

TUSCOLA TOURISM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

November 18, 2025

Meeting Minutes

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

Drew called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m.

The minutes of the October 21st meeting were presented. Randy made a motion to approve and Jennifer seconded. The motion passed.

Drew presented the financials from October. Bill made a motion to approve, Donna seconded, and the motion passed.

Steph shared that the new replacement "Open" flags have arrived and are available to any participating business whose flag is getting frayed. She reported that Shop Small Saturday is next Saturday, November 29th and that she has scheduled social media posts and will be distributing canvas tote bags for promotion. The Great Inflatable display has taken on a life of its own and there are now (20) communities participating. A local resident selected "Trees" for Tuscola and is leading that initiative. Steph shared copies of the Christmastown Schedule which will continue to evolve as more activities are developed. She also shared the Jingle & Mingle Market flyer which has thirty plus vendors planned. Finally, Daphne Coffey at the Douglas County Museum, Devon Black at the Library and Steph are brainstorming activities to commemorate the IL250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Anyone interested is welcome to join their efforts.

Richard Kidwell was in attendance to give a report on the Rural Life Antique Show which was held 11/7-8. Richard reported that:

- The Kidwells have hosted the show twice a year for 11 years.
- Other participating communities are Arthur, Arcola and Chrisman
- Tuscola had 5-55 dealers come to town from 17 states
- The Kidwells host vendors at two locations in Tuscola
- Rural Life Antique show collects customer info to give away cash door prizes. The names collected are used for future advertising efforts and demonstrate that
 - Customers come from 24 different states
 - 96 towns in Illinois are represented by customers
 - 50 towns in Indiana are represented
 - Customers come from as far away as Maine, New York, Florida, Oregon and Texas
 - 10-12 men help to set up the peg board walls and paper them
 - Bill Hill is the supervisor
- Rural Life advertises in the Maine Digest, local newspapers and mails hundreds of show cards
- All motels are full on antique weekend

- Tax dollars are generated by sales by vendors and customers at restaurants, grocery, gas, hardware, etc.
- The crowd seems to have more younger attendees with families
- Attendance for Fall 2025 was just under 1200 people
- All agreed there seemed to be more customer traffic this year

Ainslie created a proposal for a new mural for the back of the buildings which face the north side of Kleiss Park. He gave the following updates on the proposal:

- The murals will continue with well know paintings with a Tuscola Twist
- He's basing most off murals off of famous paintings housed in Illinois
- Ainslie and his team would like to start painting in May
- Suggested if needed we could solicit corporate type sponsors as in Renaissance times.
- Ainslie pointed out that the proposed mural could also commemorate the IL250 which would make it eligible for special grants. Steph will investigate.
- Bill suggested looking at the Lumpkin Family Foundation for funds
- The proposal is the first iteration of the murals which will most likely continue to evolve.
- Jennifer gave permission for her building which houses Pawsitive Vibes to be painted with the mural which includes the back and east side of the walkway.
- Steph and Ainslie will continue to work on this project and report back

Steph reminded everyone about the holiday window painting and that there would be a scavenger hunt again this year. Petals & Plants purchased the Farm Bureau building on Sale Street and is relocating there. Devon pointed out that their previous building is owned by the Masons and is in need of repairs as they try to attract a new tenant.

Jennifer shared a reminder to support each other and send customers to other local businesses.

Randy made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:49. Devon seconded and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Stepheny McMahon
Tuscola Tourism Director

Approved Randy G. Hunter Date 2-17-26