

AT A MEETING OF THE TOURIST DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL HELD IN AND FOR GADSDEN COUNTY, FL ON
NOVEMBER 12, 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
Ronte Harris, Quincy City Commissioner

Staff Present: Louis Baptiste, Interim County Attorney - ABSENT
T.J. Lewis, Economic Development Director
Leann Perez, Assistant BOCC Secretary

1. Welcome

Chair Ford called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m.

2. Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance/ Roll Call

Chair Ford led into the pledge of allegiance. The clerk did roll call.

3. Regular Meeting

a. Approval of Minutes:

October 1, 2025 – Regular Meeting

COMMISSIONER HARRIS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AND PETER PATEL MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 6-0 TO APPROVE.

Mr. Lewis stated they had 1 last minute request for funding from the Hola Gadsden Festival/Soccer final.

Commissioner Simpkins appeared at 4:35 p.m.

RICHELE ROBINSON MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA WITH THE ADDITION OF THE HOLA GADSDEN FESTIVAL/SOCCER FINAL AND COMMISSIONER HARRIS MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 7-0 TO APPROVE.

b. Discussion of FY 25/26 Budget – Updated expenditure report

Mr. Lewis presented the above item.

Ms. Robinson asked what the county provides.

Mr. Patel asked about overtime hours.

Mr. Dubree stated he thought the amount allocated for salaries seems excessive.

Mr. Patel had questions about who does the photography for specific events.

Mr. Patel asked who benefits from the salary allotted and Mr. Lewis stated it would typically be the person in his position, but his salary is paid through economic development.

Mr. Lewis stated the duties are being split between him, the part time person, and his office manager.

Councilman Williams asked if Lewis was part time and if he was being compensated for his role in TDC.

Ms. Robinson stated she wants clarity on the salary.

Commissioner Harris asked for point of clarity and wanted to know if there were employees being paid from the TDC budget. Mr. Lewis stated no.

Commissioner Simpkins stepped out at 4:58 p.m.

Commissioner Simpkins returned at 5:00 p.m.

Mr. Dubree asked for a better break down on the expense material they were supplied.

Chair Ford stated she has never seen an expense breakdown like they were supplied.

Commissioner Simpkins stated this Tourist Development Council board did not approve the line items within the budget, those items were brought to them.

Mr. Lewis stated it was a sponsorship and it is paid upfront. He also stated in the last meeting the board voted to go in direction of reimbursement instead of sponsorship.

Commissioner Simpkins stated if it is not a Tourist Development Council event should they be supplying receipts.

Commissioner Harris asked if Mr. Lewis could send out last years expenses. Mr. Lewis stated he would send that out.

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

(T.J. Lewis, Economic Development & Tourist Development, Director)

Mr. Lewis presented the above item.

Ms. Robinson stated she did some research about advertising and statues.

Mr. Dupree asked what a realistic time frame is for someone asking for funding for events. Michael Hall, Medium4 stated typically 4 months in advance.

Mr. Dupree stated he thought they could implement the change in deadlines for submitting funding requests the beginning of 2026.

Chair Ford stated they need to close the application on a certain date instead of receiving applications all the time.

Mr. Lewis asked if they were going to vote on the changes or if they wanted him to bring the item back, and Chair Ford stated she wants the item to be brought back.

Mr. Patel stated they should add how many nights/rooms were generated the previous year.

Michael Hall, Medium4 appeared through zoom, and asked if there will be any incentives from hotels as this has been discussed before but there had been no incentives offered.

Mr. Dupree stated they could give incentives through a code for hotel incentives, and it would be easier to track using the code.

Michael Hall stated he agreed with Mr. Dupree and stated that's exactly what he was talking about with incentives.

Mr. Lewis asked Chair Ford if all questions and concerns have been addressed with the request form for him to be able to move forward with drafting the new form to send all commissioners individually for approval.

Commissioner Simpkins stated they agree with Chair Ford about the bed taxes.

Kountry Kingz MC Annual

Mr. Lewis presented the above item. He stated they are asking for \$1500 in reimbursement for their event.

Michael Hall stated if it was not an advertisement, they should cap the reimbursement at \$250-500.

Ms. Robinson stated she thinks they should pay this reimbursement, and they must keep in mind that the event planner can't get the certification for the hotel until after the event.

JEFF DUPREE MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE REIMBURSEMENT OF \$1000 FOR THE FLYER ADD AND COMMISSIONER HARRIS MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 7-0 TO APPROVE.

Chattahoochee Annual Membership / Sponsorships

- **Final Friday, Christmas Heritage Park, Historic Programming, Downtown Beautification Efforts, Main Streets Master Golf Tournament, Annual 5k & Fun Run**

Mr. Lewis presented the above items.

COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE \$5000 AND RICHELE ROBINSON MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 7-0 TO APPROVE.

Havana Winterfest Sponsorship

Mr. Lewis presented the above item. He stated they are requesting funds ranging from \$250-2000.

COMMISSIONER SIMPKINS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE TO BE A PARADE SPONSOR FOR \$1500 AND RICHELE ROBINSON MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 7-0 TO APPROVE.

Hola Gadsden Festival/Soccer Final

Mr. Lewis presented the above item. He stated he does not know what they are requesting, and the only thing the Tourist Development Council can sponsor is the shirts at \$900.

PETER PATEL MADE A MOTION TO REIMBURSE \$1000 FOR THIS EVENT AND COMMISSIONER HARRIS MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 7-0 TO APPROVE.

d. Medium Four Invoice(s) - \$5,000 Due for Prior FY Underpayment

Mr. Lewis presented the above item. He stated he needs a statement of satisfaction from the board for Finance to pay this.

PETER PATEL MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THIS ITEM AND COMMISSIONER HARRIS MADE THE SECOND. THE BOARD VOTED 7-0 TO APPROVE.

e. DMO Greatest Hits (Visit Florida)

Mr. Lewis presented the above item.

Commissioner Simpkins stepped out at 6:26 p.m.

Mr. Lewis expanded further on this item.

Chair Ford stepped out at 6:32 p.m.

Councilman Williams stepped out at 6:39 p.m.

Councilman Williams returned at 6:40 p.m.

Peter Patel stepped out at 6:41 p.m.

Had to pause meeting as there was not a quorum when Mr. Patel stepped out.

Peter Patel returned at 6:43 p.m.

Ms. Robinson stated they should get the advice of the attorney for the removal of the member that never comes to the meetings.

Michael Hall asked about payment for phase 2.

Commissioner Harris tried to leave the meeting, but Ms. Robinson stopped him as there would not be a quorum to continue the meeting if he left.

Mr. Lewis stated he will call a special meeting for December for phase 2 payment.

f. Process for new Board Membership

4. Next Scheduled Meetings

5. Adjournment

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD, RICHELE ROBINSON
DECLARED THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:05 P.M.**

GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

**CAROLYN FORD, Chair
Tourist Development Council**

ATTEST:

NICHOLAS THOMAS, Clerk