

# **Economic Development and Tourism Council Agenda**

**August 3, 2026**

**5:00 PM**

**Ag Learning Center/UT Extension, 288 Spring Street, Spencer, TN**

## **AGENDA**

**Call to Order**

**Approval of Previous Minutes: June 1, 2026**

**Citizens' Comments**

**Board Updates:**

- **Chamber of Commerce**
- **Historical Heritage Museum**
- **Fall Creek Falls State Park**
- **VBC Fair Board**
- **UT Extension (agricultural items, economic development, etc.)**
- **City ECD & Tourism**
- **Others**

**Old Business:**

**New Business:**

- **Discuss Freedom Fest 250<sup>th</sup> Pros & Cons**
- **Grand-reopening of City Park Ideas**
- **VBC Fair Booth Ideas**
- **September Meeting Date**
- **Other**

**Adjourn**

**Next Meeting:**



**FALL CREEK FALLS RECREATION CORRIDOR**  
**Spencer Tourism**  
**Van Buren County Economic Development & Tourism Council**

Date: June 1, 2026

Time: 5:00 PM

Location: UT Extension Ag Learning Center, 288 Spring Street, Spencer

**1. Call to Order**

Chairperson Alisa Farmer called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

**2. Roll Call**

Present:

- Alisa Farmer
- Gage Farmer
- Justin Aughinbaugh
- Valerie Sochocki
- Brad Taylor
- Amelia Mooneyham (Chamber Representative)
- Kenny Delon
- Earl Delong
- Ce Ce Martin
- Chris Binkley
- Lesa Bouldin

Absent:

- Susan Spears
- Rebecca Harris

**3. Approval of Previous Minutes**

Motion by: Lesa Bouldin

Second by: Earl Delong

Outcome: Motion carried

**4. Citizens Comments**

No citizens comments were presented.



## **5. Reports & Updates**

### **Chamber of Commerce**

Amelia Mooneyham reported that the Chamber conducted ribbon cuttings for the Prevention Coalition and Piney Pantry Farm Stand. The Farmers Market is scheduled to begin June 20. A community connection event is planned for June 23. The Chamber will sponsor a Fourth of July decorating contest for businesses and residences. Amelia also reported that the Chamber will coordinate the Van Buren County exhibit at the Tennessee State Fair and requested promotional and historical materials from local organizations and businesses for display.

### **Heritage Museum**

Justin Aughinbaugh reported that no museum board meeting had been held since the previous Tourism Council meeting. Planning continues for the Field of Honor display to be presented during the July 3 Freedom Fest event. Approximately 250 flags are being considered in recognition of America's 250th anniversary.

### **Fall Creek Falls State Park**

No report was presented.

### **Fairgrounds / Fair Board**

Lesa Bouldin reported that work is expected to begin on a new concession stand addition and covered seating area using state grant funds that must be expended before November. Additional improvements are planned to increase storage and functionality at the fairgrounds.

Lesa and Gage Farmer presented the proposed 2026 Fair theme, "Tennessee 250: Woven by Generations," which incorporates quilting traditions and local heritage. Council members discussed potential educational and community activities related to the theme.

### **UT Extension / Economic Development**

Chris Binkley reported progress on the ThreeStar grant project and stated that engineering services are being finalized. He also provided an update on ARC-funded technology improvements, including upgraded meeting room equipment and livestream capabilities for county meetings.

Chris also reported continued growth within the Amish community on Rocky River Road, including a bakery, greenhouse, feed store, and plans for additional retail and food-related businesses.



## **City / Economic Development & Tourism**

Valerie Sochocki reported that the Mennonite tourism brochures are currently being printed. She also proposed creating a county map highlighting local farm stands, cottage industries, and other small attractions to help visitors discover destinations throughout the county.

Mayor Alisa Farmer reported that promotional materials for the July 3 Freedom Fest celebration have been distributed and encouraged members to assist with promotion throughout surrounding counties.

Additional updates included:

- Brad Taylor canceled live music events at The Ugly Mug during the July 3 weekend to avoid conflicting with Freedom Fest activities.
- Kenny Delon reported that the Hitchcock Building is under contract with plans for future commercial and event space use.
- Mayor Farmer reported that city park improvements are nearing completion and that a grand reopening event will be planned following final construction.

## **6. Old Business**

Council members reviewed plans for the July 3 Freedom Fest celebration.

Updates included:

- The American Legion will provide the Presentation of Colors, Pledge of Allegiance, and National Anthem.
- Children's activities and inflatables are being coordinated.
- The Heritage Museum will remain open during the event.
- The Field of Honor veteran recognition display is being organized.
- Vendor and food service arrangements were reviewed.
- Stage, sound, entertainment, sponsorship, and promotional activities were discussed and confirmed.

Council members discussed methods for collecting donations and sponsorships for the Field of Honor project, including the potential use of Stripe and other online payment options.

## **7. New Business**

Chairperson Alisa Farmer announced that the Chamber of Commerce had approved Amelia Mooneyham as its official representative to the Van Buren County Economic Development & Tourism Council.



No additional new business was presented.

## **8. Next Meeting**

The next meeting date was not announced.

## **9. Adjournment**

Motion by: Earl Delong

Second by: Gage Farmer

Outcome: Motion carried

Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:50 PM.

*Minutes respectfully submitted by:*

*Justin Alan Aughinbaugh*

*Secretary*

*Van Buren County Economic Development & Tourism Council*

## **Action Items**

- Justin Aughinbaugh – Continue Field of Honor planning and finalize online donation/payment options.
- Amelia Mooneyham – Coordinate Chamber participation in the Tennessee State Fair exhibit.
- Lesa Bouldin and Fair Board – Continue concession stand and fairgrounds improvement projects.
- Alisa Farmer – Finalize July 3 Freedom Fest schedule, promotions, and opening ceremony arrangements.
- Valerie Sochocki – Continue development of tourism mapping and brochure distribution efforts.

## **Potential Follow-Up**

- County-wide map highlighting farm stands, cottage industries, and tourism destinations.
- Field of Honor payment and sponsorship system implementation.
- Development of community activities related to the “Tennessee 250: Woven by Generations” fair theme.
- Planning for the city park grand reopening event following project completion.