

**Tryon Tourism Board**  
*(Tryon Tourism Development Authority)*  
**Minutes**  
**June 2, 2025**  
**4:30 P.M.**

Chairman Mason-Freeman called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm at the Tryon Town Hall with four members present. Commissioner Bill Crowell arrived at 4:40 pm.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Maria Mason-Freeman, Chairman; John Vining, Vice-Chairman; Steven Siler; Melanie Jackson; and Bill Crowell, Tryon BOC Rep (arrived late);

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Allan Casavant

**STAFF PRESENT:** Meg Rogers, Secretary; Lourdes Gutierrez, Tryon Downtown Development Director; and Tracey Daniels, Website-Social Media Contractor

**Approve Minutes from May 5, 2025**

Minutes from the May 5, 2025 regular meeting were reviewed. Vining made a motion to approve the May 5, 2025 regular meeting minutes as presented. Siler seconded the motion. Motion was approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

**Approve Financial Report for May 2025**

The Tryon Tourism Development Fund FY 2024-2025 financial report for May 2025 was not available.

**Saluda Grade Trail Update**

Gutierrez reported that the purchase of the property for the trail would be finalized at the end of June 2025. Norfolk-Southern wanted to close the sale before the end of their fiscal year which ended June 30, 2025. A celebration was being planned at the Tryon Depot sponsored by Conserving Carolina and the Saluda Grade Committee. Crowell reported that a contractor for the trail project had been walking the tracks and putting in markers.

**Website & Social Media**

Tracey Daniels distributed a printed report as well as a handout related to the status of the Conty TDA. Daniels briefly went over her report:

**Social Media Status Report-ExploreTryon Facebook Page**

- 7-10 posts per week
  - 28 content posts last two weeks-tourism focused
- 13 new followers, 5 unfollows
- 17.1K views
- Followers include: Charlotte, Campobello, Boiling Springs, Asheville, Travelers Rest
- Most Liked Posts:
  - Tryon Midnight – asking for photos 1/1/2025
  - Fitzgerald’s Valentines Day event post
  - Trade Street Diner “now open for dinner” announcement
  - First Peak weekly “things to do” posts

**Website Update**

- Cleaned up some categories and backend on website
- New businesses, restaurants (example Dela Street Tacos)
- Calendar link update. Daniels reported that the calendar was down for one-day due to a glitch in the connection between the ExploreTryon.com calendar and the FirstPeaknc.com calendar.

**Miscellaneous**

- Next Polk County Economic and Tourism meeting was scheduled for next week, June 10 2025.
- Answered 8 incoming travel tourism e-mail questions and referred along to direct contacts
- Presented \$25 in 2025 Summer Challenge at Tryon Board of Commissioners meeting and the Tryon Downtown Development Association meeting
  - See promotional documents

Daniels went over the second handout showing the FY 2022-2023 occupancy tax collections by the municipalities in Polk County as well as by the county.

<u>Entity</u>	<u>FY23 Occupancy Tax Collections*</u>
Polk County	\$518,452
Saluda TDA	\$38,050
Tryon TDA	\$30,264
<u>Town of Columbus</u>	<u>\$28,625</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b><u>\$615,391</u></b>

\* Gross before any administrative and collections fees deducted

The current status of occupancy tax collection in the various jurisdictions was discussed briefly with the reasons why some entities (particularly Columbus because their occupancy tax revenue had minimal constraints on use, no advisory committee required with Town administrator and Town Council controlling expenditures) did not want to participate in a county-wide Tourism Development Authority. Daniels reported the North Carolina tourism department, VisitNC, was projecting a decline in tourism in North Carolina next year. How the County's occupancy tax revenues were currently allocated and spent was discussed briefly. Chairman Mason-Freeman and Gutierrez agreed to reach out to Saluda and Columbus tourism staff to find out if the municipalities could request funds from Polk County from the County's occupancy tax revenue for municipality-hosted events and marketing. The variable definition of "tourism" was discussed (i.e. heads in beds vs other considerations). It was suggested that a formal letter or e-mail from Tryon Tourism Development Authority be sent to Polk County regarding allocation of County tourism funds for some municipality-hosted events. Chairman Mason-Freeman would draft the letter to Polk County Tourism and Siler and Gutierrez would review the draft before finalization to send.

Daniels presented more information on the "\$25 Summer Challenge" campaign to encourage local spending this summer during June, July & August 2025. A card would be mailed out to all residents with 28782 zip code. Daniels asked the Authority for permission to distribute campaign info vis the ExploreTryon social media. The Authority members approved the request. Siler suggested that photos be shared on social media to celebrate spending in Tryon. The photos for this TDDA-Tourism partnership should be business-driven with businesses taking responsibility to post social media pictures. Siler suggested helping some new businesses with social media pictures and posts.

**SWOT Analysis Update – Work Plan Discussion**

Various ideas for events to promote tourism were discussed. The included:

- Pour Tour of local bars/pubs/restaurants – one for alcoholic beverages and one for non-alcoholic beverages (Valhalla Bakery and Tryon Bottle were very interested in pour tours)
- Swets Tour – local bakeries and restaurants
- Cinnabon Run for bikers/motorcycles when US 176 reopens between Tryon and Saluda
- Scavenger hunts-downtown check list scavenger hunt for families with children
- Hidden item search (i.e. Pinehurst glass pinecone ornaments hidden around downtown – Tryon could use small Morris ornaments)
- Online photo contest with monthly or quarterly prizes and use of winners for an annual calendar to sell. Siler suggested quarterly gift certificate prizes of \$25 for a total of \$100 per year. Legal disclaimers would be needed to assure rights to publish submitted photos.

**Other**

**Burrell's Fuel Tanks Murals**– Crowell asked about the fuel tank murals discussed at the last meeting. Wraps were recommended, as painting would require sandblasting the tanks before the paint could be applied. Wraps would be less expensive. Gutierrez was getting quotes for wraps. Artist selection for the murals was discussed briefly and included local artist Chris Bashon and the muralist used by Tryon Theatre for its wall mural.

**Confirm Date for Next Regular Meeting**

The next regular meeting of the Tryon Tourism Development Authority was scheduled for Monday, July 7, 2025 at 4:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Room. The members asked that that meeting be cancelled due to inability to attend. The members approved unanimously to cancel the July meeting. The next meeting date of Monday, August 4, 2025 at 4:30 pm at Tryon Town Hall, McCown Room was confirmed.

**Adjourn**

Vining made a motion to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 5:25 pm.

**Prepared by**

**Approved:**



Meg Rogers  
Secretary



Maria Mason-Freeman  
Chairman