

TUSCOLA TOURISM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

September 16, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Present were Board Members: Devon Flesor-Story, Randy Hastings, Ainslie Heilich, Bill Hill, Drew Hoel, Donna Kidwell, Jennifer Reifsteck and staff Alta Long and Stepheny McMahon.

Drew called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

The minutes of the August 19, 2025 meeting were presented. Bill made a motion to approve and Donna seconded. The motion passed.

Drew presented the financials from August 2025. Devon made a motion to approve, Bill seconded, and the motion passed.

Drew presented that the vote to approve the Tuscola Alumni grant request for \$1600 needed to be ratified as we didn't have a quorum at the last meeting. Drew made the motion to approve the \$1600 grant request by the Tuscola Alumni for Homecoming. Devon seconded and the motion passed.

Brian Lange of Lamar presented to the group a digital billboard that is being installed on Route 36 and Main Street. The billboard will be angled to be visible from those travelling south on Main and West on Route 36. Brian shared that the billboard will rotate (8) flips for (10) seconds each. Longview Bank has already confirmed space and others are considering. The cost is \$650 for a four week period. Brian shared that the design of the slides can be done by his team at no charge. They do have someone watching the billboard 24/7 so no inappropriate content can be posted even though all slides must be approved in advance. The board had a great discussion about the value of purchasing space on the billboard. Donna stated that downtown continues to need more advertising. Randy thinks it's a great opportunity for promotion with a small concern of our capacity to create ongoing content. Brian shared that a hashtag can be created and pull content from social media to post. This is interesting but also a little scary. Alta pointed out that we could choose to only share the hashtag with specific people to ensure the content being pulled was from posts that are posting positive messages. Drew reminded everyone that the city has to remain politically neutral and fair and that if we allow some viewpoints to be posted we will have to allow all. Other suggestions were to support Chamber member businesses via the billboard, invite Tracy Hornaday at the school to provide content, post artwork of local artists to promote them and have digital gallery. Steph also pointed out that we would need to set guidelines of what would be posted and what would not. After much discussion Devon made a motion to enter into a one year contract with Lamar for the billboard at a cost of \$8450. Randy seconded and the motion passed.

Steph shared some information on a panel Christmas Tree for decoration in Kleiss Plaza or wherever the committee and city felt it was appropriate. She pointed out that trees range in size and price from a 24' tree for \$11,500 to a 42' tree for \$78,535. A tree would also need to be installed and dismantled by city staff and we would have to have storage for it throughout the rest of the year. The group discussed but felt like the cost was pretty high for a tree that would only be used 6-8 weeks per year. Ainslie pointed out that the investment in murals can be similarly priced depending on the size but the artwork remains on display year round. While everyone liked the idea of a tree the group decided it was cost prohibitive. Steph suggested maybe a tree that was just lights coming off of the top of a pole could be a simpler option. The group liked the idea of exploring this type of decoration which would be easier to set up and less expensive.

Steph shared that she and Ainslie are starting to talk about another mural for 2026 in the hopes of applying for an art grant. Bill shared that Lumpkin Family Foundation also grants funding for art/murals. Ainslie said he would like to do a large mural on the back of the buildings facing Kleiss Park along with the walkway and it would be helpful to have a budget in mind while making plans.

Steph asked for feedback on Family Fun Day 2025. Bill shared there was great attendance, the music was great and there were a lot of people from out of town. Jennifer said business was good that day. Attendees liked that it was family friendly. Bill suggested better signage showing people how to use the walkway to reach vendors in Kleiss Park was needed. Jennifer heard from attendees that they would have liked the vendors to stay open longer. Devon said she would like more grant money to pay for live music next year as some of the bands pulled out when they weren't going to get paid. Steph suggested she add that to next year's grant request. Devon has reserved the Community Building for the Saturday of Labor Day Weekend 2026 so that vendors can remain open longer in the park.

Ainslie gave an update on Odd Market which is scheduled for Saturday, October 18 from 10:00am-6:00pm. Set up will be Friday 10/17 with some trial runs of how the tattoo process will work. The Odd Fellows have 30 tattoo artists lined up who will rotate between 24 stations. They have secured 60 vendors at a booth space of \$75 each. Local businesses are invited to participate by being open and promoting to the Market attendees. The Odd Market Facebook Event already has 2000 people who are interested in attending. North Central Street will be closed all day Saturday for the vendor set up.

Steph shared that downtown fall decorations will be delivered on Sunday evening 10/5 at Ponder's request. Bill expressed concern about pumpkins being stolen. Steph will ask Rob Hardwick for a barricade to put near the decorations and perhaps a tarp to cover them all indicating to the public that they are not to be taken.

Homecoming Weekend is 9/27 with a full schedule of events. Cast Iron Pub will be using the new stage in Kleiss Plaza. The Festival District with open carry of alcohol will be enacted for the second time. Cindy Little plans to do her Mini-Market on Saturday morning.

Steph shared that downtown trick-or-treat and trunk-or-treat will be on Tuesday 10/28 and per social media Pizza Hut will be doing a trunk-or-treat on Monday 10/27.

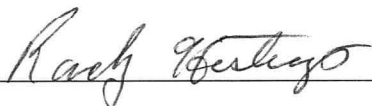
11/7-8 is the Rural Life Antique Show

12/5-6 is Christmastown and the Jingle & Mingle Market. Bill shared that Sarah had passed around some vendor solicitation cards for the J&M Market and heard feedback that \$50/booth space was too expensive. Steph shared that the hours of the event are slightly increased and that there will be additional marketing. Becky's Buddies allowed non-profit organizations to have free space and as the Chamber is hosting the event, they are not offering that deal anymore. However, Hometown Grounds has offered free space to a few groups. Bill also said many vendors are already booked that weekend. Ainslie pointed out that when you charge a bit more you are more likely to attract vendors from out of town who have a wider variety of products to sell.

Randy made a motion to adjourn. Jennifer seconded and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Stepheny McMahon
Tuscola Tourism Director

Approved  Date 2-17-26