



**MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
REGULAR MEETING**

City Hall Conference Room  
300 W. Crowell Street  
Monroe, NC 28112  
Thursday, January 8, 2026 - 8:30 AM

**AGENDA**

1. Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Meeting of October 9, 2025
2. Finance/Occupancy Report
3. Dowd Center Theatre Update
4. Monroe Science Center Update
5. Air Show Update

**MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY  
REGULAR MEETING  
CONFERENCE ROOM  
300 W. CROWELL STREET, MONROE, NC 28112  
OCTOBER 9, 2025 – 8:30 A.M.  
MINUTES**

**Present:** Chairman Robert Burns (arr. 8:33 a.m.), MaryAnn Rasberry, Sheila Crunkleton, Joyce Rentschler (arr. 8:45 a.m.), Ron Hinson, Gina Day, Jennifer Moore, Bill Heisner, and Arpan Bhakta

**Absent:**

**Staff Present:** Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director Pete Hovanec, Finance Director Lisa Strickland, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Administrative Services Supervisor Alison Nichols, Tourism Administrative Assistant Kristen Hensley, Assistant City Manager Jeff Wells, Science Center Supervisor Lauren Fike, Dowd Center Theatre Supervisor Tim Pappas, Senior Staff Attorney Terry Sholar, Staff Attorney Scott Hunt.

**Staff Absent:**

**Visitors:** Gracie Presson

Chairman Burns called the Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of October 9, 2025 to order at 8:33 a.m.

**Item No. 1 Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of**

**August 14, 2025.** Sheila Crunkleton made a motion to approve the Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of August 14, 2025. Mary Ann Rasberry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Hinson, Day, Moore, Bhakta, Heisner, Crunkleton, Rasberry

NAYS: None

At this time, new Board Members Jennifer Moore and Bill Heisner were introduced and welcomed.

Jen Moore introduced herself as a local business owner in Monroe and stated she has been in Monroe for the past 5 years, and in Union County for the past 10 years.

Bill Heisner introduced himself and stated he has been in Monroe 25+ years. He worked in Charlotte as a stock broker and also worked in commercial real estate. He stated he is semi-retired now and has more time to devote to public service. He stated he has previously served on Boards for the Red Cross, Union Academy and Loaves & Fishes.

**Item No. 2 Presentation of the Fiscal Year 2025 Audit Report:** Lisa Strickland, Finance Director of the City of Monroe introduced Eric Van Orden of Martin Starnes & Associates, CPAs, P.A. to present via Zoom.

Eric Van Orden stated via Zoom that his firm issued an Unmodified Opinion (Clean Opinion), identified no significant deficiencies or material internal control weaknesses, and praised the City's cooperative staff.

He stated expenditures increased due to several reasons, including additional staff hired at the Science Center, a new copier lease and expanded printing needs and a new vehicle purchase. He stated the total fund balance decreased due to expenditures exceeding revenues.

Lisa Strickland further explained that we are maintaining the status quo. We used some fund balance to pay for the new vehicle, which she emphasized is totally acceptable to use the balance for this purpose.

Lisa Strickland stated revenues for occupancy tax continue to increase, up 3.6% from last year.

She also noted that the Science Center is very well managed and there is good participation in the programs there, and we are able to support all operations due to both the fees charged and the occupancy tax revenue.

Lisa Strickland explained that 66% of revenue stays in the Operating Fund and 33% goes to debt services, such as payments for the purchase of the building used for the Science Center.

Lisa Strickland noted there is \$30,000 accumulated for another project in the future, and \$413,000 balance available for redoing Science Center exhibits or other projects in the future.

Ron Hinson made a motion to approve the Audited Financial Statements Report. Arpan Bhakta seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Rentschler, Day, Moore, Heisner, Crunkleton, Rasberry, Hinson, Bhakta

NAYS: None

**Item No. 3 Finance/Occupancy Report:** Lisa Strickland presented reports on Occupancy Tax. She stated revenue collection increased year over year and the cash fund balance is \$881,000. She noted that 33% or \$287,000 per year goes to debt services, but we are collecting over \$300,000. Actuals for the Science Center show a net loss but this is not really a loss because the Occupancy Tax money subsidizes the Science Center operations.

Pete Hovanec discussed how there is not a lot of movement on additional hotels in the city and noted Monroe followed national trends of travel especially in July, with especially high numbers for July.

Gina Day and Arpan Bhakta both agreed July was busy and attributed the volume to travelers passing through Monroe.

**Item No. 4 Dowd Center Theatre Update:** Pete Hovanec discussed the busy Fall line-up at the Theatre.

Tim Pappas also reviewed upcoming acts Trish Suhr and Flip Orley, as well as the Art Walk this week and a Gallery opening tonight with two new artists featured.

Tim Pappas explained that Comedian/Hypnotist Flip Orley will be performing for 50% of ticket sales, with 50% of sales going to the Theatre. Tim Pappas stated ticket sales are good so far and sales for other shows like the Yacht Rock show are about to sell out. Tim Pappas stated ticket revenues are \$58,000 so far and tracking above last year. He also noted the great attendance at the Theatre's movies. He discussed the "Spooky" movie series playing throughout October and a special upcoming sing along version of Wicked. In December, the Dowd will feature Santa for photo ops.

Sheila Crunkleton inquired about season passes and Tim Pappas said once the talent is lined up, he'll be able to determine which model will work best for season passes.

Tim Pappas also noted how he is working on student incentives for local schools South Piedmont Community College and Wingate University to get young people interested in the Theatre.

Pete Hovanec praised Tim Pappas' social media presence and elaborated on the Traditional Santa who will appear at the Dowd for free pictures in 4-hour increments for approximately 18 different days this winter. During the photo days, cartoons will play in the Theatre and all will be free of charge. Some concessions will be sold during these events.

Pete Hovanec also discussed how cameras are being installed at the Dowd.

Sheila Crunkleton praised the good energy of both Tim Pappas and all the staff at the Theatre.

**Item No. 5 Science Center Update** Pete Hovanec noted that the Science Center has slowed down with the kids back in school and that the travelling exhibit ended its residency at the Science Center but Lauren Fike has placed several exhibits in the space where the travelling exhibit had been.

Lauren Fike noted how school groups have started coming back to the Science Center. She stated that during the slower times the staff was able to thoroughly clean and repair the exhibits which received a lot of wear and tear during the busy summer season.

Lauren Fike noted how Ashe Barker, Marketing Manager has gone to many community events recently to engage the community and raise awareness for the Science Center.

Lauren Fike noted how the Science Center has a partnership with Wingate University to perform a research study exploring parent/child interactions at 3 exhibits with 3 different levels of technology. The researchers from Wingate observe and record the parent/child interactions at each exhibit and analyze the data.

Pete Hovanec discussed how the Science Center had experienced a lot of wear and tear over the past few years and praised the dedicated staff who maintain and repair the equipment.

Pete Hovanec emphasized his commitment to drawing more people to the Science Center and to downtown Monroe and at the suggestion of Ron Hinson has begun researching mini golf.

Pete Hovanec has received some information from Harris Miniature Golf Courses and they are preparing a quote of approximately \$310,000 for an 18-hole handicap accessible course which could be constructed adjacent to the Science Center.

Pete Hovanec explained that this is all in the early/preliminary stages but has the potential to generate revenue. He stated that perhaps the operations could be incorporated into the Science Center operations, for example, when customers arrive at the Science Center they can purchase tickets for the Science Center only, or tickets for the golf course only, or purchase tickets for both the golf course and the Science Center (at a discounted rate for both).

Pete Hovanec believes this addition could be another way to bring customers to downtown Monroe and keep them in Downtown Monroe for entertainment, dining and shopping.

He also presented the idea of selling sponsorships for each hole to offset costs. He used Kiwanis as an example to sponsor one of the holes on the golf course.

Mayor Robert Burns agreed it would be easy to market sponsorships once plans are in place for the golf course.

Sheila Crunkleton expressed concerns about how crowded the parking lot by the Franklin Court Grille remains at all times, that it always seems to be full. Pete Hovanec demonstrated on a map that the area for the golf course would be adjacent to the parking lot in question.

Mary Ann Raspberry inquired where the Airplane which is currently in the outdoor area at the Science Center would go if that space were taken over for the golf course.

Pete Hovanec explained that the airplane is on loan from Warriors and Warbirds.

Pete Hovanec said part of the fenced outdoor area may also be used for an enclosed climbing structure in the future.

Pete Hovanec announced that Lauren Fike will be moving into a Tourism General Manager position. She will maintain her responsibilities as Supervisor at the Science Center but also take on more administrative duties within the Tourism Department. Pete Hovanec praised Lauren Fike as a valuable asset to the City of Monroe and emphasized that this is well-deserved.

Sheila Crunkleton also praised Lauren Fike's creativity.

**Item No. 6 Air Show Update** Pete Hovanec explained how the government shutdown has impacted the filing of critical Air Show documentation. He praised the staff at the FAA who were able to complete all necessary paperwork just before the shutdown took effect.

Pete Hovanec explained how the Air Show is being promoted on social media, and stated there is approximately \$20,000 in ticket sales so far.

Packets for the Board Members to attend the Air Show will be distributed in the coming weeks.

Pete Hovanec explained how this could be the last Air Show due to construction at the airport. Mary Ann Raspberry inquired how construction would affect the Air Show and Pete Hovanec explained that there would likely not be space for the performances due to the proposed construction and expansion improvements at the airport. He estimated 1/3 of the space would be eliminated and that the space

confinements may prevent Air Shows in the future. However, he stated Air Shows may be able to proceed on a smaller scale.

Pete Hovanec presented a brief explanation of some projects within the Parks & Recreation Department, such as a Golf Simulator at the Country Club, which may open the first of next year and the possibility of Parks & Rec taking over the 3 City lakes to manage activities at those locations.

Sheila Crunkleton made a motion to adjourn. Joyce Rentschler seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Rasberry, Hinson, Day, Moore, Heisner, Bhakta, Crunkleton, Rentschler

NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:26 a.m.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Burns, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kristen Hensley

MTDA/10-9-25

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

Month	Collections								Total from	Total from	Inception	
	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025		FY2026
July	\$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	\$70,875.15	\$77,308.09	
August	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	\$76,578.66	75,481.12	
September	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	\$80,412.65	73,710.88	
October	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	\$90,971.64	83,244.67	
November	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	\$78,695.22	70,001.39	
December	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	\$62,565.29	-	
January	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	\$68,625.18	-	
February	49,690.07	50,786.19	49,090.46	50,174.09	41,074.64	35,790.58	\$55,074.93	\$64,640.72	\$62,730.49	\$53,143.41	-	
March	54,238.06	58,370.59	58,151.91	55,628.08	44,213.52	49,982.86	\$68,473.24	\$77,373.44	\$73,443.47	\$99,912.45	-	
April	56,185.32	54,463.65	55,541.22	52,298.83	24,603.84	54,315.36	\$72,023.49	\$69,155.17	\$68,463.29	\$77,453.41	-	
May	55,415.35	59,183.07	56,465.45	58,606.08	30,748.09	57,003.16	\$72,299.75	\$76,655.92	\$77,856.16	\$86,423.02	-	
June	56,036.83	53,968.10	56,273.88	54,481.57	36,285.75	57,435.41	\$72,729.08	\$74,197.82	\$80,517.94	\$82,066.87	-	
Penalties/Interest	40.29											
<b>Total Collections</b>	<b>\$596,047.38</b>	<b>\$652,252.60</b>	<b>\$622,350.60</b>	<b>\$635,255.34</b>	<b>\$515,258.40</b>	<b>\$507,713.19</b>	<b>\$740,932.20</b>	<b>\$836,924.39</b>	<b>\$848,193.12</b>	<b>\$927,722.95</b>	<b>\$379,746.15</b>	
<b>Distribution of Collections</b>												
Administrative Fee	\$17,881.42	\$16,522.53	\$16,415.73	\$16,352.55	\$15,152.58	\$15,077.13	\$17,409.32	\$17,296.09	\$18,481.93	\$19,277.23	\$11,392.38	\$482,258.72
Operating (2/3)	\$385,443.97	\$423,820.05	\$403,956.58	\$412,601.86	\$333,403.88	\$328,424.04	\$482,348.59	\$546,418.86	\$553,140.79	\$605,630.48	\$245,569.18	\$6,065,432.33
Capital (1/3)	\$192,721.99	\$211,910.02	\$201,978.29	\$206,300.93	\$166,701.94	\$164,212.02	\$241,174.29	\$273,209.43	\$276,570.40	\$302,815.24	\$122,784.59	\$4,695,631.12
	<b>\$596,047.38</b>	<b>\$652,252.60</b>	<b>\$622,350.60</b>	<b>\$635,255.34</b>	<b>\$515,258.40</b>	<b>\$507,713.19</b>	<b>\$740,932.20</b>	<b>\$836,924.39</b>	<b>\$848,193.12</b>	<b>\$927,722.95</b>	<b>\$379,746.15</b>	<b>\$11,243,322.16</b>

**Operating Fund Activity:**

Fiscal Year	Total Revenue*	Operating Expense	Capital Fund Transfer Out	increase/(Decrease in Net Assets	Fund Balance
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	973,580	720,369	273,209	(19,999)	921,490
2024	1,068,593	788,070	276,570	3,953	925,443
2025	1,189,749	930,860	302,815	(43,927)	881,516

**Fund Balance as of June 30, 2025**

**\$881,516**

**Capital Expense History:**

Professional Fees for Civic Center	86,838
Monroe Park Master Plan and Site Assessment	23,058
Air Museum Advance Planning	19,240
Purchase of "The Tinker Belle"/Capital Upgrades	255,177
Storage Building	8,175
Tourism Study	7,500
Snow Machine	6,129
Center Theatre Property/Adjacent Property Purchase	508,770
Purchase of 318 E. Franklin Street Property for Science Center & Capital Improvements/Consulting/Fun	5,038,358
Capitalized Equipment/Exhibits - Science Center	786,625
Center Theatre Expansion	332,497
Branding Initiative/Website Design	33,830
NC DNCR Grant Capital Equipment Expenses - Science Center Exhibits	100,000

**Cash Balance of the Capital Project Fund  
as of December 30, 2025**

Projects:	
Monroe Science Center Building	0.00
Science Center Exhibits	-
Rotary Picnic Shelter Project	400.24
	<u>400.24</u>
	<u>\$ 400.24</u>

**Occupancy Tax Special Revenue Fund Operating Activity FY 2026**

		<u>Budget</u>	<u>FYTD Actual</u>
Revenue:	Occupancy Tax	288,413	\$ 100,151
	Sales of TinkerBelle	-	-
	Investment Earnings	17,481	4,438
	Appropriation of Fund Balance	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>305,894</b>	<b>104,589</b>
Expenses:	Debt Service - Principal & Interest	256,848	27,326
	Debt Service - Bond Admin Fees	1,056	1,144
	<b>Total</b>	<b>257,904</b>	<b>28,470</b>
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>		<b>47,990</b>	<b>76,119</b>

**Fund Balance History of the Occupancy Tax Special Revenue Fund**

Fiscal Year	Total Revenue*	Debt Service Expense	Capital Fund Transfer In/(Out)	Increase/(Decrease in Net Assets)	Fund Balance
2022	\$ 241,649	\$ 254,351	\$ 260,565	\$ 247,863	\$ 247,863
2023	278,051	258,403	-	19,648	267,511
2024	406,745	256,665	(70,000)	80,080	347,591
2025***	306,639	251,116	(3,194)	52,328	399,920

\*\*\* Preliminary as of June 30, 2025 - Pending Financial Audit

**Monroe Science Center Operating Activity FY 2026**

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Current Year Actuals</u>	<u>Prior Year Actuals</u>
Revenue:	251,000	\$ 81,655	\$ 177,617
	60,000	17,010	34,358
	12,375	3,523	4,687
	0	-	-
	6,000	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>329,375</b>	<b>102,187</b>	<b>216,663</b>
Expenses:	439,604	196,881	391,410
	7,100	3,446	7,397
	10,000	1,746	12,207
	9,000	2,124	6,617
	20,200	20,396	1,444
	750	226	285
	4,711	4,711	3,871
	15,000	6,345	19,318
	2,000	-	1,751
	3,000	1,977	6,977
	500	893	1,794
	1,367	-	6,139
	26,920	14,590	24,416
	20,000	3,606	18,119
	750	-	650
	861	73	879
	2,500	586	6,023
	11,391	10,530	7,406
<b>Total</b>	<b>575,654</b>	<b>268,128</b>	<b>516,702</b>
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>	<b>(246,279)</b>	<b>(165,941)</b>	<b>(300,039)</b>



**STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Tourism Development Authority  
**VIA:** Mark Watson, City Manager  
**DATE:** January 8, 2026  
**FROM:** Pete Hovanec, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director  
**PREPARED BY:** Tim Pappas, Dowd Center Theatre Operations Supervisor  
**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**

Between August and December 2025, the Dowd Center Theatre presented seven live performances (including two sold-out shows) and twenty-four films. Live performance ticket revenue totaled \$87,393, a 19.8% increase over the same period in 2024, while film revenue reached \$7,175.05, a 5.8% increase over 2024. On December 19, the theatre announced three 2026 performances under the “Memories, Music, and Magic” campaign, which sold 190 tickets in its first ten days.

The Dowd also hosted a free Santa photo experience on twelve dates between Thanksgiving and Christmas, attracting approximately 300 families (1,039 total attendees).

Twelve films have been selected for the *America 250* celebration and will screen monthly on the third Thursday of each month. Historical, sports, and action titles have all been identified. Live performances tied to the celebration are in development.

Staff has recommended five candidates for hire to HR for our Part-Time Customer Service pool position. Start date is TBD. These roles support operations for concerts and films as ushers, concessions sales, and ticket scanners.

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**RECOMMENDATION**

No action is needed at this time.



**STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Tourism Development Authority  
**VIA:** Mark Watson, City Manager  
**DATE:** January 8, 2026  
**FROM:** Pete Hovanec, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director  
**PREPARED BY:** Lauren Fike, Monroe Science Center Supervisor  
**SUBJECT:** Monroe Science Center Update

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**SUMMARY STATEMENT**

The TDA will be presented an update on events and operations for Monroe Science Center.

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**REVIEW**

School field trips picked up for the late fall as well as birthday parties for the colder months. We have been putting a stronger focus on more hands-on guided activities for guests. Gearing up for planning for the January free community day and have decided to add more to the annual calendar to provide 3-4 free days annually.

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**RECOMMENDATION**

No action is needed at this time.



## **STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Tourism Development Authority  
**VIA:** Mark Watson, City Manager  
**DATE:** January 8, 2026  
**FROM:** Peter Hovanec, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director  
**PREPARED BY:** Peter Hovanec, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director  
**SUBJECT:** Air Show Update

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### **SUMMARY STATEMENT**

The TDA will be presented a recap of the 2025 Warbirds Over Monroe Air Show.

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### **REVIEW**

The annual Warbirds Over Monroe Air Show took place on November 8-9 at the Charlotte-Monroe Executive Airport. The air show serves as the largest event in Union County, drawing tens of thousands of people over the duration of the event, and the Monroe Tourism Development Authority is its largest sponsor. The 2025 air show was a great success, and preliminary financial analysis shows very strong numbers.

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

No action is needed at this time.