



Board Meeting Minutes from January 15, 2026

Sussex County EOC Building

In attendance: Scott Anthony (Board Chairperson), Drew DiFonzo Mike Dunmyer, Ben Gray, Bonnie Hall, Andrew Harton, Fred Mast, Kristin Miller, Suzanne Barger (proxy for Matt Parker), Linda Price, Betsy Reamer, Alison Schuch, Jim Smith, Scott Thomas, Fred Thompson (Board Co-Chairperson), Kevin Thompson, Nadine Timpanaro, Kate VanVorst, Lauren Weaver, Jessica Welch

Absent: Terry Carson, Kevin Evans, Maggie Lingo, Patrick Ruhl, Jo Schmeiser, Tom Summers

1. Call to Order time: 9:31am by Scott A.
2. **Welcome and Introductions:** Scott A. welcomed everyone and those in attendance introduced themselves through alphabetical roll call. The Board welcomed new member Kate VanVorst and she gave a brief introduction of herself. Quorum confirmed by Scott T.
3. Approval of the October 2025 Meeting Minutes
Motion by: Bonnie H., **Seconded by:** Linda P., **Passed by** the Board.
4. Committee Reports

Finance – Presented by Scott A

The committee approved a \$294,000 FY26 contingency marketing plan to guide use of the \$281,700 SDT surplus, with an emphasis on campaign-based spending, data-driven placements, and long-term asset development. Access to zip-code-level PAT data remains blocked by the Division of Revenue, limiting accurate chamber allocations. AirDNA is

being evaluated as a potential data solution. Idle cash balances were identified for improved investment returns.

FY26 Revenue Contingency Plan

- Projected Total Surplus: ~\$626,000
- Available to SDT (after 45% central fund): \$281,700
- Approved Guidance: \$294,000 marketing contingency plan (flexible framework)
- Strategic Direction:
Balance immediate operational needs with strategic investments
Shift toward campaign-based budgeting (e.g., Culinary Coast) to improve ROI tracking
Delaware 250 promotion included under Asset Development – Creative

Financial & PAT Data Update

- Q4 Traditional PAT: Down in December
Contributing factors: Rehoboth access closure (Oct–Nov), loss of government group business
- Division of Revenue Findings:
STR revenue lag expected to shift collections into Spring 2026
Current chamber allocations rely on outdated percentage splits-
AirDNA Evaluation
Purpose: Regain zip-code-level lodging data for chamber allocations
- Cost Comparison:
CoStar: ~\$5,508/year
AirDNA: \$16,950 (1-yr) or \$15,000 (2-yr)
Next Step: Review AirDNA sample report and validate inventory vs. CoStar

Investment & Cash Management

- Edward Jones Account: \$103,000 balance
- Recommendation: Transfer \$25,000 to improve returns
- Citizens Money Market: ~\$219,000 balance
Currently earning ~0.1%; rate renegotiation and CD options to be explored

Notes from the Q2 Financial Statements

- Total PAT Revenue is up 75.33% over the prior year, primarily because of the inclusion of short-term rentals. Excluding short-term rentals, the regular PAT revenue is up 9.8% year to date over last year. 2nd Quarter regular PAT revenue is up 5.9% over the same quarter last year. This is a slight decrease in comparison to the first quarter, and the regular PAT funds received in December were actually down 21% from the same month last year, which is the first decrease this year in comparison to last year.
- Budgeted Revenue for the year was \$1,900,000. SDT has now collected \$2,030,212 year to date - \$130,212 over the annual revenue budget.
- At 12/31/25, there was \$580,343 in the checking account. I've included in this amount, the \$116K of PAT funds that were supposed to have been received by yearend from the state. Of this amount, none is reserved for the Culinary Coast campaign. There also is \$219,295 in SDT's money market account. The Edward Jones investment account had a current cost basis at 12/31/25 of \$96,185 as reported on the books, but the actual accounts fair market value was \$103,195.90.

Motion to approve the First Quarter Financial Statements by Mike D.,
Seconded by Drew D., **Passed** by the Board.

Investment – Presented by Scott A.

Investment & Cash Management

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- Recommendation: Transfer \$25,000 to improve returns
- Citizens Money Market: ~\$219,000 balance
Currently earning ~0.1%; rate renegotiation and CD options to be explored

Motion to transfer \$25,000 from SDT's Bank Account to its Edward Jones Investment Fund by Linda P., **Seconded by** Mike D.,
Passed by the Board.

Policies & Procedures – Presented by Ben G.

- DE Division of Revenue Update. Deputy Director Kathy Revel sent a response letter to Scott T. regarding SDT's concern for accurate STR reporting. Scott will share the letter with the Board.
- P&P will prepare an email draft to state legislators regarding this concern for accurate reporting and auditing.
- Will explore the possibility of hiring a lobbyist and / or independent accounting firm.
- P&P drafted a new SDT Policy on Chamber Surplus (SDT) Funds, Accountability, and Performance Improvement. This policy has been shared with the Board and feedback has been requested from board members if necessary.
- Next committee meeting is on 2/5.

Marketing – Presented by Bonnie H.

- The marketing committee met on January 8th.
- Voted to extend SDT's Crowdriff subscription.
- Adopted the FY 26 Revenue Surplus / Contingency Plan that includes expanded marketing buys and Visitor Guide redesign.
- Bonnie outlined and called out highlights of SDT's Second Quarter Marketing Report that was shared and posted in the Boardroom.
- Committee is now using Placer ai data to prioritize DMA spends and new markets.
- Next committee meeting is April 8th.

5. DTO Update – Presented by Jessica W.

- Working on a meeting with the Secretary of State regarding STR compliance tools to help the state / DOR.
- The first of two meetings for the Sports Tourism Capital Investment Fund Committee is next Friday. \$10 million is available and there were 27 applicants with asks totaling \$38 million.
- Holding a kickoff event on 2/12 when FIFA World Cup schedule comes out.
- Will be holding World Cup Watch Parties in each of the three counties. The one in Sussex will be held on 6/20 at Hudson Fields.
- Will be holding an event on 2/3 in Wilmington highlighting DE Chefs with video from 1440 Film Company.
- Zach Bryan will be performing at The Woodlands in Dover 9/18-19th

6. Strategic Planning / Consultant Selection

- The Board tabled the Executive Committee's recommendation to hire Henlopen Hospitality due to a small number of scoring responses and need for more information that the RFP is based on.
- Scott T. will reach out to Henlopen Hospitality for an updated proposal and two other firms for more information regarding an abbreviated timeline option.
- The Board will be asked to score each proposal again in the coming weeks.

7. Other Business / Announcements

- Lauren W. gave an update on the Fire & Ice Festival
- For all your DE 250-related events, make sure that you contact Erik Raser-Schramm at erik.raser-schramm@delaware.gov to have them posted on the DE 250 website. You can also submit directly at <https://delaware250.org/my-de250-event/>

8. Next Board Meeting will be on April 16, 2026 from 9:30am to 11:30am.

9. Meeting Adjourned at 11:27 am.