Tryon Tourism Development Authority
Minutes
January 5, 2026
4:30 P.M.

Chairman Siler called the meeting to order at 4:35 pm at the Tryon Town Hall with five members present.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steven Siler, Chairman; and Bill Crowell, Tryon BOC Rep; John Vining; Melanie Jackson; and Jennifer Mathews

MEMBERS ABSENT: Maria Mason-Freeman, Vice-Chairman

STAFF PRESENT: Meg Rogers, Secretary; Lourdes Gutierrez, Tryon Downtown Development Association (TDDA) Downtown Director; and Tracey Daniels, Website and Social Media Management Contractor (arrived 5:15 pm)

Approve Minutes from December 1, 2025

Minutes from the December 1, 2025 regular meeting were reviewed. Revisions to first draft section about the Saluda Grade Trail Update requested by John Vining prior to the meeting were included in the printed draft reviewed at the meeting. Jackson made a motion to approve the updated December 1, 2025 regular meeting minutes as presented. Siler seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

Approve Financial Report for November 2025

The Tryon Tourism Development Fund FY 2025-2026 financial report for November 2025 was reviewed.

As of November 30 ,2025, FY 2025-2026 Total Revenue was $9,871.57 (21.46% of Budgeted Total Revenues), Total Expenditures were $10,726.38 (23.32% of Budgeted Total Expenditures), and (Unaudited) Ending Cash Balance was $44,452.81.

Chairman Siler asked when the revenue for item "Transfer from Fund Balance" which showed $0.00 in the Actual column in the November 2025 financial report would be showing in the Actual column. The question would be relayed to Town Manager Fatland and Town Clerk Emily Dale for response.

Gutierrez, Chairman Siler and Vining discussed trending short-term rental room rates. Chairman Siler would check on the latest rates. Gutierrez reported that Mimosa Inn was currently doing more long-term rentals and fewer short-term rentals.

Vining made a motion to approve the Financial Report for November 2025 as presented. Crowell seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

Pour Tour Official Launch Plan

Gutierrez reported that the proposed Pour Tour Launch date originally proposed for January had been postponed due to concerns regarding cold weather. New Launch date was moved to March 2026 with exact date to be determined later. The proposed Pour Tour completion gifts, the metal tumblers with the Pour Tour logo were discussed. Gutierrez had obtained quotes for orders of 16 oz or 18 oz tumblers with custom logo at prices ranging from $5.63 to $8.12 per cup with minimum order quantities of 50 to 120 depending on the supplier. Turn-around time for orders of the tumblers was approximately 10 days.

Food & Travel Magazine ran the Tryon PourTour ad that was designed by Gutierrez, Tracey Daniels and Tim Daniels on page 76 of the 2025 Special Holiday Issue. Chairman Siler asked that a .pdf scan of the ad be sent to the members of the Tourism Authority.

Saluda Grade Trail Update

Gutierrez had attended recent Trails Planning Committee meeting where the McCown Street Park redesign by landscape architect Mark Byington was discussed. The proposed plan might require permission from Conserving Carolina to move the trail over slightly from the actual track location to permit more room for the park design. Conserving Carolina trail development feasibility study was in process for demolition of existing tracks on the trail, but details were not discussed at the meeting. Adjoining attractions close to the Saluda Grade Trail were discussed briefly and included the McCown Street Greenway Park, Nina Simone Plaza, Nina Simone Childhood Home, and Morris the Tryon Horse. Revision of the McCown Street parking to reverse slant parking design had been suggested. The trail organization was in talks with NC Department of Transportation regarding traffic slowing measures for locations where the trail would cross US Highway 176. Gutierrez was in touch with the National Trust group coordinating the Nina Simone Childhood Home development. Gutierrez had spoken with the Nina Simone Project representative regarding the Nina Simone Plaza Kiosk being out of service.

Website & Social Media

Tracey Daniels reported:

Website Redesign Update

- Daniels had been working with Big Boom, the contractor doing the redesign for the Town of Tryon and ExploreTryon websites. A meeting was scheduled on January 7, 2026 with Tim Daniels, Tracey Daniels and the Big Boom staff. New website was projected to launch in two to four weeks.
- A history of the Tryon Midnight event was requested to be included in the ExploreTryon website content. Some remembrances of the early occurrences involving Chris Tinkler, Bill Crowell, Dean Trakas and George Alley were discussed briefly. Daniels reported that the "Tryon Midnight" was already branded and promoted by the Town of Tryon and Tryon Downtown Development Association (TDDA). Ten or more years ago, the event planners sent press releases to National News outlets designating Tryon Midnight as the first New Year's Eve ball drop on the East Coast that year.
- Rogers asked for a printable handout with information on Morris the Horse, his history and why he was the trademark for the Town of Tryon. Ideally, this information should be accessible on the ExploreTryon website. This information had frequently been requested by visitors and new residents at the Town Hall and the Museum/Visitors Center.

Pour Tour Launch Considerations Comments

- Some participating Pour Tour businesses were scheduled to be closed for part of the month of January 2026 and ThrowBax had a new owner. Delaying the launch until March was recommended. Participating businesses did not want to combine the launch event with a 4th Friday event because they considered Saturday a better day for their patrons.

Other

Tryon Midnight – Gutierrez asked for any new ideas for the 2026-2027 Tryon Midnight New Year's Eve event. The event was held at 9 pm at one time, but had been moved to 10 pm for the ball drop because the restaurants preferred the later time to attract more attendees.

Polk County Economic & Tourism Development Commission (ETDC) Report – Chairman Siler distributed marketing study handouts from a recent Polk County ETDC meeting with demographics and economic impact information. Numbers looked good but it was not clear how this data translated into dollars spent locally. Siler had asked Polk County Tourism Director Melinda Massey about process to request funds for tourism marketing from the County's occupancy tax fund, but was told there was no process for requesting funds. Polk County Tourism funds could only be used for occasional help with tourism advertising. Polk County Tourism recently ran ads to "Rediscover Polk County" in Columbia and Charleston. Polk County was doing no advertising in the Tennessee market. Jackson reported that Asheville & Polk County Yonder vacation rentals rarely had customers from Tennessee. Most customers came from the coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia.

Tryon PR Package – The Authority discussed the development of Tryon's own promotion package to promote tourism online with concentric reach including social media and the new ExploreTryon website. Mathews mentioned online templates were available for promotional packages. Gutierrez mentioned a branding package available for this purpose as well. Historic, current and potential future promotional ideas and festivals were discussed at length and Chairman Siler asked that Tourism PR Package be added to the agenda for further discussion at the February meeting. Tracey Daniels reminded the Authority that Tryon Tourism lacked sufficient staff to coordinate major events like the front porch festivals held in larger nearby communities.

Confirm Date for Next Regular Meeting

The next regular meeting of the Tryon Tourism Development Authority was scheduled for Monday, February 2, 2026 at 4:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Room.

Adjourn

Crowell made a motion to adjourn. Mathews seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned at 5:37 pm.

Prepared by

Meg Rogers

Meg Rogers
Secretary

Approved:

Steven Siler
Chairman