



Minutes of Meeting
Tourist Development Council
St. Johns County, Florida
County Administration Building
500 San Sebastian View
St. Augustine, Florida 32084
November 17, 2025 - 1:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Kass called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m.

Present: Irving Kass, District 2, Chair
Troy Blevins, District 5, Vice Chair
Regina G. Phillips, District 2
Clay Murphy, 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
Michael Gordon, District 4

Absent: Charles Cox, District 3

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

Kass led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

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

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

Yea: Rumrell, Blevins, Kass, Gordon, Phillips, Murphy, Sikes-Kline, Wicks

Nay: None

Absent: Cox

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Rumrell, seconded by Blevins, carried 8/0, with Cox absent, to approve the minutes for the October 20, 2025, meeting, as submitted.

Yea: Rumrell, Blevins, Kass, Gordon, Phillips, Murphy, Sikes-Kline, Wicks

Nay: None

Absent: Cox

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Melissa Wissel, City of St. Augustine Communication Director, expressed gratitude for the collaboration and funding efforts for Light Up the Night. She spoke on media coverage and the mobile app.

Discussion ensued on opening night, which ran smoothly and was well received, with plaza attendance estimated to be up 15 percent from last year and the new operational plan appearing effective.

Michael Cunningham, representing the Vilano Beach Main Street Community Association, requested \$25,000 in funding to support the New Year's Eve fireworks show. Although permits and approvals were in place, their usual CRA funding was unavailable this year.

Discussion ensued on the loss of CRA funding, when and how the change occurred, confusion caused by departmental shifts and staff turnover, and the timing and community expectations that warranted consideration. *Consensus was given to revisit the concerns later in the meeting after staff reviewed last year's appropriations and clarified the current funding situation.*

Dunn explained that Vilano Main Street agreed to absorb the \$25,000 fireworks cost within its existing Fiscal Year 2026 approved funding. He clarified that Main Street funding had increased year over year and that the perceived reduction stemmed from a one-time boost to the Arts, Culture, and Heritage program in the prior year, not from actual cuts, resulting in fireworks moving forward as planned.

7. SIGNATURE SEASONS FRAMEWORK INITIATIVE DISCUSSION

Kass presented background information and details on the Signature Seasons Framework initiative. Discussion ensued on funding and facilitation, noting there was no current budget, plans to proceed with volunteer facilitation while considering a future paid role, emphasizing inclusivity and stronger event coordination, and staff bringing back recommendations after further review.

Jeff Potts, Executive Director of St. Johns County Cultural Council, reported that the Cultural Council met with the tourism department and confirmed that the Signature Seasons work aligns with the council's five-year contract. He noted available resources to assist the Council and collaborate with tourism partners.

Motion by Wicks, seconded by Murphy, carried 8/0, with Cox absent, to schedule a time in January for a community workshop to discuss the Signature Seasons initiative in depth, gather further input, and determine the appropriate next steps for moving the initiative forward.

Yea: Rumrell, Blevins, Kass, Gordon, Phillips, Murphy, Sikes-Kline, Wicks

Nay: None

Absent: Cox

8. ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE (ACH) GRANT PROGRAM FISCAL YEAR 2027

Brenda Swann, St. Johns Cultural Council, presented the details of the Arts, Culture, and Heritage grant guidelines and timeline. Discussion ensued on base-peak periods, acknowledged changing demand patterns, and an interim approach aligned with seasonal marketing concepts. *Consensus was given to defer approval of the guidelines to a future meeting.*

Susan Phillips, President and Chief Executive Officer of the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and the Beaches Visitors Convention Bureau, reported that staff were awaiting direction, and could quickly analyze travel dates by geography to inform peak periods.

Public Comment: There was none.

9. VISTOR PROFILE QUARTERLY REPORT

Isiah Lewis, Downs and St. Germain Research Project Director, presented the details of the Downs and St. Germain Research quarterly report. Discussion ensued on the comparison on international travel, visitor studies, primary trip designation, and the inclusion of downtown St. Augustine hotels, with an emphasis on positioning the area as a destination.

Susan Phillips, President and Chief Executive Officer of the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and the Beaches Visitors Convention Bureau, explained that advertising studies were conducted based on budget and data needs. Discussion ensued on the value of frequent visitor and advertising studies to guide marketing decisions, evaluate the new advertising agency, and confirm visitor satisfaction while addressing data limitations and changing travel patterns.

10. FISCAL YEAR 2025 DESTINATION MARKETING EXPENDITURE UPDATE

Masters provided an overview of the destination marketing expenditures.

Susan Phillips, President and Chief Executive Officer of the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra, and the Beaches Visitors Convention Bureau, addressed a discrepancy caused by an uncommunicated midyear \$4.5 million budget reduction. Discussion ensued on restoring the \$4.5 million in the FY2026 budget, with Blevins opposed to reallocating reserve funds for the marketing contract before the mid-year adjustment, and suggesting revisiting the item during the mid-year budget adjustment season.

11. MONTHLY REPORTS PROVIDED IN PACKETS

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 TDT collection, the collaboration, and the VCB. Sikes-Kline thanked her for presenting the Nights of Lights to the City and for her continued efforts.

Jeff Potts, Executive Director of St. Johns County Cultural Council, provided an update, thanked Susan Phillips for highlighting work on the Black Heritage Trail, and noted its growing impact on legacy tourism. He also reported progress on the Art in Public Spaces program, including a master public art plan and expanded local art displays in the County building.

12. MEMBER COMMENTS

Wicks highlighted a tour of the Waterworks Building with Jeff Potts, commending team collaboration and noting the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall's growing community support, expanded programming, and increased membership in the Friends group.

Phillips spoke on the completion of construction preservation at Excelsior High School and highlighted a new privately funded event space intended to host programs in southern St. Augustine. She invited everyone to visit the museum and cultural center to see the project and upcoming events.

Sikes-Kline commented on her experience at the Tonight Show and congratulated the team on its efforts.

13. NEXT MEETING DATE

Masters stated that the next meeting was scheduled for February and that there would also be a workshop.

14. ADJOURN

With no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 3:53 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