also noted an exhibit opening at the Visitors and Convention Bureau on March 8, 2026, with Council members to be invited.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Gordon congratulated Blevins and Cox on their appointments as chair and vice-chair.

12. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting was scheduled for March 16, 2026.

13. ADJOURN

With no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Approved _____, 2026

TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: _____
Troy Blevins, Chair

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

By: _____
Deputy Clerk