



Hiwassee Downtown Development Authority Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, November 18, 2025
Time: 8:30 AM
Location: 50 River Street, Upstairs Training Room
Board Present: Shawn Farmer, Doug Schober, Amy Barrett, Tyler Osborn (arrived late)
Staff Present: Lily Ponitz, Jinelle Wagner
Guests Present: Leslie Howard, Caitlin Ayers, William Ayers

I. Call to order

Amy called the meeting to order at 8:33 AM.

II. Adopt agenda as set or amended

Motion: Shawn | Second: Doug | Approved | Absent: Tyler Absent

III. Approval of October 28, 2025 special called meeting minutes

Motion: Shawn | Second: Doug | Approved | Absent: Tyler Absent

IV. Approval of Financial Update

Motion: Shawn | Second: Doug | Approved

V. Directors Update

- Discussed switching accounting software from AccuFund to Black Mountain.
- Young Harris is transitioning to Blackbaud and this is another option for the City and DDA to transition to in the future.

VI. Paris Business Center Update

- Hosted the Towns County High School CTAE Advisory Council meeting and Clay County Chamber Business After Hours.
- Incubator Tenant, Brianna Hemphill, moved in.
- New partnerships are being built with Young Harris College, North Georgia Technical College, South State, and NC Extension.

VII. Night Market Season Debrief

- 18-20 artisan vendors were typical each month in 2025.
- May was cancelled due to weather.
- October was the highest attendance month.
- For next year, we're considering moving back a month since May tends to get cancelled. The schedule and themes discussed for 2026 were:
 - June 5 – Pirates/Jimmy Buffett theme
 - July 3 – USA
 - August 7 – Disney/Back to School
 - September 4 – Decades
 - October 2 – Fall
 - November 6 – Holiday
- We will vote in the December meeting on the dates and themes.
- Parking will be an issue next year when the restaurant is open and the night market is happening. Hogsed owns the corner parking lot and we can see if that can be used.

VIII. New Business

- a. Appoint final director to the Paris Business Center Board of Directors: Erik Brinke.
Motion: Shawn | Second: Doug | Approved
- b. Recommend director to be appointed to DDA Board of Directors: Bradley Barrett.
Motion: Shawn | Second: Doug | Approved | Recuse: Amy
- c. Approve A1A The Official and Original Jimmy Buffett Tribute Show Contract Agreement for the 2026 Annual FunDraiser set for July 18, 2026 - \$9,000.
Motion: Shawn | Second: Amy | Approved
- d. Ratify email vote to approve spending \$111,516.68 to pay down the PBC loan.
Motion: Shawn | Second: Doug | Approved | Recuse: Amy
- e. Approve invoice for Ana Hess for accounting services - \$640.
Motion: Shawn | Second: Doug | Approved
- f. Approve invoice for Joseph Homans for legal services - \$1,975.
Motion: Shawn | Second: Doug | Approved

IX. Old Business

- a. Tabled the approval of the purchase of a new Hikeawassee van, with down payment of \$6,500 and total cost of up to \$45,000.
 - Need more information on the insurance and whether the City or the DDA will purchase the van.
 - Need more information on the amount of money from the Shook House sale that will be allocated to DDA.Motion: Amy | Second: Shawn | Approved
- b. Approve Hikeawassee Sponsorship Agreement template.
Motion: Amy | Second: Doug | Approved

X. Executive Session – Not needed

XI. Adjourn by general consent at 9:30 AM.

2025 First Friday Night Market Season Wrap-Up and 2026 Discussions

Presented by First Friday Night Market Coordinator, Caitlin Ayers 11/18/25

May

- 26 total vendors [18 artisan + 8 food and drink]
- No theme
- Canceled due to severe weather during set up time

June

- 25 total vendors [18 artisan + 7 food and drink]
- THEME: Pirates, Beach, and Buffett [well received, great promo for the fundraiser in July]
- Rainy, but open

August

- 23 total vendors [18 artisan + 5 food and drink]
- THEME: Disney - Back 2 School
- Fun giveaway of mickey and Minnie Mouse ears to kids, a lot of folks showed up in their Disney gear and were just happy! Additional giveaways: a full backpack and local goods basket
- Hot weather, market was open

September

- 25 total vendors [20 artisan + 5 food and drink]
- THEME: Local School Spirit
- Head count: around 200 people
- Warm night, market was open

October

- 24 total vendors [20 artisan + 4 food and drink]
- THEME: Fall Finale
- Setup a fall photoshoot by the gazebo
- Head count: over 375 people
- Beautiful weather, great sunset, a little cool at sundown

Potential 2026 First Friday Night Market Schedule & Themes

*remove **May 1** from the schedule?

June 5 - Pirates, Beach, and Buffett

July 3 - USA themed? *holiday weekend*

August 7 - Disney - Back 2 School

September 4 - Decades Night (60's-90's?) *holiday weekend/Labor Day*

October 2 - All Things Fall (finale?)

November 6 - Holiday Night Market (too soon?) *additional date compared to years past*

“Off Season” Responsibilities:

- Booking local bands to fit the theme nights
- Work on improving community involvement especially local businesses. Maybe asking businesses close to the square to stay open later?

2025 SPONSORS: United Community Bank, Black Bear Realty, Barrett & Associates Insurance, City of Hiawassee, America's Home Place

Questions & Discussion from the Board