



**MONROE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING**

City Hall Conference Room
300 W. Crowell Street
Monroe, NC 28112
Thursday, August 20, 2026 - 8:30 AM

AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Meeting of July 9, 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
JULY 9, 2026 – 8:30 A.M.
MINUTES**

Present: Chairman Robert Burns (arr. 8:35 a.m.), MaryAnn Rasberry, Joyce Rentschler, Ron Hinson, Gina Day, Jennifer Moore, Bill Heisner, Arpan Bhakta, and Clayton Whitson

Absent: Sheila Crunkleton

Staff Present: Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director Pete Hovanec, Finance Director Lisa Strickland (leave 8:54 a.m.), Assistant Finance Director Ashley Ivey, Tourism Administrative Assistant Kristen Hensley, Assistant City Manager Jeff Wells (leave 8:56 a.m.), Science Center Supervisor Lauren Fike, and Dowd Center Theatre Operations Supervisor Tim Pappas

Visitors: Larry Walker

Chairman Robert Burns called the Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of July 9, 2026 to order at 8:35 a.m.

Pete Hovanec introduced and welcomed new Board Member Clayton Whitson, President of Union County Chamber of Commerce.

Item No. 1 Approval of Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of May 14, 2026. MaryAnn Rasberry made a motion to approve the Minutes of Monroe Tourism Development Authority Regular Meeting of May 14, 2026. Joyce Rentschler seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

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

NAYS: None

Item No. 2 Finance/Occupancy Report: Assistant Finance Director Ashley Ivey presented the Finance/Occupancy Report. She discussed collections from the month of May totaling \$82,670, which is down slightly from last year, and stated there is only one more month to include in the fiscal year before the annual audit. She stated the fund balance remains \$881,516, Capital Project Fund remains \$10,400 for the Rotary Picnic Shelter Project, and the revenue from Occupancy Tax which funds the debt services expense for the Science Center is \$211,799 fiscal year to date. She gave a brief recap of the Science Center Operating Activity.

Item No. 3 Market Study Update: Pete Hovanec updated the board that he and Assistant City Manager Jeff Wells have met with one company which could conduct a market assessment feasibility study to determine which projects the City of Monroe could sustain, and give recommendations as to what the City of Monroe should build, staffing needs, etc. They are planning to meet with another company as well. These companies could then provide data on local versus statewide demand, and make

recommendations regarding which project might be best sustainable for the City of Monroe. Pete Hovanec anticipates providing the board with the options of different companies, as well as cost, and a marketing/promotional plan at the next meeting for the board to review.

Pete Hovanec discussed the possibility of including other boards from the City of Monroe since this study could include the whole city and not just Tourism.

Chairman Robert Burns reminded the TDA board that they are tasked with promoting tourism of existing attractions, to draw people to the Monroe Science Center, Dowd Center Theatre and other existing venues. Chairman Burns emphasized the need to develop a marketing plan to get information out to the public and draw visitors to existing attractions.

Item No. 4 Dowd Center Theatre Update: Tim Pappas presented an update on the busy and exciting summer at the Dowd. In June, the theatre welcomed 462 attendees to Mini KISS, which was 119 more than the group's previous appearance, as well as 270 moviegoers for the Superhero Summer movie series. The July series will feature science fiction movies, and upcoming live performances include Tap into Soul with Solomon Jaye, and Catching Some Rays, featuring music of Ray Charles.

Marketing efforts continue with booths setup at the recent Juneteenth and Independence Day celebrations, with new printed rack cards and promotional giveaway items. The theatre utilized a local digital billboard to increase general awareness of the theatre as well as advertise specific upcoming events.

Tim Pappas explained how the theatre launched its first-ever subscription package allowing patrons to purchase tickets to four concerts at a 20% discount compared to individual pricing. This pilot program is designed to attract subscribers and new audience members and encourage audience retention.

Tim Pappas went over some upcoming events for later in the summer and fall.

Item No. 5 Science Center Update Lauren Fike explained that the summer so far has been busy, with numbers not reaching full capacity but steady traffic each day to the museum. She stated that opening on Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. has helped alleviate the overwhelming crowds on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays that the museum has experienced in previous summers, and that they will likely continue opening on Tuesdays during the summers going forward.

Lauren Fike displayed pictures on the screen of the recently installed block wall in the museum, which features large foam blocks that can be attached to various ports in the wall to create many different configurations for play and imagination.

Lauren Fike discussed the recent activity of Marketing Specialist Ashe Barker, who has been busy out in the community at various events such as this month's Atrium event, presenting the "Science of Nutrition" and will be attending multiple back to school events throughout Union County in August. She also described the City of Monroe's recent Passport Challenge around the city whereby citizens can visit various locations like the Science Center, Dowd Center Theatre, and library to view displays, learn interesting historical facts, and enter a drawing to receive a prize upon completion.

Lauren Fike discussed some recent group visits to the museum, including visitors from Stanly County, uptown Charlotte and other surrounding locations.

Pete Hovanec explained that televisions are being installed in the lobbies to display advertising slides of the Monroe Aquatic Center, Dowd Center Theatre, Monroe Science Center and other attractions within the City of Monroe. Also, the Dowd Center Theatre will show these advertising slides before movies.

Pete Hovanec gave a brief recap of the many ways the city has been involved in the America 250 campaign, including the recent Independence Day celebration, as well as upcoming Stars, Stripes & Strides 5K and Fun Run, disc golf tournament, patriotic movies, and the previously discussed Passport Challenge.

Ron Hinson gave an update on the Arts Council for Union County and Monroe.

Bill Heisner made a motion to adjourn. Ron Hinson seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

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

NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 a.m.

ATTEST:

Robert Burns, Chairman

Kristen Hensley

MTDA/7-9-2026

**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	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	83,646.66	
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	\$893,631.08	
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	\$18,936.31	\$489,802.64
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	\$583,129.85	\$6,402,993.00
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	\$291,564.92	\$4,864,411.45
	\$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	\$893,631.08	\$11,757,207.09

Operating Fund Activity:

Fiscal Year	Total Revenue*	Operating Expense	Capital Fund Transfer Out	ncrease/(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
2026	1,106,883	852,297	291,565	(36,979)	844,537

Preliminary Fund Balance as of June 30, 2026

\$844,537

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 July 31, 2026**

Projects:

Monroe Science Center Building	-
Science Center Exhibits	-
Rotary Picnic Shelter Project	10,400.24
	<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	\$ 263,962
	Sales of TinkerBelle	-	-
	Investment Earnings	17,481	19,837
	Appropriation of Fund Balance	-	-
	Total	305,894	283,798
Expenses:	Debt Service - Principal & Interest	256,848	256,848
	Debt Service - Bond Admin Fees	1,056	1,144
	Total	257,904	257,992
Net Income (Loss)		<u>47,990</u>	<u>25,807</u>

Fund Balance History of the Occupancy Tax Special Revenue Fund

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Total Revenue*</u>	<u>Debt Service Expense</u>	<u>Capital Fund Transfer In/(Out)</u>	<u>Increase/(Decrease in Net Assets)</u>	<u>Fund Balance</u>
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
2026***	311,402	257,992	-	53,410	453,330

*** Preliminary as of June 30, 2026 - Pending Financial Audit

Monroe Science Center Operating Activity FY 2026

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Current Year Actuals</u>	<u>Prior Year Actuals</u>
Revenue:			
Admission Fees	201,000	\$ 168,170	\$ 177,617
Gift Shop Sales	60,000	32,546	34,358
Birthday Party Packages	12,375	9,687	4,687
Misc Annual Membership	0	-	-
Rent Science Center Facility	6,000	-	-
Total	279,375	210,403	216,663
Expenses:			
Salaries & Benefits	415,617	404,177	391,410
Bank Service Charges	7,100	7,363	7,397
Technical Contracted Services	6,000	3,436	12,207
Repairs & Maintenance - Buildings & Equipment	9,000	3,691	6,617
Software License & Support	-	-	1,444
Repairs & Maintenance - Copiers	750	418	285
Property Damage/Wellness & Clinic Cost	4,711	4,711	3,871
Marketing & Promotions/Printing	19,250	14,985	19,318
Training and Travel Exp	2,000	-	1,751
General Supplies	9,300	5,900	6,977
Small Equipment	1,000	1,259	1,794
PC's Peripherals	1,367	1,253	6,139
Utilities & Telecommunications	26,920	30,693	24,416
Items for Resale - Giftshop	19,000	17,147	18,119
Organizational Dues	750	660	650
Subscriptions & Publications	1,111	988	879
Special Events	2,500	2,231	6,023
Other Operating Expense & Cost Allocations	11,657	12,717	7,406
Total	538,033	511,630	516,702
Net Income (Loss)	<u>(258,658)</u>	<u>(301,228)</u>	<u>(300,039)</u>

STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority

VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager

DATE: Aug. 20, 2026

FROM: Pete Hovanec, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director

PREPARED BY: Pete Hovanec, Parks & Recreation and Tourism Director

SUBJECT: Sports Market Study

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Staff meet with representatives from Sports Facilities Companies to discuss possibilities of future sport/facility venue in Monroe.

REVIEW

Sports Facilities Companies can provide a comprehensive market feasibility study for the city of Monroe that will review all existing service providers, assess needs and trends in the area, and evaluate the overall market. The study would also give a recommendation on the type of facility as well as some cost predictions and financial performance expectations.

The Market Feasibility would cost \$20,000 and a second part that produces a more in-depth financial feasibility and business model development would cost \$30,000 but if agreed together the total cost would be \$45,000.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends conducting the market feasibility and further discussing the benefits of moving forward with the financial feasibility portion.

STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority

VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager

DATE: August 20, 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

The Dowd Center Theatre experienced strong growth in FY26, with increased facility usage, and attendance, and staff is actively building on that momentum for FY27.

The theatre was in use on 109 occasions during the last fiscal year, a 20% increase over FY25 and the highest number of annual activations in the theatre's history. Live performances, movies, community programs, civic functions, and rentals attracted 13,060 visitors, up 15% from FY25 and the highest annual attendance in the theatre's history.

Live event programming for FY27 is off to a strong start. The theatre presented 19 live performances in all of FY26. Just six weeks into the new fiscal year, two performances have already taken place, with an additional eight shows currently on sale through June of 2027. Including performances already presented, currently on sale, and those pending announcement or contract finalization, the theatre currently has 22 live events in the programming pipeline, with additional shows actively being developed to fill remaining dates throughout the fiscal year. This represents a significant expansion of the theatre's live programming and positions the Dowd to bring more visitors into Downtown Monroe throughout the year.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is needed at this time.



STAFF REPORT

TO: Tourism Development Authority

VIA: Mark Watson, City Manager

DATE: August 20, 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 completed the last open Tuesday on 7/28/26. Staff will now use Tuesdays to spruce up exhibits, deep clean and update exhibit items. We have already been booking larger groups on Tuesday for the school year. Birthday parties have had an uptick since offering an additional time: now at 10am, 12pm and 2 pm.

We have used grant fund to purchase a 3D printer and will have support from an Eagle Scout to be trained how to use it. It was part of his senior project to help fundraise and educate staff on how to facilitate it.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is needed at this time.