



**MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
REGULAR MEETING**

City Hall Conference Room  
300 W. Crowell Street  
Monroe, NC 28112  
Thursday, March 14, 2024 - 8:30 AM

**AGENDA**

1. Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of February 8, 2024
2. Finance/Occupancy Report
3. Budget Presentation and Call for Public Hearing
4. Science Center Update
5. Dowd Center Theatre Update

**MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**CONFERENCE ROOM**

**300 W. CROWELL STREET, MONROE, NC 28112**

**FEBRUARY 8, 2024 – 8:30 A.M.**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Vice Chairwoman Pat Kahle (8:32 a.m.), Chairman Robert Burns, Arpan Bhakta, Gina Day, Joyce Rentschler, and Ron Hinson

**Absent:** MaryAnn Rasberry and Sheila Crunkleton

**Staff Present:** Communications and Tourism Director Pete Hovanec, Monroe Science Center Supervisor Lauren Fike, Communications Specialist Bradley Lucore, Finance Director Lisa Strickland (8:33 a.m.), Communications and Tourism Assistant Alison Nichols, Dowd Center Theatre Supervisor James Vesce, Webmaster Payton Mills, Senior Staff Attorney Terry Sholar, and Assistant to the City Manager Lisa Hollowell

**Staff Absent:** City Manager Mark Watson, Downtown Director Matt Black, and Accounting Manager Ashley Ivey

**Visitors:** None

Chairman Burns called the Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of February 8, 2024 to order at 8:30 a.m.

**Item No. 1 Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of December 14, 2023** Mr. Hinson made a motion to approve the Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of December 14, 2023. Ms. Day seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Hinson, Bhakta, Day, and Rentschler

NAYS: None

**Item No. 2 Finance/Occupancy Report** Mr. Hovanec discussed collections, which continue to trend upward. Finances remain strong with almost \$1 million in operating and about the same in the capital fund balance. TDA is in good shape on the financial side. Staff will present the budget for the upcoming year at next month's meeting. Mr. Hovanec stated that he is thinking of a new capital project to complement the Science Center and will bring it up for discussion at next month's meeting. Staff is also looking at creating a Visitors' Guide to promote the City in light of all the amenities the City now boasts.

Chairman Burns asked how the website is coming along.

Mr. Hovanec answered that the contract is approved, and staff is waiting for Civic Plus to respond to requests to start work.

Chairman Burns asked about the timeline for the project.

Mr. Hovanec responded that the contract has been approved for three weeks, and the project should take about three months to implement. This new website will be beneficial for the City and will involve a lot of interaction with all City departments.

Mr. Bhakta requested that hotel representatives be involved and given the opportunity to offer feedback, noting that a direct booking feature on the website would be ideal.

Mr. Hovanec responded affirmatively.

Chairman Burns asked if there will be a theme in the design layout and if it would translate to the creation of the Visitors' Guide.

Mr. Hovanec answered that there definitely will be a theme that will be dictated by the City's current branding/style guide to ensure consistency across all platforms and media.

Ms. Strickland stated that the collections are enough to cover the debt service, which is positive.

Mr. Hovanec explained the budget approval process, which will start next month and culminate in Council approval. Staff is open to any budget suggestions from members.

**Item No. 3 Science Center Update** Mr. Hovanec reminded the Board that the Science Center held its one-year celebration in January and had success with a semi-private reception and a day of free admission to the public. Staff is currently looking at new travel exhibits.

Ms. Fike reported that staff accomplished all its goals in January. Currently staff is focused on booking birthday parties and school groups. The booking process is time-consuming, but the numbers are good.

Mr. Hovanec stated that new travel exhibits put in place this summer will carry the Science Center through the end of the year. The Darden exhibit will be moved to the front of the house. School groups tour on Tuesdays, and having a dedicated day for schools is working really well. There is some wear and tear on exhibits, but overall everything is holding up well.

**Item No. 4 Dowd Center Theatre Update** Mr. Hovanec said that staff is planning for next year and has seen success with movies and activities. Currently the focus is on reaching areas farther out in Union County and beyond.

Mr. Vesce stated that movies produce varying turnout. There are a lot of requests for children's programming, and the audience for the movie "Frozen" saw 10 times the normal audience numbers. The theater will present several Black History events this month in conjunction with the Union County Community Arts Council: an art exhibition curating the work of Ryan Cureton, "Black is the Color" documentary with talk back in partnership with the Union County Public Library, and the self-produced ticketed live jazz concert "Jazz, Jive, and Jam" with tribute to Langston Hughes. The theater is also

sponsoring a high school film festival as an area of reaching out to the community. Submissions of seven-minute films shot on smartphones with the theme “I Am, We Are” will be accepted and judged.

Mr. Hovanec remarked that there are busy months ahead at the theater. It is meeting the goal of bringing people to Downtown Monroe and serving as a catalyst for growth there. Staff will be looking at some deep cleaning and painting to combat wear and tear on the facility.

Mr. Hovanec noted that staff is still waiting on final financial reconciliation for the air show but expects that the numbers will fall within acceptable costs even though costs this year were 15-20% higher than usual. Staff is already planning for next year’s show and navigating around growth at the airport. The Southeast Council of Air Shows regional conference will be held in Monroe at the end of this month and will use the theater, the science center, and the airport. This will bring 80-100 people to Monroe to use hotels and eat in restaurants and is great exposure for the City.

Mr. Bhakta asked what the capacity was at the Ag Center.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle responded that it’s technically 600, but 575 is tight.

Mr. Bhakta noted that a conference of 150-200 people is the sweet spot for hotel occupancy.

Mr. Hinson asked if a hotel were coming to Downtown.

Mr. Hovanec answered that there is definitely talk, but nothing is happening yet. There have been studies and discussion and a location identified.

Chairman Burns added that people are investigating hotel brands for the location.

Mr. Hovanec said that the project is probably five years away from happening. Despite current hotel numbers being good, the City could use more hotels. The hotel behind Hilltop has been sold and may become a new hotel.

Chairman Burns announced that as mayor, he has recently formed three new committees, one of which is a Special Needs and Disabilities Committee, and that he hopes to get involvement from TDA events. Councilwoman Thompson will facilitate this committee and would like for TDA events to consider accommodations for citizens with special needs.

Mr. Hovanec remarked that the Science Center has done a great job of that.

Mr. Hovanec stated that Melanie with the Arts Council has started a consortium of arts/entertainment events with the end goal being a clearinghouse of information about all events in Monroe and Union County. This could be especially helpful for hotels to guide guests to entertainment opportunities during their stay in Monroe.

Mr. Hinson said that ten years ago, Downtown Monroe was dead, and now it is alive.

Vice Chairwoman Kahle noted that the City’s leadership in moving the Dowd Center Theatre forward was the catalyst for that.

Ms. Rentschler made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Hinson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Hinson, Bhakta, Day, Kahle, and Rentschler

NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:06 a.m.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Burns, Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Alison H. Nichols

MTDA/2-8-24

**CITY OF MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA  
HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX COLLECTIONS HISTORY**

| <u>Month</u>                       | <u>Collections</u> |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               | <u>Total from</u> | <u>Inception</u> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|
|                                    | <u>FY2014</u>      | <u>FY2015</u> | <u>FY2016</u> | <u>FY2017</u> | <u>FY2018</u> | <u>FY2019</u> | <u>FY2020</u> | <u>FY2021</u> | <u>FY2022</u> | <u>FY2023</u> | <u>FY2024</u>     |                  |
| July                               | \$28,654.11        | \$43,035.55   | \$50,935.50   | \$57,757.87   | \$49,237.75   | \$52,555.67   | \$50,502.69   | 36,361.82     | \$58,632.48   | \$77,203.59   | \$71,311.91       |                  |
| August                             | 30,116.04          | 36,977.80     | 48,845.23     | 56,430.47     | 53,328.43     | 53,326.15     | 56,119.30     | 33,717.52     | \$57,897.52   | \$72,112.89   | \$70,250.44       |                  |
| September                          | 26,188.56          | 36,170.00     | 43,971.63     | 52,501.28     | 49,280.40     | 57,322.54     | 54,601.79     | 36,333.99     | \$57,646.95   | \$67,860.45   | \$70,961.74       |                  |
| October                            | 32,977.87          | 39,730.02     | 50,450.31     | 62,852.14     | 54,883.77     | 61,478.56     | 58,576.63     | 47,918.88     | \$60,324.82   | \$72,465.20   | \$78,388.15       |                  |
| November                           | 28,593.65          | 36,201.55     | 44,935.28     | 53,718.49     | 52,159.03     | 52,344.58     | 44,677.93     | 33,689.77     | \$62,776.88   | \$69,846.82   | \$66,133.93       |                  |
| December                           | 24,367.81          | 29,698.95     | 37,857.15     | 42,905.99     | 43,020.41     | 41,248.49     | 35,855.88     | 30,608.58     | \$55,627.44   | \$58,041.30   | \$61,688.92       |                  |
| January                            | 28,568.49          | 33,174.57     | 47,446.36     | 49,314.76     | 44,917.89     | 45,790.70     | 37,998.34     | 34,555.26     | \$47,425.62   | \$57,371.07   | \$66,446.68       |                  |
| February                           | 31,618.26          | 43,506.47     | 49,690.07     | 50,786.19     | 49,090.46     | 50,174.09     | 41,074.64     | 35,790.58     | \$55,074.93   | \$64,640.72   | \$0.00            |                  |
| March                              | 35,351.64          | 45,588.42     | 54,238.06     | 58,370.59     | 58,151.91     | 55,628.08     | 44,213.52     | 49,982.86     | \$68,473.24   | \$77,373.44   | \$0.00            |                  |
| April                              | 33,561.95          | 44,006.59     | 56,185.32     | 54,463.65     | 55,541.22     | 52,298.83     | 24,603.84     | 54,315.36     | \$72,023.49   | \$69,155.17   | \$0.00            |                  |
| May                                | 33,436.34          | 46,174.97     | 55,415.35     | 59,183.07     | 56,465.45     | 58,606.08     | 30,748.09     | 57,003.16     | \$72,299.75   | \$76,655.92   | \$0.00            |                  |
| June                               | 37,334.32          | 46,835.97     | 56,036.83     | 53,968.10     | 56,273.88     | 54,481.57     | 36,285.75     | 57,435.41     | \$72,729.08   | \$74,197.82   | \$0.00            |                  |
| Penalties/Interest                 | 2.00               | 130.10        | 40.29         |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |                   |                  |
| Total Collections                  | \$370,771.04       | \$481,230.96  | \$596,047.38  | \$652,252.60  | \$622,350.60  | \$635,255.34  | \$515,258.40  | \$507,713.19  | \$740,932.20  | \$836,924.39  | \$485,181.77      |                  |
| <b>Distribution of Collections</b> |                    |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |               |                   |                  |
| Administrative Fee                 | \$11,123.13        | \$14,436.93   | \$17,881.42   | \$16,522.53   | \$16,415.73   | \$16,352.55   | \$15,152.58   | \$15,077.13   | \$17,409.32   | \$17,296.09   | \$14,555.45       | \$447,662.62     |
| Operating (2/3)                    | \$119,882.64       | \$273,630.07  | \$385,443.97  | \$423,820.05  | \$403,956.58  | \$412,601.86  | \$333,403.88  | \$328,424.04  | \$482,348.59  | \$546,418.86  | \$313,750.88      | \$4,974,842.76   |
| Capital (1/3)                      | \$239,765.27       | \$193,163.96  | \$192,721.99  | \$211,910.02  | \$201,978.29  | \$206,300.93  | \$166,701.94  | \$164,212.02  | \$241,174.29  | \$273,209.43  | \$156,875.44      | \$4,150,336.33   |
|                                    | \$370,771.04       | \$481,230.96  | \$596,047.38  | \$652,252.60  | \$622,350.60  | \$635,255.34  | \$515,258.40  | \$507,713.19  | \$740,932.20  | \$836,924.39  | \$485,181.77      | \$9,572,841.71   |

**Operating Fund Activity:**

| <u>Fiscal Year</u> | <u>Total Revenue*</u> | <u>Operating Expense</u> | <u>Capital Fund Transfer Out</u> | <u>ncrease/(Decrease in Net Assets</u> | <u>Fund Balance</u> |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 2004               | 172,430               | 249                      | 114,830                          | 57,351                                 | 57,351              |
| 2005               | 245,420               | 49,354                   | 163,613                          | 32,453                                 | 89,804              |
| 2006               | 268,539               | 70,628                   | 176,514                          | 21,397                                 | 111,201             |
| 2007               | 292,730               | 69,590                   | 191,873                          | 31,267                                 | 142,468             |
| 2008               | 319,940               | 79,519                   | 210,593                          | 29,828                                 | 172,296             |
| 2009               | 327,232               | 85,108                   | 217,376                          | 24,748                                 | 197,044             |
| 2010               | 286,292               | 105,147                  | 190,079                          | (8,934)                                | 188,110             |
| 2011               | 306,323               | 141,300                  | 199,809                          | (34,786)                               | 153,324             |
| 2012               | 338,380               | 218,328                  | 214,473                          | (94,421)                               | 58,903              |
| 2013               | 366,349               | 157,025                  | 223,162                          | (13,839)                               | 45,064              |
| 2014               | 389,562               | 132,144                  | 239,765                          | 17,653                                 | 62,717              |
| 2015               | 505,323               | 229,769                  | 193,164                          | 82,390                                 | 145,107             |
| 2016               | 603,262               | 324,214                  | 192,722                          | 86,326                                 | 231,433             |
| 2017               | 677,786               | 243,750                  | 211,910                          | 222,126                                | 453,559             |
| 2018               | 634,804               | 270,913                  | 201,978                          | 161,913                                | 615,472             |
| 2019               | 643,745               | 257,345                  | 206,301                          | 180,099                                | 795,571             |
| 2020               | 599,412               | 270,236                  | 166,702                          | 162,473                                | 958,044             |
| 2021               | 501,615               | 385,603                  | 164,212                          | (48,200)                               | 909,844             |
| 2022               | 732,524               | 459,705                  | 241,174                          | 31,645                                 | 941,489             |
| 2023               | 973,576               | 720,369                  | 273,209                          | (20,003)                               | 921,486             |

**Fund Balance as of June 30, 2023**

\$921,486

\* Includes total occupancy tax collection less administrative fee plus interest earnings and revenue for The Tinker Belle.

**Capital Fund Activity:**

|                                                                         |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Revenue                                                                 | \$4,150,336.33 |
| Proceeds from 2018B Limited Obligation Bonds - Science Center           | \$3,651,935.65 |
| Interest Earned Trustee Account for 2018B Limited Obligation Bonds      | \$84,497.15    |
| Investment Earnings                                                     | 107,084.93     |
| Donations/Sponsorships                                                  | 440,233.25     |
| Grants                                                                  | 100,000.00     |
| Expenses:                                                               |                |
| Professional Fees for Civic Center                                      | 86,838         |
| Monroe Park Master Plan and Site Assessment                             | 23,058         |
| Air Museum Advance Planning                                             | 19,240         |
| Purchase "The Tinker Belle"                                             | 150,000        |
| Capital Improvement to interior of "The Tinker Belle"                   | 18,500         |
| Storage Building                                                        | 8,175          |
| Tourism Study                                                           | 7,500          |
| Snow Machine                                                            | 6,129          |
| Tinker Belle Navigational Equipment                                     | 1,480          |
| Center Theater Property                                                 | 248,273        |
| Tinker Belle Engine Purchase                                            | 80,046         |
| Tinker Belle Tail Wheel                                                 | 5,151          |
| Purchase of Property Adjacent to Center Theater                         | 260,497        |
| Purchase of 318 E. Franklin Street Property                             | 449,875        |
| Capital Improvements to Science Center Building                         | 3,866,342      |
| Architectural/Engineering Services/Exhibits Consulting - Science Center | 669,225        |
| Fund Raising Services - Science Center                                  | 100,439        |
| Capitalized Equipment/Exhibits - Science Center                         | 542,149        |
| Center Theater Expansion - Consulting Services                          | 62,000         |
| Branding Initiative/Website Design                                      | 33,830         |
| 2018B Limited Obligation Bonds - Issuance Costs - Science Center        | 84,256         |
| 2018B Limited Obligation Bonds - Debt Service & Annual Admin Fees       | 583,082        |
| ERP Project                                                             | 3,220          |
| NC DNCR Grant Capital Equipment Expenses                                | 99,346         |

**Cash Balance of the Capital Project Fund****as of February 26, 2024**\$1,125,436.13**Portion of Cash Balance Currently Committed in Projects:**

|                                |                     |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Projects:                      |                     |
| Branding Initiative            | \$ -                |
| Monroe Science Center Building | 4,208.56            |
| Center Theatre Expansion       | -                   |
| Science Center Exhibits        | 34,731.06           |
|                                | <u>\$ 38,939.62</u> |

**Unreserved Cash Balance of the Capital Project Fund** \$1,086,496.51**(\$0.00)**

| Occupancy Tax Special Revenue Fund Operating Activity FY 2024 |                                     | <u>Budget</u>   | <u>FYTD Actual</u> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Revenue:                                                      | Occupancy Tax                       | 213,723         | \$ 135,391         |
|                                                               | Sales of TinkerBelle                | 0               | 112,500            |
|                                                               | Investment Earnings                 | 7,060           | 8,737              |
|                                                               | Total                               | 220,783         | 256,628            |
| Expenses:                                                     | Debt Service - Principal & Interest | 255,785         | 30,783             |
|                                                               | Debt Service - Bond Admin Fees      | 880             | 1,056              |
|                                                               | Total                               | 256,665         | 31,839             |
| <b>Net Income (Loss)</b>                                      |                                     | <u>(35,882)</u> | <u>224,789</u>     |

| Monroe Science Center Operating Activity FY 2024 |                                               | <u>Budget</u>    | <u>FYTD Actual</u> |
|--------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Revenue:                                         | Admission Fees                                | 350,000          | \$ 103,713         |
|                                                  | Gift Shop Sales                               | -                | \$ 19,688          |
|                                                  | Birthday Party Packages                       | 10,000           | \$ 8,666           |
|                                                  | Misc Annual Membership                        | 5,000            | \$ -               |
|                                                  | Rent Science Center Facility                  | 10,000           | -                  |
|                                                  | Total                                         | 375,000          | 132,066            |
| Expenses:                                        | Salaries & Benefits                           | 447,529          | 220,237            |
|                                                  | Bank Service Charges                          | 2,500            | 4,298              |
|                                                  | Technical Contracted Services                 | 11,757           | 6,197              |
|                                                  | Repairs & Maintenance - Buildings & Equipment | 11,670           | 2,390              |
|                                                  | Software License & Support                    | 15,502           | 15,502             |
|                                                  | Repairs & Maintenance - Copiers               | 100              | 497                |
|                                                  | Property Damage/Wellness & Clinic Cost        | 3,248            | 3,248              |
|                                                  | Marketing & Promotions/Printing               | 25,000           | 2,622              |
|                                                  | Training and Travel Exp                       | 2,000            | 889                |
|                                                  | General Supplies                              | 3,000            | 3,828              |
|                                                  | Small Equipment                               | 500              | 1,689              |
|                                                  | PC's Peripherals                              | 0                | -                  |
|                                                  | Utilities & Telecommunications                | 22,049           | 18,316             |
|                                                  | Items for Resale - Giftshop                   | 31,266           | 9,852              |
|                                                  | Organizational Dues                           | 10,000           | 420                |
|                                                  | Subscriptions & Publications                  | 0                | 517                |
|                                                  | Special Events                                | 7,000            | 603                |
|                                                  | Other Operating Expense & Cost Allocations    | 5,521            | 4,410              |
|                                                  | Total                                         | 598,643          | 295,516            |
| <b>Net Income (Loss)</b>                         |                                               | <u>(223,643)</u> | <u>(163,449)</u>   |



## **STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Tourism Development Authority

**VIA:** Mark Watson, City Manager

**DATE:** March 14, 2024

**FROM:** Peter Hovanec, Communications and Tourism Office

**SUBJECT:** Call for Public Hearing to be held April 11, 2024 for FY 2024-2025 Budget

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### **SUMMARY STATEMENT**

The consideration of calling for a Public Hearing on the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget to be held on April 11, 2024 at 8:30 a.m.

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### **REVIEW**

North Carolina General Statute 159-12 stipulates that a public hearing be held to receive public comment on the proposed Annual Budget prior to adoption of such Budget.

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the TDA board call for a public hearing to be held on April 11, 2024 at 8:30 a.m. to receive public input.

Attachment(s):



## **STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Tourism Development Authority

**VIA:** Mark Watson, City Manager

**DATE:** March 14, 2024

**FROM:** Peter Hovanec, Communications and Tourism Director

**SUBJECT:** Science Center Update

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### **SUMMARY STATEMENT**

The TDA will be presented an update on science center attendance numbers and programming.

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### **REVIEW**

Staff has been focused on booking advance sales: groups, field trips and birthday parties. We hope to have our first traveling exhibit come in May to stay throughout November with a company called Minotaur Mazes: Rain Forest Adventures.

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

No action is needed at this time.

Attachment(s):

## **STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Tourism Development Authority

**VIA:** Mark Watson, City Manager

**DATE:** March 14, 2024

**FROM:** Pete Hovanec, Communications and Tourism Director

**SUBJECT:** Dowd Center Theatre Update

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### **SUMMARY STATEMENT**

The TDA will be presented an update on events for the Dowd Center Theatre.

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### **REVIEW**

Current Movie Calendar: *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* 3/9; *The Wizard of Oz* 3/23; *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* 4/6.

Previous Bookings: Sept. 16 & Oct. 14 *Union Symphony*; Sept. 29 *Spin Doctors*, Sept. 30 *AJ Lee & Blue Summit*, Oct. 7 *Ruben Studdard*; Oct. 6-19 *UCCAC Juried Art Show*; Nov. 8-11 *Lanti Performing Arts Presents Peter Pan Jr.*; Nov. 16-19 *Acting Out Studios Presents Footloose*; Nov. 26 *The Embers feat. Craig Woolard*; Dec. 2 *Union County Playmakers Present Frosty The Snowman*; Dec. 3 *Havilah Dance Presents Nutcracker Sweets*; Dec. 8 *Noel & Maria: Home For The Holidays*; Dec. 9 *Lee Greenwood*; Dec. 16 *SOP Presents Bible Stories*

Current Bookings: Feb 1 *Economic Development Groundhog Day*; Feb. 9 *The Ryan Cureton Exhibit*; Feb. 3 *Union Symphony*; Feb. 15 *UCL presents Black Is The Color*; Feb. 23 *Jazz, Jive & Jam: A Black History Month Joint*; March 2 *Stephen Freeman As Elvis*; March 13 & 14 *UCCAC Presents Cat In The Hat*; March 15 *The Malpass Brothers*; April 12-13 *Downtown Monroe Art Walk*; April 17-19 *The Shakespeare Time-Traveling Speakeasy*; April 20 *Union Symphony Orchestra: Art, Music and Film: Roots*

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

No action is needed at this time.