

**AT A MEETING OF THE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FL ON
OCTOBER 1, 2025 AT 4:30 P.M., THE FOLLOWING
PROCEEDING WAS HAD, VIZ:**

Present: Carolyn Ford, Chair
Alonzetta Simpkins, County Commissioner
Charles Williams, Midway City Councilman
Richele Robinson
Peter Patel, Tax Collector
Jeff Dubree, Tax Collector

Absent: Ronte Harris, Quincy City Commissioner

Staff Present: Louis Baptiste, Interim County Attorney, Appeared Online
T.J. Lewis, Economic Development Director
Adriana Quijada, Deputy Clerk

1. Welcome

Chair Ford called the meeting to order at 4:45 p.m.

2. Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance/ Roll Call

Commissioner Simpkins led into invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. Deputy Clerk did roll call.

3. Regular Meeting

Chair Ford stated they are adding the following items to item 3.c.: Wild Game Cook-Out, ABC 27 Neighborhood Tour Sponsorship, and Marketing Funds Request Requirement Update.

MR. PATEL MADE A MOTION TO ADD THE ABOVE ITEMS TO ITEM 3.C. AND MR. DUBREE MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

3.a. Approval of Minutes – May 5, 2025 Regular Meeting

MS. ROBINSON MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MAY 5, 2025 MINUTES AND MR. WILLIAMS MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

3.b. Discussion of FY 25/26 Budget

Mr. Lewis stated they have for review the budget for FY 25/26 and he went through the increases.

Commissioner Simpkins asked what was the total income. She stated she had concerns about the treasure hunt event and if it really has been bringing in tourism to the county. They may need to address the allocation of \$20,000 for that event. She asked about the \$30,000 increase for the marketing firm. Mr. Fillyau appeared through Zoom and stated the \$30,000 was not an increase, it was a part of their annual budget of \$150,000. Commissioner Simpkins stated she read they had a budget for \$138,000, so the \$150,000 was an increase. Mr. Hall stated they have a budget of \$150,000 per contract, so there was no increase and he was not sure what

numbers were reflecting on their end. He stated the Go Daddy website fee was not included with them.

Ms. Robinson asked if Medium4 could provide an itemized breakdown of their \$150,000 budget. She also recommended for her and Mr. Lewis to review the invoices, since they are both new to the board. Chair Ford stated they could ask the Clerk for a summary of how the money was spent. Ms. Robinson stated she has no issue with \$150,000 for a marketing firm, because that was pennies compared to other firms. She just wanted to see the itemization of those funds.

Commissioner Simpkins went down the list of items under the \$150,000 line item. Mr. Hall stated the \$500 and the \$300 was not included in their budget.

Ms. Robinson asked about tourism tax and the amount they started with. Mr. Lewis stated he will get back with her on that answer. Ms. Robinson stated they could do grants for events but the money should not be utilized to sponsor events.

Mr. Baptiste stated back in July, the Clerk raised an issue related to an expenditure made by TDC regarding the mega reunions. He did legal research and drafted a legal opinion on it where he concluded that the high school mega reunions were a lawful expense of the TDC based by the statute.

Commissioner Simpkins stated she focuses on return on investment. She questions if some of these events are really bringing in tourism to the county.

Mr. Baptiste stated there was several expenditures that raised concerns with the Clerk's office. He did not want them to approve things that gets rejected by the Clerk. He has not issued a legal opinion yet on the treasure hunt that was funded by TDC.

Chair Ford asked if there was a motion to adopt the budget. Commissioner Simpkins asked if they have a place in the budget for additional requests that may come through. Chair Ford mentioned that they could always move line items; she stated they should have adopted this budget last week.

Ms. Robinson asked if they approve the budget, are the items in red set in stone. Chair Ford stated they could always move line items. Mr. Baptiste stated there was no deadline to adopt the budget. He stated he did confirm that the county adopted the budget that contained the TDC budget, so the statutory requirements were met. They have an ongoing contract with Medium4 and they have the rights to receive the funds under the contractual agreement.

MR. DUBREE MADE A MOTION TO TABLE THE BUDGET AND SCHEDULE A WORKSHOP FIRST AND COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

3.c. Discussion and Action Marketing Funds and Event Grant Requests

2025 UF/IFAS Garden & Farm Fall Festival

Mr. Lewis presented the above item and stated they were asking them to sponsor. They have a range of prices from \$350 for the bronze package and up to \$3,000 for a platinum package.

Mr. DUBREE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE SILVER PACKAGE SPONSORSHIP OF \$450 FOR THE UF/IFAS GARDEN & FARM FALL FESTIVAL AND MR. PATEL MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

Ms. Robinson asked Mr. Lewis if he could create a survey from this event; like a QR code.

Mr. Baptiste stated if there was not a specific line item for sponsorships, then he did not think this would be payable. Mr. Lewis stated they could workshop this.

National Crappie Trail

Mr. Lewis stated this event was asking for a sponsorship.

COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE GOLD PACKAGE SPONSORSHIP OF \$650 FOR THE NATIONAL CRAPPIE TRAIL AND MS. ROBINSON MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

Visit FL- Destination Marketing Organization Partnership

Mr. Lewis stated this was a renewal of this partnership for this fiscal year.

COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE RENEWAL OF THE VISIT FL- DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION FOR FISCAL YEAR 25/26 AND MR. DUBREE MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

Havana History & Heritage Society, Inc.

Mr. Lewis stated he wanted to make sure this was an authorized expenditure and it looked like it was. It was a reimbursement of their expenses from the previous fiscal year in the total of \$10,000.

COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE REIMBURSEMENT OF \$10,000 FOR THE HAVANA HISTORY & HERITAGE SOCIETY, INC. AND MS. ROBINSON MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

Wild Game Cook-Out

Commissioner Simpkins stated she received this request from the Across the Track Hunting Club who were asking for assistance with funding the 31st Annual Across the Track Cookout. The cookout is a community event that feeds in excess of 1500 people. This year's event will be held on November 8, 2025 in Havana, Florida.

Ms. Robinson asked how would they verify that this event would be beneficial to the county. Commissioner Simpkins mentioned that they could do a survey, QR code.

Commissioner Simpkins asked Mr. Baptiste for his opinion on this. Mr. Baptiste stated he could not comment on the legality of it because he did not have the details; if they want to table it they could.

MR. DUBREE MADE A MOTION TO PROVIDE \$650 FOR THE WILD GAME COOK-OUT AND FOR IT TO BE USED FOR MARKETING AND ADVERTISING OF THEIR EVENT ONLY. COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS MADE THE SECOND AND THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

ABC 27 Neighborhood Tour Sponsorship

Mr. Lewis stated this was a marketing opportunity for them. On the week of December 1, ABC 27 will air stories on, highlighting the things that make Gadsden County a great place to live and raise a family.

Mr. Dubree asked if they had access to the content after it has already been aired. Mr. Lewis stated yes, they will be given the content. Commissioner Simpkins stated ABC 27 was going to come anyway, so she did not see the point of funding them.

MR. DUBREE MADE A MOTION TO NOT SPONSOR THIS EVENT AND MR. PATEL MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

Marketing Funds Request Requirement Update

Mr. Lewis stated this was the criteria that they have been discussing regarding people coming to ask for funds.

Mr. Fillyau stated they will always need more content to highlight the activities in Gadsden County. If an event does not have photography, social media posts, and event recaps, then that should disqualify them from receiving funds.

Mr. Lewis stated they have had a pattern of people submitting requests with a short turn-around time. Mr. Fillyau advised that it would be best to have a timeframe of 60-90 days or longer. He stated that if it was under 60 days, they would have to come with all collateral material produced and ready to go.

Ms. Robinson stated from conversations she has had with TDC Managers from other counties, they operate off reimbursable grants. That way, they could ensure all criteria were to be met before releasing any funds.

Commissioner Simpkins stated they need to make sure this was online and make sure people are aware of this process. They need to make sure they are straight across the board. She stated they need to take advantage of things like football seasons. She also mentioned that they need to meet more than a quarterly basis.

~~3.d. Annual Performance Review and Impact Report – First Year Achievements~~

3.e. Review and Approval of Contract Renewal – Research & Development Investment for Strategic Tourism Marketing Expansion

MR. DUBREE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE FIRST PHASE FOR MEDIUM4 AND MR. PATEL MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

Mr. Fillyau stated they will send the phase 1 invoice to Mr. Lewis.

4. Next Scheduled Meetings

The next TDC meeting will be held on November 12, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.

5. Adjournment

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, CHAIR FORD DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:26 P.M.

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

CAROLYN FORD, Chair
Tourist Development Council

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk