

DUVAL COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 10:00 a.m.

City Hall - Lynwood Roberts Room

TDC Members: City Council President Carrico (Chair), City Council Vice President Howland (Vice Chair), City Council Member Randy White (*excused*), Jitan Kuverji, Dennis Chan, Dennis Thompson, Mark VanLoh (*excused*), Michael Jenkins, Shawn LeNoble

TDC Staff: Carol Brock (Executive Director), Brett Nolan (Administrator), Phillip Peterson (Auditor), Daren Anderson (Office of General Counsel)

I. Welcome and Call to Order

Chair Carrico

Chair Carrico called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and asked the attendees to introduce themselves for the record.

II. Public Comments Including Action Items

Chair Carrico

John Nooney

Mr. Nooney highlighted his efforts in advancing potential land acquisition projects that would benefit Duval County citizens and expressed hope for a TDC park located in Council District Four.

III. Approval of Minutes

Chair Carrico

The minutes of the December 11, 2025 Regular TDC meeting were **approved unanimously as distributed**.

IV. Tourism Strategic Plan Update

Dennis Thompson

The Chair introduced TDC board member Dennis Thompson, Subcommittee Chair for the Tourism Strategic Plan, to provided an update on the Tourism Strategic Plan. He highlighted that the strategic plan pillars will be included in TDC board meeting packets to guide decision-making for tourism funding. Mr. Thompson emphasized that the pillars are guides, not laws, and deviations should provoke discussion. An advisory committee will be established, meeting twice a year with tourism industry leaders throughout Jacksonville, to collaborate on future decisions. Invitations will be sent out soon, pending finalization with the Council President. Mr. Thompson shared that the first pillar, "Showcase Jacksonville as a Destination for Visitors," was edited slightly for brevity and precision, without altering its core message.

Mr. Kuverji commented on hearing Visit Jacksonville's commercial on 1010XL and suggested marketing local events via radio, especially on 92.5 FM leading up to the Jacksonville Jaguar season. Michael Corrigan confirmed that Visit Jacksonville is working creatively to market local events and that he appears monthly on 1010XL to discuss upcoming sports events and other activities. Mr. Thompson added that sponsoring, funding, and promoting local events is a focus area, with the goal of filling the calendar with daily activities for tourists.

Council Vice President Howland asked how often would this plan be reviewed, commented on the rise of healthcare tourism. Mr. Thompson suggested that the strategic plan should be a constant discussion with regular updates at every meeting.

V. Florida's First Coast of Golf Annual Report

David Reese

Chair Carrico introduced David Reese, President of the Florida's First Coast of Golf, to provide an annual report for the organization.

Mr. Reese provided background on the organization and insight into the upcoming fiscal year budget request. He explained that Florida First Coast of Golf was formed three decades ago as a regional golf tourism agency, a collaboration of five county TDCs, tourism offices, private industry, Visit Florida, and other strategic organizations. He highlighted that golf is in this region's DNA and that Jacksonville and Northeast Florida rank highly in golf-related online searches. He noted that golf participation is expected to reach 50 million in the near future. Northeast Florida has been the top spot in golf for the last eight years. While the region experienced declines in activity in 2022 due to hurricane impacts and in 2024 due to widespread capital improvements on many courses, 2025 showed a strong rebound—with nearly half a million tourist rounds played, marking a 3% increase year-over-year. He emphasized the importance of marketing Northeast Florida as a single connected golf destination. He introduced his marketing staff, Jenna and Brett, and mentioned their year-round production of new golf destination videos, connected TV campaigns, and a successful military golf campaign. He anticipated a budget-neutral request for the upcoming fiscal year at the next TDC meeting. In response to a question about AI citations from Mr. Kuverji, Mr. Reese stated that Tempus AI is their agency and that they have seen an increase in AI citations recently.

VI. FY 26-27 Budget Request

Chair Carrico

The Chair introduced Greg McGarity, President and CEO of Gator Bowl Sports, to provide a budget request.

TaxSlayer Gator Bowl

Greg McGarity

Mr. McGarity presented a budget request for the 2026 TaxSlayer Gator Bowl, thanking the TDC and others for their support over the years. He requested \$270,000 for the 82nd annual game, a reduction from the previous year's funding of \$300,000, following a cadence of drawdown. He noted that the game will be played in Gainesville in 2027 due to the "Stadium of the Future" construction but will return to Jacksonville in 2028. Business direct sales for the year were a little over \$4.7 million, estimated room nights were a little over 9,000, and total visitor days were a little over 22,000. He mentioned the uncertainty surrounding the college football playoff and its impact on bowl games. He emphasized that bowl teams love playing in Florida.

Mr. LeNoble questioned the reduced attendance and asked why the funding request wasn't reduced more significantly. Mr. McGarity responded that the return on investment is still clear and that they are emphasizing regionality. He noted that Tampa and Orlando also saw decreased attendance. Mr. Jenkins inquired about programming during the Gainesville game, and Mr. McGarity confirmed that all programming would remain in Jacksonville. Mr. Thompson asked about the impact of further reduced funding, and Mr. McGarity explained that the organization has not been profitable in the last two years due to ticket sales. The Council Vice President inquired about the possibility of limiting bowl games in the future, and Mr. McGarity explained that some bowls are struggling financially. Mr. Kuverji asked about teams staying in Duval County, and Mr. McGarity explained the current arrangements and the desire to have teams stay in the city as downtown develops.

Mr. LeNoble questioned the TaxSlayer sponsorship, and Mr. McGarity stated that they have partnered with the event for 14 years and have two years remaining on their sponsorship. He shared that all indications are that they enjoy the relationship and the value of the exposure from being the title sponsor. When asked by Council President regarding the annual sponsorship level amount for the event, Robert Leverock, CFO of Gator Bowl Sports, clarified that the TaxSlayer sponsorship is the third-largest revenue source, after ticket revenue and television revenue. Due to non-disclosure clauses, the exact amount could not be stated.

Mr. Kuverji inquired about the possibility of hosting both the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl and a college football playoff game. Mr. McGarity responded that it is possible, citing Miami as an example with the Orange Bowl and the national championship game. He suggested that Jacksonville might be in a better position to host a championship game, referencing past locations like Santa Clara, California. Citing the current lack of downtown amenities for the players and team, Mr. McGarity emphasized that the build-out of the Stadium of the Future, Four Seasons, MOSH, and developments on Bay Street would enhance the city's appeal for these larger opportunities.

Mr. Kuverji, who's from Santa Clara, California, highlighted the lack of amenities around the stadium there, despite hosting major events like the World Cup and Super Bowl. He urged for lofty goals for Jacksonville's new stadium. Mr. Thompson emphasized the importance of amenities between the Hyatt and the stadium and suggested incorporating ideas for building out these amenities into the strategic plan committee meetings, focusing on sports tourism.

Motion (Howland / 2nd Thompson): Fund the 2026 TaxSlayer Gator Bowl in the TDC FY 26-27 budget in the amount of \$270,000. – **approved unanimously.**

VII. Visit Jacksonville Update

Michael Corrigan

The Chair introduced Michael Corrigan, President and CEO of Visit Jacksonville, to provide an update to the board.

Audit Report and Visit Jacksonville 3.0

Michael Corrigan started with the annual audit conducted by the Nichols Group, which resulted in a clean audit with no recommended changes. He mentioned that Visit Jacksonville would be returning \$140,383, or 1.9% of their \$7.2 million budget, to the TDC. Mr. Corrigan reminded the board that the organization creates their budget in partnership with the TDC in April, prior to the start of the fiscal year in October. With a budget done so far in advanced, Mr. Corrigan is proud of his team for ending up only having to return such a small percentage of the budget back to the TDC. He then discussed the reorganization of Visit Jacksonville, referred to as "Visit Jax 3.0," which involved rearranging departments and renaming them to Marketing and Communications, Outreach and Engagement, and Sales and Service. The biggest change was bringing service back into the sales side. Mr. Corrigan highlighted the success of group sales and the importance of servicing returning groups. He discussed the Bring It Home Jax campaign to engage the local community and address the loss of room nights due to the stadium closure in 2027. He introduced Jorie Allison, the engagement manager, and Autumn Leach, the social media manager, and thanked them both for their hard work.

Budget Reallocation Request

Mr. Corrigan presented a budgetary reallocation request, primarily due to Visit Jacksonville reorganization of Visit Jax 3.0 and an increased printing and postage costs for visitor magazines, requiring a motion from the TDC for approval. Mr. Jenkins inquired about what a FAM trip is, to which Mr. Corrigan explained it's a familiarization trip where meeting planners and other related industry representatives are brought to Jacksonville to learn more about what the city has to offer as a destination. Council Vice President Howland noted that the reallocation was budget neutral.

Motion (Howland / 2nd Chan): Approve the Visit Jacksonville budget reallocation request as presented. – approved unanimously.

Quarterly Report

Mr. Corrigan proceeded with the Visit Jacksonville Quarter One report. He highlighted the London activation and the shift towards Brand USA's European Travel Week conference. He mentioned the use of Seymour Jax, the mobile visitor center, at the Florida Coffee Festival in Orlando, a huge market for Jacksonville travel, and three Explorer events held during the quarter. Mr. Corrigan also noted an expansion of the Tourism Ambassador program and that the director sales meetings at the new Hilton at Mayo Clinic was great. He continued by discussing the launch of the Inside the Flipside campaign and shared the announcement of a survey for local residents to provide their thoughts about the "Flip Side of Florida" campaign. Visit Jacksonville will use that feedback as they start planning the next campaign which the TDC board will have the chance to review before it's enacted.

Mr. Kuverji raised the issue of bus tour business in Jacksonville, noting his efforts with Diamond Tours to increase hotel usage. He suggested focusing on domestic travel and increasing efforts to attract more bus tours. Mr. Corrigan responded that group tours are an area they are starting to market and maximize, especially considering the University of Florida taking over the Prime Osborn Convention Center in 2030-2032.

Mr. Jenkins inquired about the possibility of highlighting the restaurant and bar scene in Jacksonville and expanding community events outside of the downtown core. Mr. Corrigan confirmed that they are considering a restaurant trail and focusing on neighborhoods with great places to eat, as well as creating a "BAM map" to introduce neighborhoods and their food/drink scenes.

VIII. Financial Report

Phillip Peterson

Assistant Council Auditor Phillip Peterson gave the financial report. TDC tax revenues for the 12 months ending January 2026 were \$10,632,637.87, a 0.42% increase over the 12 months ending January 2025. Revenue from the start of FY 25-26 to date, four months ending in January 2026, was \$3,160,717.65, down 7.15% compared to the start of FY 24-25 to date, four months ending in January 2025. Revenue for January 2026 was \$746,734.48, down 9.35% from the same month in 2025. Actual collections for the fiscal year to date were under the average monthly budgeted amount by \$250,479.09.

Mr. Peterson reviewed the budgetary balances as of December 31, 2025 remaining in the TDC's contractual and operating accounts, they are: Destination Services - \$1,508.52; Marketing - \$0; Convention/Group Sales - \$0; Convention Grants, Sponsorships, and Promotions - \$489,650.04; Planning and Research - \$87,826; Event Grants - \$470,000; Development Account - \$2,121,077.63; Contingency Account - \$956,061; Equestrian Center Promotion - \$10,692.05; Remaining to be Spent in Accordance with the TDC Plan – TDC Operations - \$ 564,331; TDC Administration - \$253,060.24; and the Special Revenue Fund - \$2,767.50.

Mr. Peterson also stated that if revenues came in at budget, the projected year end fund balance would be \$5.1 million, but this number is expected to decrease.

IX. New Business

Chair Carrico

Chair Carrico reminded the board that On December 11, 2025, the TDC unanimously approved a motion supporting the Administration's and the Tax Collector's recommendation to contract with short-term rental (STR) booking platforms and establish Voluntary Collection Agreements (VCAs). He then provided an update on short-term rental agreements on behalf of Carla Miller with the Administration. Actions taken by the Mayor's Office include reviewing existing agreements, evaluating terms, engaging with platforms, developing a local short-term rental ordinance, and coordinating with the fire department for safety inspections. The Administration's next steps involve reviewing agreements with platforms, legal review by the Tax Collector's Office and the Office of General Counsel, and continuing ordinance development.

Mr. Kuverji discussed his involvement in the short-term rental issue, noting his communications with Mrs. Miller and his contributions to developing a feasible ordinance for all industries. He mentioned the formation of an advocacy group within the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association (FRLA), including short-term rental owners, hotel owners, and restaurants, to ensure everyone plays by the rules as it relates to hotels and short-term rentals.

The Chair reminded the Board that at the previous TDC meeting, members unanimously supported efforts to attract Project Caymus (Culinary Institute of America) to Jacksonville. A formal letter of support was sent on behalf of the TDC, and the Board directed the Executive Director to explore possible avenues for financial support.

Chair Carrico noted that the TDC cannot make a direct contribution to Project Caymus under current Florida statutes governing allowable expenditures (based on information available to date). However, viable opportunities exist in the City's FY 2025/26 budget: the TDC Fund Balance could cover certain allowable expenditures typically funded by the City's General Fund, thereby freeing up General Fund resources to support Project Caymus. Additionally, Mrs. Brock discussed the opportunity to extend a current University of North Florida impact study to include an assessment of the impact of public infrastructure improvements on attracting tourists to the Culinary Institute to Jacksonville.

A discussion ensued on allocating funds for the Culinary Institute of America (CIA). The initial suggested request from CIA was \$1 million. It was shared that the goal today was to approve a "not to exceed" amount to negotiate with the administration, budget team, and CIA. An additional "not to exceed" amount of \$9,999 was proposed to enhance a current UNF study in accordance with state statutes. Council Vice President questioned the feasibility study requirement, referencing a previous \$3 million capital investment at UNF Hodges Stadium, which Mrs. Brock clarified falls under a different allowable use in the Florida statute related to public facilities.

Mr. LeNoble inquired about competition from other cities for the CIA to which the Chair answered not at this time. Chair Carrico emphasized the strategic value of supporting Project Caymus as a key investment to strengthen Jacksonville's culinary scene and enhance the city's competitiveness in attracting major events such as the College Football Playoffs and Super Bowls. The Chair further stated that, over the next five years, developing a robust culinary scene and a vibrant downtown would help Jacksonville rival other cities. He added that securing this project would significantly elevate the attractiveness of our downtown and enable it to better contend with other destinations that already feature strong culinary offerings and related amenities. Mr. LeNoble highlighted the success of the CIA in Hyde Park, New York, as a tourism draw. Chair Carrico cited the positive impact of the CIA in San Antonio, Texas, where it serves as a catalyst for the culinary community. Mr. Thompson questioned the difficulty in aligning Florida statutes to fund the CIA with TDC dollars, given its potential as a tourist attraction, suggesting that private endeavors attracting tourists should be easier to justify for funding. Mrs. Brock explained that Florida statutes require facilities to be publicly owned or operated to receive direct funding, which is a challenge for the privately owned CIA. She suggested future opportunities for convention or special event grants once the facility is built.

Mr. Kuverji inquired about other organizations involved in trying to secure Project Caymus in Jacksonville. The Chair answered in the affirmative and shared that Mayo Clinic, for example, was in discussion with the CIA to partner on food health initiatives. Other foundations are also working to raise money for scholarships and endowments. Seeing no further discussion, the Chair passed the gavel to Vice Chair Howland to make a motion.

Motion (Carrico / 2nd Thompson): Direct the TDC Chair to work with Administration to identify opportunities in the city's FY 2025/26 budget not-to-exceed \$999,000 that can be covered by TDC Fund Balance as allowable expenditures in accordance with FL Statute 125.0104 thereby allowing the General Fund dollars to contribute to Project Caymus. – **approved unanimously.**

Chair Carrico then proposed a motion in regard to the University of North Florida study to demonstrate the positive impact that public infrastructure projects can have on tourist-related businesses with the development of the CIA

Motion (Carrico / 2nd Thompson): Direct the TDC Chair and Executive Director to enlist UNF to expand the current impact study to demonstrate the positive impact that public infrastructure projects can have on tourist-related businesses with the development of the CIA in an amount up to \$9,999. – **approved unanimously.**

Vice Chair Howland passed the gavel back to Chair Carrico.

The Chair asked if there was any additional new business that needed to be brought before the TDC.

Mr. Corrigan raised the need to replenish sports tourism funding, noting that the \$1.5 million allocated in February 2024 has dwindled to \$160,000, noting successes like ASUN basketball tournament, Ironman, and NCAA championships. He suggested including sports tourism funding in any future requests for fund balance allocations. Chair Carrico agreed to discuss future sports tourism funding separately at a future meeting.

Mr. Thompson proposed accelerating the strategic plan by finalizing the Tourism Strategic Plan Advisory Committee, scheduling regular meetings with TDC staff, and preparing a presentation on analytics and ideas. Mr. Kuverji inquired about committee membership and support from the board. Mrs. Brock clarified that the Council

President as Chair of TDC and Mr. Thompson are the representatives of the TDC, but when the meetings are noticed they will be open to any person interested in attending.

X. Closing Comments and Adjournment

Chair Carrico

The Chair announced that the next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, April 16th, in the Lynwood Roberts Room, at City Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

Meeting Minutes respectfully submitted by Brett Nolan, TDC Administrator

These minutes were approved at the TDC Regular Board meeting on April 16, 2026