Tryon Tourism Development Authority
Minutes
September 8, 2025
4:30 P.M.

Chairman Mason-Freeman called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm at the Tryon Town Hall with three members present. A fourth member, John Vining arrived at 4:53 pm. Steven Siler left early at 5:34 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Maria Mason-Freeman, Chairman; John Vining, Vice-Chairman; Steven Siler; and Jennifer Mathews

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bill Crowell, Tryon BOC Rep; and Melanie Jackson;

STAFF PRESENT: Meg Rogers, Secretary; Lourdes Gutierrez, Tryon Downtown Development Association (TDDA) Downtown Director; &Tracey Daniels, Website/Social Media Contractor

Welcome New Member Jennifer Mathews
Chairman Mason-Freeman welcomed new member Jennifer Mathews. Members introduced themselves to Mathews.

Officer Elections
Mason-Freeman nominated Steven Siler for Chairman. Mathews seconded the nomination. Nominations were closed. Steven Siler was elected Chairman by a vote of 3 to 0.

Siler nominated Maria Mason-Freeman for Vice-Chairman. Mathews seconded the nomination. Nominations were closed. Maria Mason-Freeman was elected Vice-Chairman by a vote of 3 to 0.

Siler nominated Meg Rogers for Secretary. Mason-Freeman seconded the nomination. Nominations were closed. Meg Rogers was elected Chairman by a vote of 3 to 0.

Approve Minutes from August 4, 2025
Minutes from the August 4, 2025 regular meeting were reviewed. Mason-Freeman made a motion to approve the August 4, 2025 regular meeting minutes as presented. Siler seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

Approve Financial Report for August 2025
The Tryon Tourism Development Fund FY 2025-2026 financial report August 2025 was reviewed.

As of August 31,2025, FY 2025-2026 Total Revenue was $4,514.46 (18.06% of Budgeted Total Revenues), Total Expenditures were $4,046.79 (16.19% of Budgeted Total Expenditures), and (Unaudited) Ending Cash Balance was $45,907.69.

Gutierrez reported that the $14,500 allocated in FY 2024-2025 for the electronic interactive kiosk but not yet spent would need to be pulled from Tryon Tourism Development fund balance in FY 2025-2026 for that purchase. The electronic kiosk would be welded to the existing Maple Street Plaza information kiosk frame. The similar interactive kiosk from the same company at the Nina Simone Plaza was not currently in service due to lack of funding for software and hosting support from the Nina Simone Project organization and Meridian was concerned about that installation's unpaid subscription fees balance. Gutierrez stated she would contact Polk County Tourism Director Melinda Massey about

helping to fund the Nina Simone Plaza kiosk operating costs. Gail Awan told the Authority that she had heard that a local organization had offered to provide financial support for the Nina Simone Plaza kiosk.

Mason-Freeman wanted the Authority to pursue a meeting with Melinda Massey regarding procedures for requesting marketing funds for events and attractions in Tryon. Per Daniels, Massey would not approve funding for the ExploreTryon website management/updates. Daniels reported that the county-wide Polk County TDA approval by the NC Legislature fell through.

Mason-Freeman made a motion to approve the August 2025 financial report as presented. Siler seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

Saluda Grade Trail Update

Gutierrez reported that Town Manager Jim Fatland had been appointed as a representative on the design committee for the Saluda Grade Trail segment in South Carolina and was working to get the segment from Inman SC to the NC/SC state line extended through downtown Tryon to the Lockhart Road railroad crossing for the South Carolina segment design plan. This would help Tryon benefit sooner since the southern portion of the trail would likely be completed earlier than the northern section in North Carolina from Tryon to Zirconia. The Saluda Grade Trail Organization was working to expedite settling the legal claims of property owners along the trail's right-of-way. The Town of Tryon had hired landscape architect Mark Byington to work on a design for the greenspace between Morris the Tryon Horse and the Nina Simone Plaza to add shade structures, family-friendly green space and possibly a music event stage along that area. Siler mentioned that the Saluda Grade Trail design would probably include a bridge over US 176 in Tryon for the safety of trail pedestrians and cyclists.

Website & Social Media

Tracey Daniels distributed and briefly went over her printed report.

Social Media Status Report-ExploreTryon Facebook Page (last 30 days unless noted)

- ExploreTryon Facebook page had approximately 8000 followers with no paid ads or pushes to build follower base.
- 8-10 posts per week. Chairman Siler asked if reels could be posted to the social media. Daniels stated there was insufficient funding for time/staff to produce effective reels for the social media. Daniels agreed that more video would improve social media effectiveness.
- Most Liked Posts:
  - Floral Design Workshop
  - Mirrorball post from ET: "All are invited: celebrate TDB award recognition"
  - 4th Friday in August (8/19): received 7,000+ views (fueled by Tryon Dog Mayor and Tryon Mayor-Purr-Tem Cat elections)

Website Update

- Worked on SEO for business listings, wording updates. Daniels was disappointed in the lack of active participation and support from local businesses in this process.
- Interviewed three different website design companies, submitting Big Boom proposal for consideration. RFPs were sent to five companies. Two proposals/bids were submitted. One bid was for $16,000+ and the other was for $13,725. The proposal from Big Boom to do redesign for ExploreTryon.com and Tryon-NC.com for a total estimated cost quote of $13,725.00 was distributed and reviewed by the Authority members. It was suggested that the

Town of Tryon government website revisions were more extensive that the updates for the Tryon Tourism website and that the Tourism Development funds contributed to the project should be less than the portion paid by the Tryon General Fund. Daniels suggested eliminating a few expense items from the quote (such as hosting fees and blog spot) to reduce the total cost, but with the Town and Tourism Development paying equal shares of the reduced cost. Mason-Freeman made a motion that the Tryon Tourism Development Authority authorize up to $6,500 toward the website update project with the Town of Tryon paying the remainder of the cost to update the two websites. Motion was seconded by Mathews. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

- Added new business Fox and Kit
- Added new rental host John Wilkins AirBnB

Miscellaneous

- Answered 7 incoming travel tourism e-mail questions and referred along to direct contacts
- Reminder: OUR STATE re Tryon December toy feature article on Wednesday, August 5, 2025
- **TRYON POUR TOUR**–Designed plan, worked with graphic artist regarding the logo design, wrote letters for outreach – hoping to launch in early October, but not on 4th Friday, should be stand-alone event; will promote with postcards, stickers, and more at BeerFest. Daniels distributed updated logo designs with suggestions to replace some beer-related images with wine images, grapes for mane instead of hops, etc. and a shield-shaped version for lapel stickers for participants. Passport promotion was discussed briefly, but Tryon Tourism Development lacked funds for extensive printed materials to do this now. However, online interface tracking with social media, website tools and QR codes to collect number of visits per participant for sticker awards and small gifts could be feasible. Award program could grow with the growth of the Pour Tour participation. Possible awards and marketing slogans were discussed briefly. Pour Tour logo could be trademarked. Royalties for local merchants to use the trademark for merchandise they sold could fund the awards program. Daniels noted that if Tryon developed a "Non-Alcoholic" Pour Tour in the future, that would be unique in North Carolina and could attract a different market segment to downtown. The Pour Tour would be a permanent part of the ExploreTryon social media, website, downtown kiosk and other ongoing marketing. Daniels recommended considering funding for marketing the Tryon Pour Tour during BeerFest at the October meeting.
- **Food & Travel magazine ad opportunity** –Daniels presented an opportunity to advertise in the monthly print publication Food & Travel Magazine (market distribution 37,000 in southeast US) at a discounted rate for the Fall 2025 issue. Ad would cost $1000 for a one-page ad. It was noted that Fall was usually busy in this area without additional advertising, and advertising to attract visitors during slow season could be more effective economically. Other pros and cons were discussed. Methods to track magazine ad effectiveness were discussed. The ad could stimulate social media traffic and address downtown businesses' requests for tourism marketing benefitting them directly. Daniels and Gutierrez would work with magazine staff on ad layout. Mason-Freeman made a motion to allocate $1000 for the Food & Travel one-page ad contingent on having the plans and marketing logo for the Pour Tour ready to be promoted in the ad. Mathews seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 3 to 0.

SWOT Analysis Update – Work Plan Discussion
No discussion.

Other

Locally-Filmed Movie Premiere – Locally filmed movie would premiere at the 2025 Tryon International Film Festival (TRIFF 2025). Possibility of additional local showings of the film was discussed briefly.

NC Main Street Storytelling Tips – Gutierrez reported that a North Carolina Main Street (NCMS) workshop was recently held in Tryon to develop NCMS participants' skills in telling their community's story in marketing and promotion. The workshop included interviewing key people about why they chose to come to Tryon and what they loved about their local businesses. TDDA Director Gutierrez was preparing to post these interviews on ExploreTryon.com and TDDA's TryonDowntown.org websites. Another storytelling project, Makers on Main, would be posted on the TDDA's website featuring the art and craft galleries and studios in downtown Tryon.

TDDA BeerFest – Gutierrez briefly updated the Authority briefly on how the TDDA's annual BeerFest event had a dedicated group of volunteers and long-term partnerships with sponsors. BeerFest would not be asking for advertising funds from Tourism Authority this year, but wanted to help tell Tryon's story and help promote the Pour Tour by distributing any available Pour Tour promotional materials to event participants.

Confirm Date for Next Regular Meeting
The next regular meeting of the Tryon Tourism Development Authority was scheduled for Monday, October 6, 2025 at 4:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Room.

Adjourn
Vining made a motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Mathews. Meeting was adjourned at 6:05 pm.

Prepared by

Meg Rogers

Meg Rogers
Secretary

Approved:

Steven Siler
Chairman