

North Little Rock Advertising & Promotion Commission

MINUTES
October 15, 2025

ATTENDEES

COMMISSION MEMBERS

Manoj Patel, Chairman
Tom Roy, Vice Chairman
Brayan McFadden, Secretary/Treasurer
Michael Marion, At-Large Position
Council Member Scott Fowler
Council Member Debi Ross
Melody Williford, Immediate Past Chairman

STAFF

Karen Trevino, President & CEO
Janis Alexander, Chief Operations Officer
Heather Kouns, Vice President of Strategic Sales
Everett Gaither, Vice President of Marketing and Communication
Lourdes Jones, Administrative Specialist
Jeff Wood, Sales Specialist

GUESTS

Rick Hogan, North Little Rock City Attorney Office
Mary Beth Bowman
Katelyn Thomas
Greg Spradlin
John Gaudin
Council Member Nathan Hamilton
Chris Kent
Bob Butler
Charlie Dawsen
Scott Landers

The North Little Rock Advertising and Promotion Commission met at 2:30 p.m. at 600 Main, North Little Rock. Chairman Manoj Patel called the meeting to order, the roll was taken, and a quorum was present. Brayan McFadden had an excused absence.

Manoj Patel welcomed all the guests to the Commission meeting and asked for anyone who wanted to address the Commission to wait until the end of the meeting, when the agenda is finished.

Tom Roy made a motion to approve July 16, 2025, meeting minutes, Debi Ross seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Debi Ross announced that Park Hill is working on a new entertainment district and that there should be more information about it soon.

MINUTES
October 15, 2025

Trevino presented the Financial Report noting that North Little Rock Tourism is doing well. In discussing the Profit and Loss Statement, Trevino reported that the income is at 75% for the year where it should be by 3rd quarter. Trevino reported that the reason the Audit and CPA Services expense was much higher than last year was because North Little Rock Tourism had been given a three-year deal with John Craft, and when his business was sold to EGP, the deal no longer applied after the expiration. Trevino reported that the money that is budgeted for building mortgage will not be spent this year and stated that the mortgage is paid up to 2029. Expenses are at 73%, which is perfect for 3rd quarter. Melody Williford made the motion to approve the Financial Report. The motion was seconded by Michael Marion and passed unanimously.

Janis Alexander reported on the Tax Collection Report. Alexander reported that 39 late letters were sent out this month, eleven Intent to Revoke letters, and three Revoke letters. Code Enforcement was also sent out to foodservice businesses that were late. Six food service businesses that received letters have paid already. Trevino said that some businesses had developed a pattern of behavior and that she intended to work with the City Attorney's office to tighten up some of the policies that are in place now. Tom Roy made the motion to approve the Tax Report. The motion was seconded by Michael Marion and passed unanimously.

Trevino reported that North Little Rock Tourism is working on strategic planning for the year 2026. It was determined that sports, meetings and groups, and leisure were the three main markets for the destination. Trevino stated that North Little Rock Tourism would be putting 40% into sports, 40% into meeting and groups, and 20% into leisure in the coming year for budget expenses of marketing, communications, media, and promotion. A hard look is being taken at community grants and sports incentives to make sure that sponsorships align with the return on investment.

The next topic of discussion was the music pavilion. Trevino reported that the pre-construction cost was estimated to be \$100,000, but now the Commission is only looking at having to allocate \$85,000 for the preconstruction contract and that Alessi Keyes is not charging for that part of the project. If that comes out in this fiscal year, it is being offset by not paying towards the building lease.

Trevino then welcomed John Gaudin and Greg Spradlin to speak about the art that would go into the pavilion. Gaudin spoke about the work the two were doing locally and out in the state. He reiterated that Kevin Kresse is the artist that would be producing the pieces to be showcased in the pavilion, and that next year the Commission could expect a full Johnny Cash sculpture and six busts to accompany it. The project would go on until all twenty busts were in place. Gaudin stated that in the spaces that a bust was not ready to be placed, there would be some type of display showing what busts are coming. There may also be other displays added to recognize other pioneers that won't have a bust. Gaudin reported that they already had \$600,000 committed by sponsors to cover the first year of art. Gaudin then stated that the cost totaled \$1.3 million for art all together which his volunteer capital group is raising. The first year was the biggest expense, and that has already been committed. Gaudin stated that they are working with a lot of great people to have conversations about the pavilion and make presentations about the new attractions around the state.

MINUTES
October 15, 2025

Greg Spradlin talked about how long ago he was a consultant for the Delta Blues Museum in Mississippi. He shared that it started off as a one-room office that was locked and required permission to access, and now today it was a multi-million-dollar operation. Mississippi conservatively estimated that music tourism brought a little over a billion dollars a year to the state. North Little Rock possesses an enviable opportunity and there is a lot of excitement surrounding this project. Music tourism is an opportunity for economic development, and the state of Arkansas possesses multiple potential assets in this niche. Economic development like this has benefited small and medium sized destinations greatly, and destinations like North Little Rock will surely shine. Spradlin said, with reference to his background in fundraising, that this type of momentum and enthusiasm was a great sign, and that North Little Rock could not be a more ideal location for the music pavilion. The fact that North Little Rock was so accessible and was the grand center of the state would be very attractive to international visitors as well.

Spradlin talked about the Music City Conference that was held in Fayetteville this year. Spradlin explained that the Music City Conference is an international conference that happens in one city every year. This conference focused on cities that have been transformed through music or any performance. When Spradlin participated in a panel that focused on cities that used music tourism as a means of rebirth, Spradlin spoke about the North Little Rock music pavilion. He said that after he presented, during the rest of the conference people asked him how they could help and participate in the project themselves. Trevino chimed in to mention that Alexander, Pete Unwer, Chris Kent and she had also gone to the conference, and many people had expressed interest in bringing their entertainers to North Little Rock.

Trevino invited Scott Landers up to present the overview and the scope of the music pavilion and plaza upgrade project. Landers had met with the North Little Rock Tourism staff to first understand the challenges faced with the current state of the Plaza which requires a larger stage, lighting, storage, and stage covering. He mentioned that the Plaza stage does not possess adequate protection from weather events. The conceptual design possessed more lighting not only for the performers, but also the clean-up crew that operated after the event and lighting under the Front Porch. Landers spoke to the manufacturer of the projector for the Plaza about how to change the lens and prepare for it to be used day or night. This will allow the current projector to be permanently placed on the stage to be used even during the day, which cannot be done now. The conceptual design possessed as many of the requirements gathered from stakeholders as possible, so that the design was ready when it was time to start the design process.

The design of the pavilion itself was studied by Landers and Kevin Kresse to incorporate the roots and beginnings of the arts from the agricultural community. A concept was based on the tobacco barns in which many entertainers began their journey. These "Americana" artists are the theme of the pavilion. Landers then modernized the design so the structure would complement the architectural design of the rest of the Plaza. The design is up to 3,000 square feet and could fit up to 300 people at a time and had attachable sides if an organizer wanted to hold a heated event during the wintertime. The art project is being done separately from the building project; the structure would hold all the electricity and conduits used to create an interactive experience with the art. Landers is working with a company that worked on a lot of museum spaces and outdoor spaces, in the conceptual design was an interactive auditory element that when a person approaches one the bust pieces, it would introduce itself and play a piece of the represented artist's music. A system will be used to design the feature so that the sound would only be heard by people that are

MINUTES
October 15, 2025

within close vicinity with the bust. A component to be able to turn this feature off when events are being hosted would also be included in the design. Engagement with the company to get down specifics would happen when the design phase begins.

Trevino welcomed Bob Butler and Mary Beth Bowman to present the draft of the contract. Butler introduced himself as the President of Alessi Keys Construction and Charlie Dawsen as the Vice President. Butler explained that the Commission was being asked to approve the comprehensive contract. The \$85,000 requested today from the Commission would go towards Phase 1, the design phase. Once approved, Alessi Keys would get in contact with engineers and produce a design, then Butler would come back to the Commission to speak about budget and design for the project. Trevino stated that Butler was not charging the Commission a pre-construction cost. Mary Beth Bowman explained that she is providing support to North Little Rock Tourism as she is the Construction Director for the city with expertise in this type of project. Gary Clements is the architect chosen for the design build contract. Mr. Clements would take the project designs and schematics to the Historic District Commission then to the Planning Commission AFTER the A & P Commission makes the final decisions. The benefit to the timeline of this plan was that there would be a designated time for changes to be made before the project starts construction.

Council Member Nathan Hamilton asked for permission to address the Commission on this issue rather than waiting until the end of the agenda. With the Commissions' approval for him to speak for three minutes, Council Member Hamilton stated that he felt his public comment should be made before the vote because that was what made the most sense. Hamilton thanked the Commission for their service to the city and went on to thank Commissioner Michael Marion for what Simmons Bank Arena brings to North Little Rock. Hamilton stated that there had not been more done for tourism in North Little Rock than what Michael Marion had done through his service and leadership with the Commission and Simmons Bank Arena. Marion thanked Hamilton for the recognition and Hamilton moved on to his next point.

Hamilton stated that the City Council, who agreed to sell the land for the project, did not receive an informational presentation and that he wished he had an opportunity to hear the presentations that were made today. Hamilton stated that when John Gaudin and Kevin Kresse first spoke to him about the project that he had wanted to donate money to the project. He said that he supports the project. Hamilton claimed that the City Council's decision to sell the property did not make sense. He felt like the decision had been made behind closed doors. Hamilton continued saying that there was no credible reason for the decision. Council Member Hamilton asked the Commission to go to the mayor asking for the land purchase to be paused for one City Council cycle and have the Council vote on the decision so that he can vote "yes". Hamilton finished by saying that after today's meeting he would be content and that he would not comment on the decision again, no matter which way the vote goes. Hamilton thanked the Commission for the time and excused himself from the meeting.

Trevino informed the Commission that there had been many weeks of conversation with Council Member Hamilton, who had asked for all North Little Rock Tourism's financial information for the last seven years, minutes and recordings for seven years among other information. Trevino commented that it was an extensive amount of material that Hamilton had requested and that it had all been sent as requested. Trevino stated that the decision to sell the land for the pavilion was not made behind closed doors, as Hamilton had said. Trevino had met with the Mayor, the City Attorney, the City CFO, John Gaudin, and others.

MINUTES
October 15, 2025

The group discussed the music pavilion project and that North Little Rock Tourism had the money to build the pavilion. After much discussion about the most efficient and effective way to make the music pavilion happen, it was decided that the city could sell the land to the North Little Rock Advertising and Promotion Commission who could then build the project. In accordance with the A & P law, North Little Rock Advertising & Promotion can build and develop attractions for the destination, and the mayor felt that the music pavilion was North Little Rock Tourism's project to take on. The land for the pavilion was eventually priced at \$2,500 dollars. Trevino is allowed to spend up to \$50,000 without a Commission vote. She stated that nothing was done inappropriately. It is her responsibility to handle the business of this organization while it's the Mayor, CFO, and City Attorney's responsibility to handle the business of the city.

Trevino asked the Commission if there were any questions about the land sale or pavilion/stage project. Council Member Scott Fowler stated that he had a comment to make. Fowler stated that Trevino, Artist Kevin Kresse, and John Gaudin had met with Debi Ross and Fowler separately as commission members to educate them about the project. Gaudin and Kresse met with all other council members and the mayor. These meetings were only for discussion and sharing knowledge. Trevino clarified to the Commission that the City Council members were NOT asked about voting nor polling for support. Fowler stated that when the project and land was brought to the City Council, the legal term that had been used by the City Attorney was "consideration". Fowler stated that the legal term "consideration" was used to describe an intangible or intrinsic exchange, like the predicted future return on investment for this project and use of land. Rick Hogan confirmed that Fowler was correct. Trevino added that the mayor stated that the land was basically being transferred from one government entity to another government entity and that the value of the entire project, along with its future economic impact far exceeded the value of the land. She also mentioned that the site has no ingress or egress or parking and that it would be very difficult to build anything else on the site as past experiences have shown.

Ross asked that a permanent policy be put in place, so the Commission knows how to handle comments from guests during the meeting. Trevino stated that by the next meeting the Bylaws would be amended for discussion by the A&P Commission. She will get the City's policy for Council meetings as a guide.

Tom Roy made a motion to approve the contract and the \$85,000 initial costs, Melody Williford seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Trevino informed the Commission that November 13, 2025, is the VIP night for the circus, and the Commission would receive an invitation. The ringmaster schedule for the circus is also finished. The Mayor's Tree Lighting will be November 18, 2025, Trevino stated that there would be hot chocolate, and singers would perform holiday songs. Northern Lights Festival will be November 22, 2025, with added activities for this year, and North Little Rock Ice Rink will open at the Lakewood POA. She stated that their organization had been trying to find ways to include other parts of the city in the holiday events and the Ice Rink sponsorship allowed that to happen. The Christmas Parade was changed from the first weekend in December to the second weekend.

At the end of the meeting, Chris Kent asked to speak to the Commission for three minutes. Kent informed the Commission of a brief history for the Argenta Plaza. This included the expectation that the Plaza would always be filled with people and have high traffic, this was not the case, partly because of the pandemic. Another structure was planned to be built at

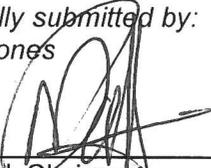
MINUTES
October 15, 2025

the Plaza to act as a food court and a restaurant was meant to be in First Orion, that did not happen. The solution was decided to be music, but the Plaza was not made for concerts and music festivals. The music pavilion presented new opportunities for music tourism. Kent applied for North Little Rock to be recognized as a music city at the Music City Conference in Fayetteville. North Little Rock did not win, but Kent stated that North Little Rock possesses a great attraction for music tourism, the Simmons Bank Arena. North Little Rock also possesses music venues like Four Quarter and potentially Dickey Stephens. With the music pavilion, North Little Rock has the potential to become a music city for tourism and travel.

Trevino introduced Jeff Wood, the new sales specialist, and congratulated Everett Gaither who was promoted to Vice President of Marketing and Communication.

The budget meeting will be held on December 17. The next quarterly A & P Commission meeting will be held on January 21, 2026, at 2:30 p.m. at the NLR A & P Commission office at 600 Main Street. With no other business to discuss, Debi Ross motioned to adjourn the meeting at 3:36 p.m. Melody Williford seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by:
Lourdes Jones



Manoj Patel, Chairman