



**MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING**

City Hall Conference Room
300 W. Crowell Street
Monroe, NC 28112
Thursday, July 9, 2026 - 8:30 AM

AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Meeting of May 14, 2026
2. Finance/Occupancy Report
3. Market Study Update
4. Dowd Center Theatre Update
5. Monroe Science Center Update

**MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
CONFERENCE ROOM
300 W. CROWELL STREET, MONROE, NC 28112
MAY 14, 2026 – 8:30 A.M.
MINUTES**

Present: Chairman Robert Burns (arr. 8:33 a.m.), MaryAnn Rasberry, Sheila Crunkleton, Joyce Rentschler, 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, Tourism Administrative Assistant Kristen Hensley, Assistant City Manager Jeff Wells, Science Center Supervisor Lauren Fike, Dowd Center Theatre Operations Supervisor Tim Pappas, Staff Attorney Scott Hunt

Staff Absent:

Visitors:

Chairman Robert Burns called the Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of May 14, 2026 to order at 8:33 a.m.

Item No. 1 Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of April 9, 2026. Ron Hinson made a motion to approve the Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of April 9, 2026. MaryAnn Rasberry seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

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

NAYS: None

Item No. 2 Finance/Occupancy Report: Lisa Strickland presented the Finance/Occupancy Report. She discussed collections from the month of March and stated the occupancy tax collections for the fiscal year to date are down approximately 4.6% compared to last year. She stated the fund balance remains the same throughout the year and is currently \$881,516, and the Special Revenue Fund is at \$399,920. She gave a brief recap of the Science Center Operating Activity.

Item No. 3 Tourism Strategy Presentation by Arpan Bhakta: Pete Hovanec displayed the presentation slides on the screen. Arpan Bhakta outlined some ideas to increase hotel revenue and noted many event venues are here in Monroe, they just need to be marketed.

Pete Hovanec suggested a work session involving the Economic Development Advisory Board and the Downtown Advisory Board, along with the Tourism Board and perhaps Chamber of Commerce and a facilitator to manage marketing efforts. He explained that the Tourism Board can direct how marketing funds could be used.

Sheila Crunkleton suggested focusing marketing efforts around those times of year that hotel occupancy is low.

Pete Hovanec emphasized including all that the entire City of Monroe has to offer, and not just focusing marketing efforts on the Downtown core. Pete Hovanec listed the Dowd Center Theatre, Science Center, splash pad, golf course, and downtown events as examples to include in marketing.

Jen Moore explained that the summer months are particularly slow for the downtown area, with very low foot traffic, likely due to the heat, and customers taking summer vacations. Gina Day concurred, adding that corporate travel is significantly reduced during the summer.

The Board discussed bringing in an outside marketing company.

Chairman Robert Burns emphasized the purpose of the Tourism Board versus the Economic Development Advisory Board, Downtown Advisory Board and Arts Council.

Joyce Rentschler suggested all of these groups working together to achieve an overall better result and including Downtown Director Ashley Nowell.

Chairman Robert Burns suggested an open session to invite multiple groups and committees to the Dowd Center Theatre to develop a marketing strategy.

The Board discussed marketing efforts outside Monroe city limits.

Arpan Bhakta suggested a centralized website whereby local businesses could maintain a calendar of events. Pete Hovanec expressed concern regarding who would be responsible for maintaining such a website, citing efforts to launch similar websites in previous years which were unsuccessful.

The Board discussed a collaboration with the Arts Council.

Arpan Bhakta outlined some examples for a framework for marketing efforts and emphasized collaboration.

Bill Heisner briefly discussed hotel occupancy, and how sports/athletic fields or a sports complex would fill hotel rooms which would in turn increase occupancy tax collections which would increase revenue overall. Pete Hovanec discussed how the city is exploring hosting mid-tier tournaments utilizing existing Parks and Recreation facilities, using Pickleball as an example.

The Board also discussed the high demand for swimming pools and how the sport of swimming is a growing attraction.

Item No. 4 Dowd Center Theatre Update: Tim Pappas presented an update on two recent events from the Dowd Center Theatre, and noted that 55% of the Magic Rocks audience and 64% of the Charlotte Symphony audience had never been to the Dowd before, accounting for 344 new theatre patrons. He emphasized the versatility of the programming and displayed two photographs on the screen showing how the stage is utilized specifically for each performance. He briefly discussed the zip code/location data from ticket sales.

Tim Pappas discussed some upcoming events at the Dowd Center Theatre, including an appearance by TV's Celebrity Housewives, and Mini KISS, which is back by popular demand, selling over 100 tickets in less than 48 hours. The May film series will include Grease, Newsies, Yankee Doodle Dandy, and next month's series will feature superheroes Captain America, Guardians of the Galaxy and Batman (starring Michael Keaton). Sensory friendly family films will resume in the summer months as well.

Item No. 5 Science Center Update Lauren Fike explained that April was a busy and successful month with Spring Break, a Community Day free event, and Monroe High School Prom. Six hundred tickets were issued online for the free Community Day event, which sold out. Providing tickets reserved in advance with specific arrival times resulted in no lines or waiting upon entry, and very positive feedback overall. The Science Center hosted the Monroe High School Prom, with approximately 100 attendees and chaperones, and staff received exceptionally positive feedback on this private event.

Summer break starts soon and the Science Center will include Tuesday operating hours for June and July from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. with \$2 off the price of admission. Summer days are very busy, and opening on Tuesdays should help alleviate some of the crowds Wednesday through Saturday during the summer months.

Pete Hovanec displayed images of two Rack Cards which were designed by Lauren Fike on the screen. These will be used for advertising attractions such as the Science Center, Dowd Center Theatre, City of Monroe parks, the golf course and Clubhouse 1936. He gave an update on the golf simulator opening and golf course operations.

Sheila Crunkleton made a motion to adjourn. MaryAnn Rasberry 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 9:31 a.m.

ATTEST:

Robert Burns, Chairman

Kristen Hensley

MTDA/5-14-2026

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

Month	Collections										Inception	
	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	Total from FY2024	Total from 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	62,864.60	
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	68,838.50	
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	62,845.12	
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	77,620.90	
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	75,398.94	
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	82,670.21	
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											
Total Collections	\$596,047.38	\$652,252.60	\$622,350.60	\$635,255.34	\$515,258.40	\$507,713.19	\$740,932.20	\$836,924.39	\$848,193.12	\$927,722.95	\$809,984.42	
Distribution of Collections												
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	\$18,099.84	\$488,966.18
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	\$527,923.05	\$6,347,786.20
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	\$263,961.53	\$4,836,808.05
	\$596,047.38	\$652,252.60	\$622,350.60	\$635,255.34	\$515,258.40	\$507,713.19	\$740,932.20	\$836,924.39	\$848,193.12	\$927,722.95	\$809,984.42	\$11,673,560.43

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 June 30, 2026**

Projects:	
Monroe Science Center Building	-
Science Center Exhibits	-
Rotary Picnic Shelter Project	10,400.24
	<u>10,400.24</u>
	<u>\$ 10,400.24</u>

Occupancy Tax Special Revenue Fund Operating Activity FY 2026

		<u>Budget</u>	<u>FYTD Actual</u>
Revenue:	Occupancy Tax	288,413	\$ 211,799
	Sales of TinkerBelle	-	-
	Investment Earnings	17,481	13,464
	Appropriation of Fund Balance	-	-
	Total	305,894	225,263
Expenses:	Debt Service - Principal & Interest	256,848	231,683
	Debt Service - Bond Admin Fees	1,056	1,144
	Total	257,904	232,827
Net Income (Loss)		47,990	(7,563)

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

Monroe Science Center Operating Activity FY 2026

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Current Year Actuals</u>	<u>Prior Year Actuals</u>
Revenue:	201,000	\$ 167,001	\$ 177,617
	60,000	32,375	34,358
	12,375	9,687	4,687
	0	-	-
	6,000	-	-
	279,375	209,063	216,663
Expenses:	415,617	395,581	391,410
	7,100	7,218	7,397
	6,000	3,436	12,207
	9,000	3,338	6,617
	-	-	1,444
	750	396	285
	4,711	4,711	3,871
	19,250	14,379	19,318
	2,000	-	1,751
	9,300	5,687	6,977
	1,000	893	1,794
	1,367	1,253	6,139
	26,920	30,693	24,416
	19,000	10,111	18,119
	750	660	650
	1,111	974	879
	2,500	1,491	6,023
	11,657	11,649	7,406
	538,033	492,471	516,702
Net Income (Loss)	(258,658)	(283,407)	(300,039)



STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority
VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager
DATE: July 9, 2026
FROM: Pete Hovanec, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director
PREPARED BY: Pete Hovanec, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director
SUBJECT: Market study/Marketing discussion

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Staff is exploring opportunities for the targeted marketing of Monroe as well as exploring options for potential tourism projects.

REVIEW

Staff has reached out to a few organizations to discuss potential contracting to not only develop a marketing plan for Monroe Tourism. Staff is also looking at companies that could provide information as to what the City of Monroe could feasibly sustain within the context of sports complex/venue.

Once staff has identified key companies, staff will bring information back to the TDA for continued discussion, budget allocation and narrowing of the scope of services.

RECOMMENDATION

No action needed. For information and discussion only at this time.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority
VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager
DATE: July 9, 2026
FROM: Pete Hovanec, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director
PREPARED BY: Tim Pappas, Dowd Center Theatre Operations Supervisor
SUBJECT: Dowd Center Theatre Update

SUMMARY STATEMENT

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

REVIEW

June was a busy month for the Dowd, despite being traditionally one of the theatre’s quieter months. The theatre welcomed 462 attendees to Mini KISS at the beginning of the month, 119 greater than the group’s previous appearance, as well as 270 moviegoers to our Superhero Summer Series. In addition, the theatre hosted the Build It NC Foundation’s fundraiser for the renovation of the Belk Mansion and four events for Monroe Police and Fire Departments.

Marketing efforts continue to extend beyond social media, including appearances at the City of Monroe’s Juneteenth and Independence Day Celebrations, new printed collateral, and new promotional giveaway items. The theatre also utilized a digital billboard on the corner of US 74 and Unionville-Indian Trail Rd. for four weeks, to promote our upcoming performances, June movie series, and general awareness of the Dowd.

The theatre launched its first-ever subscription package, **Jazz @ The Dowd** allowing patrons to purchase four concerts at a 20% discount compared to individual ticket prices. This pilot program aligns the Dowd with a common industry practice while encouraging repeat audience attendance and building stronger audience loyalty.

Upcoming Live Performances:

- August 7: Tap Into Soul
 - September 11: Catching Some Rays
 - September 17: Uptown
 - September 26: TBA
-
-

RECOMMENDATION

No action is needed at this time.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority
VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager
DATE: July 9, 2026
FROM: Pete Hovanec, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director
PREPARED BY: Lauren Fike, Monroe Science Center Supervisor
SUBJECT: Monroe Science Center Update

SUMMARY STATEMENT

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

REVIEW

The science center is staying busy with increased summer attendance. Summer Tuesdays have been successful with an average attendance of 115 guests made up of general admission and group visits. This has alleviated the overwhelming attendance on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays we have felt in previous years.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is needed at this time.