



Board Meeting Minutes from July 17, 2025

Sussex County EOC Building

In attendance: Scott Anthony (Board Co-Chairperson), Heather DeMarie, Drew DiFonzo, Mike Dunmyer, Carol Everhart, Ben Gray, Bonnie Hall (Past Chair), Maggie Lingo, Fred Mast, Matt Parker (Board Chairperson), Bill Pfaff, Linda Price, Betsy Reamer, Alison Schuch, Jim Smith, Fred Thompson, Kevin Thompson, Scott Thomas, Nadine Timpanaro, Lauren Weaver, Jaimie Watts, Allyson Ennis

Absent: Terry Carson, Kevin Evans, Kristin Miller, Patrick Ruhl, Jo Schmeiser, Jessica Schlegel, Tom Summers, Jessica Welch

1. Call to Order time: 9:34am by Matt P.

2. Welcome and Introductions: After recognizing and celebrating board member Bill Pfaff's retirement at the end of the month, Matt P. welcomed everyone and those in attendance introduced themselves through alphabetical roll call. Quorum confirmed by Scott T.

3. Approval of the April 2025 Meeting Minutes

Motion by: Linda P., **Seconded by:** Lauren W., **Passed by** the Board.

4. Committee Reports

- **Policies & Procedures** – Presented by Jim S.
 - Executive Director Succession Plan was voted on. Bonnie H. **made a motion** to approve the plan as crafted by P&P. **Seconded by:** Lauren W., **Passed by** the Board.

- Committee recommends suspending the SDT Funding policy of withholding any chamber carryover / surplus funds should they occur over the next two years within the discretion of the SDT Executive Committee. **Motion by:** Lauren W., **Seconded by** Bill P., **Passed by** the Board.
- Jim S. will be stepping down as committee chair and a new chair is being sought.
- **Finance** – Presented by Scott A.
 - Total PAT Revenue finished the year about 14.94% higher than the prior year, but 15.79% below budget for the year. PAT Revenue includes \$168,439.14 of short term rental tax collected in the 2nd half of the year. Excluding the Short-Term Rental tax, PAT Revenue was up \$40,489.67 (2.9% increase) over the prior year.
 - There will be some changes to the chart of accounts beginning in July 2025, and how expenses, etc. are broken down.
 - Total administrative expenses were .08% higher than budgeted for the year, and total marketing expenses were 12.4% under budget for the year (primarily because revenue was under **budget** as well).
 - As of 6/30/25, there was \$301,736 in the checking account. Of this amount, \$4,127.41 is reserved for the Culinary Coast campaign. There also is \$219,284 in SDT's money market account. The Edward Jones investment account had a current cost basis at 6/30/25 of \$75,187, after the \$50,000 was transferred in February from the checking account.

Discussions at the 7/10 Finance Committee Meeting:

- FY 26 Goals- develop the STR inventory list in Sussex and to track STR income.
- Discussed possibly making an adjustment to the STR % in January 2026 vs waiting until the next fiscal year

- Lauren W.'s suggestion to look at a web-based phone system within SDT office has been completed with a transition to a new service (Nextiva) to increase efficiency and to save money effective July 2025.

Motion to approve the Fourth Quarter Financial Statements by Linda P.,
Seconded by Mike D., Passed by the Board.

- **Investment** – Presented by Matt P.
SDT's Edward Jones Account currently has a balance of \$78,259 and has generated a return of a little over 6.18% over the first year.
- **Marketing** – Presented by Bonnie H.
 - Bonnie outlined and called out highlights of SDT's Fourth Quarter Marketing Report that was shared and posted in the Boardroom.
 - Southern Delaware Tourism hosted its Spring Partner Expo this quarter, drawing 74 attendees and featuring 16 exhibitors. The event served as a valuable opportunity for networking, collaboration, and showcasing regional tourism initiatives.
 - Our Towns web pages have been receiving more visits and attention as we have revamped the town pages with a new design and more content and name (of town/city) recognition.
 - This quarter's SDT media coverage value exceeded \$109,000 with nearly 12 million unique visits per month.
 - Our Tourism Ambassador program launched its recertification process for ambassadors who have reached one year since certification. We now have 213 certified ambassadors, with more signing up for the course all the time. Additionally, partners have been great about stepping up to offer a great collection of Ambassador perks to familiarize our ambassadors with local attractions.
- Chris Cazares presented SDT's Crowdriff Content Creator approach that will be used to curate and implement much more video on SDT's social media channels.

- New storytelling/content strategy for Facebook/Instagram using CrowdRiff platform
- 30 video shoots planned to build foundational content library
- Targeting 18-40 year-old millennials/Gen Z travelers with "SouthDel Unlocked" campaign
- Emphasis on tagging and sharing content with tourism partners
- Google spreadsheet will be shared to show what has been scheduled

- **Advocacy** – Presented by Drew D.

- Drew outlined action that took place at the outcome of the last Delaware Legislative Session and mentioned some of the Governor's new priorities.

5. Changing of the Board Chair

Scott T. presented outgoing chair Matt P. a Governor's Tribute recognizing and celebrating Matt in his role as SDT Chairperson over the last two years. Scott A. assumed the role as the new SDT Board Chair and Fred T. assumed the role as the new SDT Board Co-Chair.

6. FY 2026 Committee Goals

Scott A. called for a **September 12, 2025 deadline** for all committee chairs to submit their committee goals to Scott T.

7. DTO Update – Presented by Jaimie Watts (covering for Jessica W.)

- Doubling down on sports tourism initiatives
- Expanding sports tourism team from 1 to 2 staff
- \$10M put back in the state's Bond Bill for capital investment funds for sports tourism
- TEAMS Program restarted with \$500K budget to attract tournaments/events
- **D250** (Delaware 250th anniversary) planning **underway**, \$500K state funding secured, \$1M fundraising goal
- Commemorative magazine planned for March
- Focus on inclusivity and all 250 years of state history
- New marketing efforts targeting sports tourism, **D250**, and DC area

8. SDT 2025 Awards Luncheon

- Scott T. indicated that the event is looking to be scheduled the week of December 8th and seeking a featured speaker with a possible theme.
- Arts & Entertainment with a tourism focus was discussed with Patti Grimes among possible speakers. Scott T. will reach out to Patti to discuss and schedule.

9. SDT – Chamber Funding Application Review Meetings

Scott T. scheduled meetings with all the chamber directors and will distribute a meetings schedule and send calendar invitations. Meetings are set throughout August 26 and August 27.

10. Other Business / Announcements

Betsy R. announced that a candidates' forum will be held on Friday July 25th at the Virden Center for the state representative special election for District 20.

11. Next Board Meeting will be on October 16, 2025 from 9:30am to 11:30am.

12. Meeting Adjourned at 11:22am.