



FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026
MINUTES



Minutes

Discover Durham
Tourism Development Authority

NO MEETING IN JULY



Minutes

Discover Durham
Tourism Development Authority Meeting
Tuesday, August 26, 2025
3:00 p.m.

Board Present			
Tom Lubbe	Carlos Rubio	Barry Van Deman	
Sean Umstead	John Brown	Crystal Taylor	
Wendy Jacobs			
Staff Present			
Susan Amey	Margaret Pentrack	Tony Hall	Cara Rousseau

At 3:05 PM, Board Chair Carlos Rubio called the meeting to order.

The board approved the June 2025 meeting minutes and June and July 2025 financials.

Discover Durham staff presented the FY25 Year in Review presentations for the Marketing, Visitor Experience, Research and Operations teams. The Board engaged in discussion around the presentations and expressed appreciation for these reports.

Board member recruiting: The Board discussed recruitment applications and voted to recommend Emily Strickland, General Manager at The Durham Hotel, for the full-service lodging seat.

Chair Rubio adjourned the meeting at 4:52 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Barry Van Deman, Secretary/Treasurer

DISCOVER DURHAM
212 W Main Street, Suite 101
Durham, NC 27701
TF: (800) 446-8604
W: discoverdurham.com



Minutes

Discover Durham
Tourism Development Authority Meeting
Tuesday, September 25, 2025
3:00 p.m.

Board Present			
Jennings Brody	Carlos Rubio	Barry Van Deman	
Sean Umstead	John Brown	Crystal Taylor	
Wendy Jacobs			
Staff Present			
Susan Amey	Tony Hall	Cara Rousseau	Sam Kraushaar

At 3:06 PM, Board Chair Carlos Rubio called the meeting to order.

Jay Sharpe presented the Discover Durham FY25 Audit, reporting a clean audit with no findings. The board approved the audit.

The board approved the August 2025 meeting minutes and August 2025 financials.

Tony presented the proposed budget amendment, and the Board voted to approve it.

Durham Sports Commission Executive Director, Marcus Manning, and Deputy Director, Kaila'Shea Menendez, along with Discover Durham Chief Marketing Officer, Cara Rousseau, presented the FY25 Year in Review presentations for the Durham Sports Commission and Discover Durham Sales team, respectively. The Board engaged in discussion around the presentations and expressed appreciation for these reports.

Board member recruiting: The Board discussed the applications for the limited-service lodging seats for both the City and County. They voted to recommend Martin Simon, General Manager at Aloft Hotel, for the City Council-appointed seat and Ron Wood, owner of Arrowhead Inn Bed & Breakfast, for seat appointed by the Durham Board of County Commissioners.

Susan provided an update on the status of the DPLEX project.

Tony provided the board with details and instructions on completing the CEO Performance Evaluation survey, which will be emailed to them next week. The CEO's annual performance review will take place in the October meeting.

Chair Rubio adjourned the meeting at 4:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Barry Van Deman, Secretary/Treasurer



Minutes

Discover Durham
Tourism Development Authority Meeting
Tuesday, September 25, 2025
3:00 p.m.

Board Present

Jennings Brody	Carlos Rubio	Barry Van Deman
Sean Umstead	John Brown	Crystal Taylor
Wendy Jacobs		

Staff Present

Susan Amey	Tony Hall	Cara Rousseau	Sam Kraushaar
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At 3:06 PM, Board Chair Carlos Rubio called the meeting to order.

Jay Sharpe presented the Discover Durham FY25 Audit, reporting a clean audit with no findings. The board approved the audit.

The board approved the August 2025 meeting minutes and August 2025 financials.

Tony presented the proposed budget amendment, and the Board voted to approve it.

Durham Sports Commission Executive Director, Marcus Manning, and Deputy Director, Kaila'Shea Menendez, along with Discover Durham Chief Marketing Officer, Cara Rousseau, presented the FY25 Year in Review presentations for the Durham Sports Commission and Discover Durham Sales team, respectively. The Board engaged in discussion around the presentations and expressed appreciation for these reports.

Board member recruiting: The Board discussed the applications for the limited-service lodging seats for both the City and County. They voted to recommend Martin Simon, General Manager at Aloft Hotel, for the City Council-appointed seat and Ron Wood, owner of Arrowhead Inn Bed & Breakfast, for seat appointed by the Durham Board of County Commissioners.

Susan provided an update on the status of the DPLEX project.

Tony provided the board with details and instructions on completing the CEO Performance Evaluation survey, which will be emailed to them next week. The CEO's annual performance review will take place in the October meeting.

Chair Rubio adjourned the meeting at 4:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Barry Van Deman, Secretary/Treasurer



Minutes

Discover Durham
Tourism Development Authority Meeting
Tuesday, October 28, 2025
3:00 p.m.

Board Present			
Javiera Caballero	Carlos Rubio	Barry Van Deman	
Sean Umstead	John Brown	Crystal Taylor	
Tom Lubbe			
Staff Present			
Susan Amey	Tara Kenchen	Cara Rousseau	Sam Kraushaar

At 3:10 PM, Board Chair Carlos Rubio called the meeting to order.

The board approved the September 2025 meeting minutes.

The board approved the September 2025 unaudited financials.

Tara Kenchen, Executive Director of Durham Next, provided a year-in-review presentation on the organization’s achievements and current projects.

The Board voted to recommend Doug Pender to city council for appointment to the board, replacing the first recommended candidate who resigned from her position and therefore became ineligible to serve.

At 3:58 PM the Board approved a motion to move into executive session as permitted by GS 143-318:11 (a) to conduct the annual performance evaluation of the CEO and discuss the organization’s leadership succession plan.

The board returned to regular session at 5:05 pm and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Barry Van Deman, Secretary/Treasurer

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Minutes

Discover Durham
Tourism Development Authority Meeting
Thursday, December 11, 2025
3:00 p.m.

Board Present			
Wendy Jacobs	Carlos Rubio	Ron Wood	
Sean Umstead	Crystal Taylor		
Staff Present			
Susan Amey	Tara Kenchen	Cara Rousseau	Sam Kraushaar
Tony Hall			

At 3:13 PM, Board Chair Carlos Rubio called the meeting to order.

The board did introductions for newly appointed board member Ron Wood.

Tara Kenchen, Executive Director of Durham Next, provided a Durham Next overview and project update presentation to the board. Tara also shared the current Financial Report for Durham Next.

The board approved the October 2025 meeting minutes.

Susan shared proposed CEO goals through June 2026, including leadership transition planning. No changes were proposed.

Tony presented the financials through October 2025. Both November and December will be shared in January due to the timing of this meeting. The board approved the October 2025 unaudited financials.

Carlos adjourned the meeting at 4:33 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Barry Van Deman, Secretary/Treasurer

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Minutes

Discover Durham
Tourism Development Authority Meeting
Tuesday, January 27, 2026
3:00 p.m.

Board Present			
Wendy Jacobs	Carlos Rubio	Ron Wood	
Sean Umstead	Crystal Taylor	Barry Van Deman	
Jennings Brody	Doug Pender	John Brown	
Javiera Caballero			
Staff Present			
Susan Amey	Tony Hall	Cara Rousseau	Sam Kraushaar
Morgan Moushon	Jonathan Lee		

At 3:03 PM, Board Chair Carlos Rubio called the meeting to order.

The board approved the November and December 2025 meeting minutes.

Tony presented the November and December financials. The board approved the November and December 2025 unaudited financials.

Susan shared the final version of the CEO Goals for January-June 2026. The Board voted to approve the CEO goals for January-June 2026.

At 4:03 PM the Board approved a motion to move into executive session as permitted by GS 143-318:11 (a) to discuss the contract for employment of a public officer. The Board reviewed Cara Rousseau’s contract for the President & CEO position.

Board Chair Carlos Rubio adjourned the meeting at 4:34 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Barry Van Deman, Secretary/Treasurer

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Minutes

Discover Durham
Tourism Development Authority Meeting
Tuesday, February 24, 2026
3:00 p.m.

Board Present			
Wendy Jacobs	Carlos Rubio	Ron Wood	
Sean Umstead	Crystal Taylor	Barry Van Deman	
Javiera Caballero	Doug Pender		
Staff Present			
Susan Amey	Tony Hall	Cara Rousseau	Sam Kraushaar
Tara Kenchen			

At 3:05 PM, Board Chair Carlos Rubio called the meeting to order.

The board approved the January 2026 meeting minutes and January 2026 unaudited financials.

Jennings Brody has resigned from the board, so we are beginning recruitment for the Retail or Transportation seat she occupied. If board members have candidates to recommend, please let Susan know.

Durham Next Executive Director, Tara Kenchen, shared Durham Next project updates:

- Festival Ecosystem: We have received the research report and are finalizing plans for further investment in and support of Durham’s festival ecosystem.
- Stadium Feasibility Study: We have conducted interviews with two firms to conduct a feasibility study and we are connecting with the project team to make a final decision. This will be about a seven-month process once they get started.
- Convention and Event Center/Hotel: We have engaged Hunden to conduct a site fit analysis that includes the downtown YMCA space and adjacent areas. We’re collaborating with DDI on creating a visionary concept for a broader convention and entertainment district that incorporates elements of both the DDI blueprint objectives and the convention and events center.
- RDU Signage: Some final design concept changes required another round of approvals from RDU. We’re still pushing to get this completed by Summer 2026.
- D2 Live: Shared design concepts and updates on project status and timeline.

Cara shared updates on the leadership transition and upcoming organizational changes and Susan discussed the timeline for transition between now and the end of June. Cara will present her incoming CEO 90-day goals in May and then the TDA will complete a final CEO review for Susan in June.

Board chair Carlos Rubio adjourned the meeting at 4:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Barry Van Deman, Secretary/Treasurer



Minutes

Discover Durham
Tourism Development Authority Meeting
Tuesday, March 24, 2026
3:00 p.m.

Board Present			
Wendy Jacobs	Carlos Rubio	Ron Wood	
Sean Umstead	Crystal Taylor	Barry Van Deman	
Javiera Caballero	Doug Pender		
Staff Present			
Susan Amey	Tony Hall	Cara Rousseau	Sam Kraushaar
Tara Kenchen			

At 3:04 PM, Board Chair Carlos Rubio called the meeting to order.

The board approved the February 2026 meeting minutes and February 2026 unaudited financials.

Tony Hall shared the team’s recommended assumptions about FY27 revenue that will be factored into our budget development for discussion. The board did not propose any changes, so the staff will plan with a flat revenue budget.

Staff is preparing updated financial policies that better address the purchasing and financial management needs introduced by Durham Next. While complete updates to the policies will be presented in April for board review and approval, staff requested one specific change in the March meeting to allow direct procurement for consulting or feasibility services on tourism product development projects under \$100,000. Contracts over that amount will require issuance of a formal RFP. The board approved the request.

In the ensuing conversation about purchasing policies, members of the board requested that staff report out periodically (perhaps quarterly) on major contracts that have been awarded and their compliance with our procurement policies.

Cara and Tara presented the implementation plan for advancing Durham's festival ecosystem. One area of feedback from the board urged us to consider fewer festival grants for larger amounts if it will help ensure success. The staff agreed to consider that, and it would be helpful to all concerned to be able to compare the proposed size of grants with the budgets of the festivals we would support to understand whether the grants will be large enough to make meaningful and significant impacts in the events’ scale.

Marcus Manning, Executive Director of the Durham Sports Commission, joined the meeting to present the recommendation that we pursue more regional event recruitment and support. In particular, working with UNC Athletics to win major sporting events will drive visitor spending in Durham. UNC has a stronger offering of athletic facilities than it does hotel rooms, and the opposite is true in Durham. A regional approach may also be applicable at times in working with festivals and non-sports events, in Wake as well as Orange County, but the opportunity is strongest with UNC Athletics. The board was amenable to this approach.

Board member recruiting: The Board discussed the applications for the Retail and Transportation seat and voted to recommend Wendy Abrams to join the TDA.

Susan delivered project updates on some Durham Next initiatives, including the Durham Convention and Events Center. Our financial analysis has concluded that while a new convention center has a tremendously positive economic impact on the community, it would require a very large commitment of public capital without contributing sufficiently offsetting tax revenue. While the project should remain a priority, the team does not recommend trying to push it forward at this time, in light of the FY27 budget constraints the city and county are working under this year. The board agreed with this direction.

Chair Rubio adjourned the meeting at 4:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Barry Van Deman, Secretary/Treasurer

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Minutes

Discover Durham
Tourism Development Authority Meeting
Tuesday, April 28, 2026
3:00 p.m.

Board Present			
Wendy Jacobs	Carlos Rubio	Ron Wood	
Sean Umstead	Crystal Taylor	Barry Van Deman	
Javiera Caballero	John Brown	Wendy Abram	
Staff Present			
Susan Amey	Tony Hall	Cara Rousseau	Sam Kraushaar

At 3:06 PM, Board Chair Carlos Rubio called the meeting to order.

The Board completed introductions for the newly appointed TDA Board Member Wendy Abrams of Jada’s Men’s Accessories.

The board approved the March 2026 meeting minutes.

Tony reviewed the March 2026 financials, and the board unanimously approved the March 2026 unaudited financials.

Susan led a discussion of the proposed financial policies update. The board unanimously approved the updated policies.

Related to the policies discussion, Wendy Jacobs asked that staff share a report with the board at least annually about what vendors we’ve engaged with over the course of the year, including what procurement process was used (RFP, competitive quotes, etc.), splitting out DD, DSC and DN, and providing detail on alignment with our intentions for vendor profiles to match the make-up of the community where available.

Cara Rousseau presented the FY27-29 Strategic Blueprint highlights. This Strategic Blueprint is the newly updated three-year plan; the board will receive the full Strategic Blueprint document in a few weeks to discuss in the May 2026 TDA Board Meeting. The board will be asked to approve the blueprint in the June 2026 Board Meeting. Specific comments, feedback, and action items from the highlights presentation:

- The Blueprint includes an expanded use of economic incentives and grant funding across our organizations, of which Cara provided an overview. Wendy J. asked that staff share what policies and rubrics we plan to use.
- There are a limited number of spaces, and particularly highly affordable ones, for local theater presentations. A suggestion was made for DD to curate and make available a list of potential spaces with contact information for local groups to access.
- A suggestion was made for DD to expand their role in facilitating connections between festivals and local businesses to generate more traffic benefitting the businesses.

The board was asked for feedback on the annual event and how it can be improved in the future:

- Livestream the awards portion of the program so the winners' teams, family and friends can watch remotely.
- Send video clips out to each winner and their organization for social media sharing.

Other comments about the event: tight program that flowed smoothly; good food; good balance of data sharing, promoting the vision and networking.

Susan's retirement celebration will be June 12th from 4:00 – 7:00 PM at Sarah P. Duke Gardens. Invitations will be sent out soon.

Board chair Carlos Rubio adjourned the meeting at 4:25 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Barry Van Deman, Secretary/Treasurer

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