

Town of Swansboro
Swansboro Tourism Development Authority
April 10, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Chairman Randy Swanson, Jack Harnatkiewicz, Preston Patterson, and Michael Diehl. Steven Overby and Linda Thornley were absent.

Call to Order

Chair Randy Swanson called the meeting to order at 2:34 pm.

Business

Financial Report

Sonia Johnson, Finance Director, presented the third quarter financial report for FY 24–25, noting expenditures through March 30 totaled \$68,253.73, with a cash balance of \$239,562.70 and an available fund balance of \$239,560.70. The only outstanding item was \$15,950 approved for the dock walk, which had been completed and would be dispersed soon. Johnson highlighted the importance of conservative revenue projections in light of potential future renovations at the Hampton, aiming to maintain flexibility and avoid additional funding requests. She also indicated that marketing and advertising would be discussed in the upcoming budget presentation.

In response to inquiries from the board, Mrs. Johnson clarified the following details:

- The \$30,000 for the visitor center was still part of the budget
- No other commitments exist aside from the dock walk payouts
- Marketing and advertising inquiries could be sent via email to be forwarded to Anne Marie for follow-up

Marketing & Advertising Status Update Discussion

Mrs. Johnson provided the board with an opportunity to ask questions regarding the marketing and advertising update included in the agenda packet. She shared that a more detailed discussion would take place during her upcoming proposed budget presentation and noted that Anne Marie would attend the next budget meeting to provide further details on her activities.

In response to inquiries from the board, Mrs. Johnson clarified the following details:

- Board members with specific marketing-related questions can email Johnson, who will ensure they are forwarded appropriately
- A proposal was introduced to develop marketing benefits for Airbnb participants, such as listings on websites or social media
- Any additional costs associated with expanded marketing efforts should be reviewed and approved by the board.

Proposed FY 2025-2026 Budget

Mrs. Johnson presented the proposed FY 2025–2026 budget, explaining that it was based on March 2025 figures and accounted for planned renovations at the Hampton during October through December. She recommended maintaining conservative revenue projections—keeping occupancy tax revenue at \$110,000—to avoid overbudgeting. Mrs. Johnson emphasized the importance of fiscal responsibility and flexibility, suggesting the board revisit and adjust the budget after renovations are complete to prevent premature funding requests. She also noted that Anne Marie would attend the next budget meeting to provide additional details on her work and proposals for marketing and advertising.

In response to inquiries from the board, Mrs. Johnson clarified the following details:

- Budget conservatism is key to managing risk during the renovation period and ensuring flexibility for future adjustments
- Anne Marie will be present at the next budget meeting to elaborate on her activities and any new marketing proposals
- Any new marketing initiative, such as those targeting Airbnb owners, would require board review and approval before incurring expenses
- Chair Randy Swanson plans to connect with Anne Marie ahead of the next meeting to explore a potential marketing package for Airbnbs, which could include incentives like listings on websites or social media

Set date to hold a public hearing/adoption

Pursuant to G.S. 159-12(b), which mandates a public hearing before budget adoption, the board selected May 8, 2025, as the date for the public hearing and adoption of the budget.

National Travel & Tourism Week

Kelly Brown from the Hampton Inn provided details about the upcoming National Travel & Tourism Week, scheduled for the first full week in May. She outlined her plans to visit I-95 visitor centers at the Virginia and South Carolina borders to engage with travelers and distribute promotional materials showcasing Swansboro and its local attractions. The estimated cost for this activity was limited to her mileage of approximately \$345, as she would cover her own hotel accommodation.

On a motion by Mr. Diehl, seconded by Mr. Harnatkiewicz, the funding request for the National Travel & Tourism Week Event was unanimously approved.

Board Projects/Discussion Items

The board discussed potential projects and strategic use of TDA funds, emphasizing the importance of proactive planning to support tourism and prevent unplanned or non-tourism-related requests. Topics included readiness for possible repair needs like the

Moore Street dock, maintaining a reserve for emergencies such as storms or shortfalls at events like the Mullet Festival, and developing targeted initiatives to increase tourism revenue, including marketing efforts focused on Airbnb participation.

In response to inquiries from the board the following details were clarified by Mrs. Johnson.

- The TDA was required to maintain at least 34% of the fund balance per state guidelines
- Anne Marie's main proposal was included in the draft budget, with two additional options available for board review
- A \$6,000–\$7,000 contingency was requested, but only \$3,500 was budgeted based on past spending, with \$3,500 still unused from the current year
- Any additional marketing services outside Anne Marie's scope must be evaluated and approved by the board
- A special meeting may be required if urgent opportunities arise between the TDA's regular meeting schedule.
- The board agreed to consider inviting Representative Gable to the July meeting, with intent to be clarified at the budget session.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Diehl, seconded by Mr. Harnatkiewicz, the meeting adjourned at 3:01 pm.