Meeting Minutes

Lincolnton Tourism Development Authority

June 2, 2026, 4:00 PM
114 West Sycamore Street, Lincolnton, NC 28092

Call to Order

Vice-Chair Tom Flohr called the regularly scheduled Lincolnton Tourism Development Authority meeting to order at approximately 4:05 pm.. in the Council Chambers of City Hall located at 114 West Sycamore Street, Lincolnton, NC

Present: Tom Flohr, Wayne Brooks, Taylor Eaddy, Courtney Browning. Also present were Pamela McBryde, Daphne Ingram and Kara Smith. A quorum was present.

Note: *Chair Randall Williams was not present at the start but joined the meeting at 5:10 p.m.*

Approve Meeting Agenda

The board moved to approve the agenda as presented.

> **Motion to approve the meeting agenda was made by Taylor Eaddy, seconded by Wayne Brooks. The motion carried unanimously.**

Approve Meeting Minutes

The board reviewed the Special Meeting Minutes from May 22, 2026.

> **Motion to approve the meeting minutes was made by Wayne Brooks and seconded by Courtney Browining. The motion carried unanimously.**

Review of Financial Report

Pamela McBryde, Treasurer, presented the financial report, noting that the primary expenditure for the prior month was Hype-Mill and that the Authority was over budget for the current fiscal year. Two additional financial actions were brought before the board.

Budget Amendment (BA-02-26):

Ms. McBryde presented a budget amendment in the amount of $20,000 to appropriate funds from the fund balance in order to bring the Authority back into compliance for the current fiscal year.

> **Taylor Eaddy made a motion to approve budget amendment BA-02-26 in the amount of $20,000. Motion was seconded by Wayne Brooks. The motion carried unanimously.**

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FY 2026–2027 Budget Ordinance:

Treasurer Pamela McBryde presented the budget ordinance for the upcoming fiscal year, which is required to be approved prior to the end of the current fiscal year so that operations can commence on July 1. The total budget was set at $252,500, based on projected occupancy tax revenues of approximately $140,000, investment income similar to the current year, and approximately $100,000 drawn from fund balance. Vice-Chair Flohr noted that $2,295 of the budgeted appropriations had already been approved.

> **Motion to approve the FY 2026–2027 budget ordinance in the amount of $252,500 was made by Taylor Eaddy and seconded by Member Wayne Brooks. The motion carried unanimously.**

FUNDING REQUEST

City of Lincolnton – Parks & Recreation Rail-Trail Committee

Public Services Director Nathan Eurey and Rail-Trail Advisory Committee member Carol King presented a request for a public art mural project at the Main Street rail-trail tunnel and stairway. Director Eurey noted that the initiative originated with the Tourism Development Authority and was subsequently passed to the Rail-Trail Advisory Committee given the project's location.

Ms. King described the scope of the project, explaining that the proposed artist, Kenzie Baxter, would paint the stair risers, the back wall, a portion of the tunnel interior, and the full tunnel walls. The design, which has already been approved by the steering committee, was developed with attention to the existing train mural on the adjacent building, with colors chosen to complement rather than clash. Ms. King noted that the artist would paint decorative frames around the existing wing murals rather than painting over them, preserving a popular photo opportunity.

The original agenda listed the request at $12,000; however, the steering committee subsequently recommended extending the project to include the full tunnel walls, bringing the revised total to $18,000. Members discussed the incremental cost structure, noting options for the stairway only, the back wall, a partial tunnel, and the full tunnel. Director Nathan Eurey advised that completing all elements at once with a single contractor is significantly more cost-effective than returning for additional phases at a later date.

Concerns were raised regarding potential graffiti and maintenance. Ms. King noted that in her experience, graffiti tends to occur on blank surfaces and that many murals in Lincolnton have remained undisturbed for years. City Manager Ritchie Haynes added that the area is covered by security cameras, which serve as a deterrent. The artist's certificate of liability insurance was confirmed to be on file. The board also confirmed that the tunnel ceiling would not be painted, preserving the option for future lighting installations such as those discussed in connection with the Christmas Village event.

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Motion to approve the full revised amount of $18,000 for the rail-trail mural project, encompassing the stairway, back wall, partial tunnel, and full tunnel walls, was made by Taylor Eaddy and seconded by Wayne Brooks. The motion carried unanimously.

Lincolnton Police Dept. - Electronic Sign Quote

City Manager Ritchie Haynes presented a proposal for a new double-sided electronic digital sign at the Lincolnton Police Department. He noted that the existing sign, while functional, is outdated and no longer competitive. The proposed sign would serve as a community billboard for events, particularly for nonprofits, and would reduce the Authority's reliance on paid third-party digital advertising. City Manager Haynes noted that the quoted figure is approximately six months old and may have changed.

The board discussed the relationship between this item and the Authority's newly established capital line item for FY 2026–2027, which would allow the Tourism budget and the City's business and community development fund to jointly fund capital projects, effectively doubling available capital. Vice-Chair Flohr noted that under the Authority's recently adopted rules, funding cannot be approved for the next fiscal year at the current meeting and that the item should be deferred.

City Manager Haynes agreed and recommended that a decision be made later at the September meeting. He committed to obtaining an updated quote prior to that meeting.

Member Taylor Eaddy made a motion to table the Item and move it to discussion at the September meeting. Wayne Brooks seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion Regarding Other Request/Commitments

City Manager Haynes provided a broader strategic overview of how the Authority will assist in funding an administrative positions. Mr. Haynes explained that this agreement would free up approximately $50,000 in the City's business and community development fund annually, effectively doubling the capital available for the Authority each year. He outlined several potential capital uses for the combined funds in the coming fiscal year, including: the Christmas Village, an additional train and Conex box storage unit for the rail trail (potentially decorated with a mural), a splash pad at the site of the soon-to-be-closed city pool, additional phases of First Federal Park, streetscape improvements, and pocket parks. He also noted that he had been in contact with Lamar Signs regarding a radius map of available digital billboard placements to support future event advertising throughout the region. The board acknowledged the presentation as informational, with specific project decisions to be made at the September meeting.

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Meeting Minutes

Lincoln Theatre Guild

Joanna Underwood presented a funding request on behalf of the Lincoln Theatre Guild in support of their upcoming musical production. The revised request total was $7,350. Line items included cast t-shirts (already produced, at $1,500), posters, electronic billboard advertising on three county-perimeter locations along US-150/16, NC-16/73, and US-321, and playbill printing.

Discussion centered on the playbill line item of $4,500. Chair Flohr questioned whether a playbill distributed inside the theater constitutes advertising eligible for LTDA funding, given that attendees are already present. Ms. Underwood clarified that the playbill would include advertising for upcoming productions and events at the Cultural Center, making it forward-facing promotional material. It was noted that the theatre draws cast members and audience from across the region, including as far as Morganton and Charlotte. Neil Underwood noted that the production—Annie—last ran in 1991 and sold out the Citizen Center for four of five performances. Advertising revenue from playbill sponsors was estimated at approximately $1,500, leaving a net cost attributable to the Authority of $3,000 for that line item.

Staff clarified that all approved funding for this request would fall in the next fiscal year (FY 2026–2027) and would be disbursed on a reimbursement basis upon submission of receipts.

> **Motion was made by Taylor Eaddy to approve the Lincoln Theatre Guild request at $5,850 (the total request of $7,350, less $1,500 in anticipated playbill advertising revenue, resulting in a net playbill allocation of $3,000). Seconded by Courtney Browning. The motion carried unanimously**. *Applicant was directed to submit receipts to Ms. McBryde.*

United Way of Lincoln County

Alisha Friday, Executive Director of United Way of Lincoln County, and Faith Barnes-Martin presented a request for $750 to support marketing costs and materials for the NextGen United 5K Race, scheduled for that coming Saturday. Ms. Barnes-Martin noted that 72 runners from 12 different cities were already registered as of that morning.

Discussion arose regarding the requirement that LTDA-funded materials bear the Authority's logo. The shirts had already been ordered without the logo due to the timing of the request. The presenters offered alternatives, including a branded insert card inside the race bags and event signage at registration and water tables acknowledging the Tourism Authority's sponsorship.

> **Motion to approve the United Way of Lincoln County request for $750 was made by Wayne Brooks and seconded by Courtney Browning. The motion carried.**

A second, broader funding request from United Way for multiple events and marketing campaigns was briefly discussed but was not on the formal agenda. Vice-Chair Flohr noted that the request lacked sufficient specificity regarding individual events, locations, and cost breakdowns, and that the Authority is restricted to funding

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activities within the City of Lincolnton. Ms. Alisha Friday, the United Way representative, was asked to return at the September meeting with a more detailed submission identifying specific events, locations, vendors, and itemized costs.

Lincoln Cultural Center

Ms. Cathy Davis, representative of the Lincoln Cultural Center, presented a request for promotional materials in support of events including concerts at the Citizens Center. The funding request included related supporting materials including balance sheet, 2026 event financials and a list of scheduled events in 2026.

The board reviewed the request in the context of the Cultural Center's ongoing relationship with LuWell Marketing, a digital marketing firm, discussing the value of the firm's paid Meta advertising, content creation, analytics reporting, and daily monitoring of ad performance. Member Wayne Brooks, who recused himself from voting due to a financial interest, offered context on how the firm manages ad spend, pivoting targeting strategies based on real-time data across platforms. Ms. Davis a current 28-day social media reach of 363,000 people, improved follower counts resulting in Facebook monetization, and strong advance ticket sales for the upcoming Rhonda Vincent concert, including purchases from Wilmington, Mooresboro, and South Carolina, indicating heads-and-beds impact.

The discussion clarified that the $12,000 previously approved covered activities through the end of the current fiscal year and that the current request of $5,750 was for the upcoming fiscal year beginning July 1, covering the Rhonda Vincent concert remainder and the Confederate Railroad concert in August 2026

Ms. Davis confirmed that all expenditures would be on a reimbursement basis and that the Cultural Center did not anticipate returning for additional LTDA funding until the first quarter of calendar year 2027.

> **Motion to approve the Lincoln Cultural Center request for $5,750 for FY 2026–2027 was made by Taylor Eaddy. Courtney Browning seconded. The motion carried.**

Note: Chair Randall Williams joined the meeting during this portion of the meeting

Lincoln County Apple Festival

Nikki Gray, representative of the Lincoln County Apple Festival board, presented a funding request for promotional and marketing materials in connection with the annual festival. The request included large festival announcement banners, A-frame directional inserts with vendor maps, digital advertising, t-shirts, posters, and a new full-color brochure with a festival map. Ms. Gray noted that in the prior year, the event reported between 35,000 and 40,000 visitors downtown during the festival.

Discussion touched on the requirement that LTDA-funded materials bear the Authority's logo. The representative indicated that the Authority's logo is currently displayed on table covers at the event but acknowledged that it does not appear on t-shirts. Members discussed the feasibility and cost of adding the logo to shirts, acknowledging that an additional print screen would be required. The board agreed

the logo was not a deal-breaker if it added cost but preferred its inclusion if it could be done at no extra charge.

Member Taylor Eaddy raised questions about the inflatable tube men and parking lot directional signage, noting that those items serve guests already present at the festival rather than drawing new visitors. The motion was structured to exclude those line items, reducing the approved amount to $7,500.

All funding is to be disbursed on a reimbursement basis upon submission of receipts. The board also noted that materials approved from prior years, such as tablecloths, would continue to be reused.

> **Motion to approve the Lincoln County Apple Festival request for $7,500, excluding the inflatable tube men and parking lot signage, with receipts required for reimbursement, was made by Taylor Eaddy and seconded by Tom Flohr. Wayne Brooks, opposed. Motion carried with a majority vote.**

Young Adult Steering Committee

Trent Mason presented on behalf of the Young Adult Steering Committee (YASC), providing a detailed year-over-year account of the Apple Drop event's growth since its inception in 2018. Attendance has increased from under 500 people to approximately 4,000 in the most recent year, with a stated goal of reaching 5,000. The presentation highlighted data from Placer AI cell phone pings and organic social media metrics, including a reported 834% increase in content views and a 51,000% increase in clicks to the event page attributed to the prior year's marketing investment through LuWell Digital Marketing. Mr. Mason also noted that the event directly contributed to the opening of Sunset Slush as a permanent downtown business.

The YASC's vision for 2026 included expanding the event footprint to incorporate the renovated courthouse grounds, possibly using a projector to display images on the courthouse façade, and broadening the geographic marketing radius to reach more out-of-market visitors. The request of $14,224.50 included $6,100 for LuWell marketing services and various event production expenses.

Member Tom Flohr acknowledged the event's success but raised the question of whether the LTDA should be the sole funding source for the event, expressing the view that the original intent was for seed money and that the event should now be developing sponsorships. Mr. Mason countered that approaching struggling local businesses for sponsorships places undue pressure on the community, and that all prior LTDA funding has been fully expended and returned to the community through the event, with no profit retained.

Member Taylor Eaddy noted a meaningful distinction between YASC and other funded organizations: the Apple Drop is entirely free to the public and does not generate ticket revenue to fund future programming, unlike some other organizations that can reinvest proceeds. Members expressed support for the event's community value and its alignment with the Authority's statutory purpose of increasing lodging use and attracting visitors.

After deliberation, Member Flohr proposed a compromise: a base grant of $8,000, plus a matching contribution of up to $3,000 contingent upon the YASC raising an equivalent amount through outside sponsorships.

> **Motion to approve funding of $8,000 as a base grant to the Young Adult Steering Committee, plus an additional match of up to $3,000 upon demonstration of equivalent outside sponsorship funding, was made by Tom Flohr and seconded by Courtney Browning. The motion carried**

OTHER BUSINESS

Administrative Assistant Kara Smith presented a revised LTDA funding application form for board review, noting that an updated version had been mocked up for consideration. The revised form is intended to go live on July 1 upon board approval. Members reviewed the changes and noted several content corrections needed on the LTDA webpage within the City's website, as well as corrections on the visitlincolntonnc.org site including incorrect terminology related to pottery and an outdated photograph identified as not depicting the Cultural Center.

City Clerk Daphne Ingram noted that she was advised that the quilt trail listing is no longer active.

Member Wayne Brooks reported that he had been visiting downtown businesses to raise awareness of the LTDA tourism portal, estimating that approximately 60% of downtown businesses are unaware of the portal and its capability to post events. Ms. Smith was encouraged to begin outreach in coordination with City staff, specifically Becky for website-related updates and Morgan and Gabby for social media content with Hype-Mill. The board briefly discussed whether it was necessary to wait until July 1 for Ms. Smith to begin her liaison duties and determined that outreach could begin immediately.

Members also noted that remaining available funds in the current fiscal year's community line had been largely committed and that a discussion about adjusting line-item allocations for the coming year would be taken up at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

> Being no further business, Tom Flohr made a motion to adjourn. Taylor Eaddy seconded. Members voted 5-0 in favor of the motion.

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Daphne Ingram, Secretary	Randall Williams, Chair