



Minutes of Meeting
Tourist Development Council
St. Johns County, Florida
County Administration Building
500 San Sebastian View
St. Augustine, Florida 32084
March 16, 2026 - 1:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Present: Troy Blevins, District 5, Chair
Charles Cox, District 3, Vice Chair
Irving Kass, District 2
Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor, City of St. Augustine Representative
Michael Gordon, District 4

Absent: Sarah Arnold, BCC Representative
Beth Sweeny, Mayor, St. Augustine Beach City Commission, Seat 2
Michael Wicks, District 4
Regina G. Phillips, District 2

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

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Blevins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Masters called the roll.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Cox, seconded by Kass, carried 5/0, with Phillips, Arnold, Sweeny, and Wicks absent, to approve the Agenda, as submitted.

Yea: Blevins, Cox, Kass, Sikes-Kline, Gordon

Nay: None

Absent: Phillips, Arnold, Sweeny, Wicks

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Cox, seconded by Kass, carried 6/0, with Arnold, Sweeny, and Wicks absent, to approve the minutes for February 2, 2026, workshop and February 23, 2026, regular meeting, as submitted.

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

Nay: None

Absent: Arnold, Sweeny, Wicks

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

7. SING OUT LOUD 2025 REVIEW UPDATE

Diana Mzrkovits, Director of Public Relations and Partnerships for St. Johns County Cultural Events, presented an update on the 2025 Sing Out Loud review and future strategy discussion.

Discussion ensued on no events being held at Frances Field in September, while activities would continue throughout the month. Questions were raised about budget impacts, funding carryovers, and the potential use of funds for marketing. Council members supported increasing local promotion of the event and discussed scheduling, venue selection, and application processes.

8. ST. JOHNS CULTURAL COUNCIL UPDATES

Jeff Potts, Director of the Cultural Council, presented an update on the Arts, Heritage, and Culture Grant Scoring criteria and the Black Heritage Trail.

Discussion ensued on peak tourism periods, and adjustments were made to encourage extended events on lower-demand days. Appreciation was expressed for the director's incorporating of Fish Island into the theme and for adding the Frederick Douglass statue to the Black Heritage Trail.

9. SIGNATURE SEASONS INITIATIVE FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

Kass presented the details of the signature season initiative. Discussion ensued supporting the marketing strategy, emphasizing repeat visitation, event-driven promotion, and alignment with the arts to increase attendance.

10. MONTHLY REPORTS

Masters stated that the monthly reports were included in the agenda packet and presented the details of the reports. Discussion ensued on lodging data, raising questions about tracking room nights and occupancy rates to better assess performance, as well as obtaining more precise data from the tax collector, including breakdowns by municipality rather than zip code.

Susan Phillips, President and Chief Executive Officer of the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and the Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau, provided an update that a research firm would present studies on annual visitation and the Nights of Lights event, and displayed a video on the Florida Historic Coast. She also announced that annual tourism workshops would be held to gather stakeholder input, with findings to be shared the following month at the Tourist Development Council meeting.

MEMBER COMMENTS

Blevins introduced Melissa Wissel, City of St. Augustine Communication Director, who invited the community to the first annual St. Augustine Community Table event, to be held on March 27, 2026, in partnership with Flagler College and the St. Augustine Sister Cities Association (Exhibit A).

Blevins spoke on the “Park Bench History” proposal to honor St. Augustine’s 250th anniversary, inspired by the Frederick Douglass bench, featuring historical benches throughout the city. He emphasized engaging children through QR codes and audio storytelling and suggested phased funding. Discussion ensued on supporting public art, concerns about pulling from other history exhibits, kids’ engagement, and funding.

Public Comment:

Susan Phillips, President and Chief Executive Officer of the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and the Beaches Visitors Convention Bureau, spoke in support of the project and stated she would be available to assist.

Jeff Potts, Director of the St. Johns Cultural Council, spoke on slowing the pace to work with local artists and expressed interest in participating in site selection or connecting the Council with local artists.

Blevins requested that City of St. Augustine and County representatives, along with Potts, Phillips, or their delegates, participate in further discussions.

Gordon reported on the Professional Golfers Association Tour event in Ponte Vedra, highlighting high occupancy rates and favorable weather, and noted that preparations would begin for the following year.

Sikes-Kline highlighted the new Visitors Information Center exhibit on Irish roots, noted visitor interaction with the Frederick Douglass bench, and promoted the micro-space for future themed exhibits and local sites.

11. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting was scheduled for April 20, 2026.

12. ADJOURN

With no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 2:38 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