

ST. JOHNS COUNTY
TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING
FEBRUARY 2, 2026, 9:00 AM
COUNTY AUDITORIUM

1. CALL TO ORDER – Irving Kass, Vice Chair
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. ROLL CALL
4. SIGNATURE SEASONS FRAMEWORK INITIATIVE WORKSHOP – Irving Kass
5. MEMBER COMMENTS
6. NEXT MEETING DATE – February 23, 2026
7. ADJOURN

SIGNATURE SEASONS

ST. AUGUSTINE ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH
PONTE VEDRA

COUNTYWIDE SIGNATURE SEASONS INITIATIVE

11/6/25

Prepared by Irving J. Kass

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Purpose & Mission

This initiative proposes the development of five significant, branded event periods throughout the year. Each Signature Season will be carefully curated to elevate St. Johns County's identity, strengthen its destination brand, and deliver a consistent, world-class guest experience.

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Prepared by Irving J. Kass

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Purpose & Mission

Continued

The mission of this Signature Season Initiative is to explore the best ways to support, coordinate, and elevate essential aspects of event development, incubation, planning, production, financing, and marketing. Through community input and collaboration with existing organizations, the initiative will identify how to enhance existing events and create new programming that meets the highest standards of quality, safety, and visitor experience.

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Prepared by Irving J. Kess

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Purpose & Mission

Continued

This work will be guided by broad community participation and close collaboration with the Visitors and Convention Bureau, the Cultural Council, St. Johns County Cultural Events, Inc., and tourism leadership. This approach ensures that communications, promotions, and programming reflect and strengthen a unified destination brand.

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Prepared by Irving J. Kess

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Purpose & Mission

Continued

By focusing on Signature Seasons and building strong, inclusive partnerships, St. Johns County will continue to position itself as a leader in world-class destination experiences.

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Prepared by Irving J. Kiss

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Collaborative Framework & Alignment

During this development phase, the Signature Season Initiative will rely on input and feedback from the community and key partners, including:

- St. Johns County Cultural Events, Inc.
 - Visitors and Convention Bureau
 - Cultural Council of St. Johns County
- Local event organizers and nonprofit partners
 - County, City and Beach Administrations
 - Tourist Development Council
 - Community Leaders

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Prepared by Irving J. Kiss

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Collaborative Framework & Alignment continued

The purpose of this phase is not to alter or affect any existing county agreements, contracts, or governance structures. Instead, it is to ensure that Signature Seasons are developed in a manner that supports, enhances, and aligns with current agreements and operations.

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Collaborative Framework & Alignment continued

No changes will be proposed without comprehensive consultation and input from affected parties. The initiative will work collaboratively to ensure that messaging, branding, logistics, and programming support the county's broader destination strategy.

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Event Development & Tourism Stabilization

Each of the Signature Seasons is envisioned to span approximately 70 days, producing sustained opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy curated programming. This structure is designed to stabilize tourism by spreading demand throughout the year and reducing reliance on peak periods.

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Prepared by Irving J. Kass

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Event Development & Tourism Stabilization Continued

There are hundreds of events that take place countywide. As the initiative advances, existing events will be evaluated for potential alignment within each Signature Season, with the goal of amplifying visibility, strengthening marketing, and enhancing overall consistency.

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Event Development & Tourism Stabilization Continued

This process will be fully collaborative and will not alter how current partners plan or operate their events. Instead, the goal is to position events within a unified marketing and branding framework that benefits all stakeholders.

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Signature Seasons

American Legacy & Heritage

Love of the Arts

Living the Outdoors

Sing Out Loud/Hispanic Heritage Alive

Nights of Lights

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Seasons Calendar

AL&H: Mid January - March

LOTA: April - June

LTO: July & August

SOL/HHC: September - Mid November

NOL: Mid November - Mid January

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American Legacy & Heritage

St. Johns County will come alive with history, culture, music, and community. By weaving together the MLK Celebration, the Fort Mose Jazz & Blues Series, African American and Women History Months, we create a powerful season of programming that honors the diverse stories shaping our county. Linking these commemorations under one umbrella elevates their visibility, deepens public engagement, and celebrates the legacy of our heritage.

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Love of the Arts

St. Johns County is home to extraordinary artists, musicians, and creatives, along with a cultural history that deserves to be celebrated. This season will highlight our vibrant arts scene, galleries, performances, festivals, and heritage events, while honoring the traditions that shaped our community. By designing programs that welcome and inspire younger audiences, we will cultivate the next generation of art lovers and ensure that our creative legacy thrives well into the future.

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Living the Outdoors

From the Guana River to the Bartram Trail, our county offers a wealth of natural beauty and outdoor experiences. This season would showcase our unique landscapes—estuaries, trails, waterways, beaches and wildlife—inviting visitors and residents alike to explore and appreciate the who are focused on outdoor recreation and conservation, we can attract broad support while also fostering local pride and participation. This approach not only boosts tourism but also strengthens our community's connection to the natural world.

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Sing Out Loud Hispanic/Latino Heritage Alive

Expand from a concentrated two-week festival into a full ten-week season, positioning music as a cornerstone of St. Johns County's brand. Add Hispanic/Latino Heritage with vibrant celebrations of the roots, rhythms, and flavors that shape our identity. From the journeys of Ponce de León to the global influence of Jennifer Lopez, this season spans history, music, and cuisine. Anchored by Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15), Founders Day (September 6), and culinary experiences like Flavors of St. Augustine, creating a multi-layered celebration of sound, culture, and cuisine.

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Nights of Lights

Maintain and build upon the current momentum while our community develops recommendations for the season's long-term vision, growth, and sustainability. This approach ensures that Nights of Lights continues to enchant visitors and residents alike while evolving thoughtfully for the future.

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Leadership, Participation & Input Process

During the development phase, a designated facilitator will coordinate meetings, gather community input, and guide the planning process. Responsibilities will include:

- Conducting listening sessions with community stakeholders
- Facilitating meetings with VCB, Cultural Council, and Cultural Events, Inc.
 - Developing draft management models for review
- Ensuring that all work respects and preserves current county agreements
 - Building consensus on the most effective long-term management approach
 - Creating an interim board

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Qualifications for the Facilitator

- Significant world class event experience, including planning & logistics
 - Ability to work across multiple organizations, respecting existing governance
 - Strategic vision for destination development and branded events
- Economic impact focus, with emphasis on local business and workforce participation
 - Strong communication and collaboration skills
 - Understanding of destination branding and message coordination

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Opportunity & Responsibility

Through this collaborative, exploratory process, St. Johns County has a unique opportunity to:

- Create year-round economic and employment opportunities
- Identify a unified approach to event branding and promotion
- Strengthen the county's identity through five distinct Signature Seasons
 - Develop a management model that enhances operations without modifying or interfering with existing agreements
- Build stronger connections between residents, visitors, and the cultural and natural assets of the county

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Next Steps and Immediate Priorities

- Launch a structured community engagement process to gather input and refine the long-term vision for the Signature Seasons initiative.
- Determine the most effective management approach for the initiative without altering any existing county agreements.

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Next Steps and Immediate Priorities

Continued

- Develop a comprehensive seasonal branding framework to be integrated into the County's Marketing Plan, with full implementation targeted for the 2027 plan cycle.
- Align messaging and communication efforts across partners including the VCB, Cultural Council, Cultural Events, Inc., and event organizers, while maintaining current operational structures.

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Next Steps and Immediate Priorities

Continued

- Update the 2027 grant program guidelines to encourage alignment with Signature Seasons for funding requests above a defined threshold.
- Prepare a 2027 zero-based budget for Signature Seasons implementation to be presented alongside the seasonal marketing strategy for TDC review

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