

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, February 20, 2014. The meeting began at 8:00 a.m. and was held at the Winchester-Frederick County Visitors Center.

Board Members Present: Rebecca Ebert, Dan Martin, Bill Hottel, Tootie Rinker, John Marker, Eric Campbell

Board Members Absent: Sue Robinson, Rainee Simpson, Sharon Farinholt

Staff: Renee Bayliss, Sally Coates

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Matt Armstrong, Winchester Star; Kristen Laise, Belle Grove Plantation.

Call To Order: Ms. Rebecca Ebert, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

Roll Call: Mrs. Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

The January 2014 minutes were approved on a motion by Tootie Rinker, seconded by John Marker.

Executive Director's Report – Sally Coates

Mrs. Coates announced that the Winchester-Frederick County Civil War Geo-Trail launched this past Saturday, February 15 at the Visitors Center with 58 people in attendance. Visitors from all over Virginia, PA, MD, and WV participated. Mrs. Coates also attended the kick-off event for the Shenandoah Valley Kids Trail. The Kids Trail brings together kid-friendly attractions in the Shenandoah Valley, and locally includes the Family Drive-In, Alamo, Shenandoah Summer Music Theatre, Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum, and the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival.

Mrs. Coates spent three days at the Virginia is for Lovers booth representing Winchester-Frederick County at the Great American Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, PA. She noted that it has greatly improved since the show changed management from last year.

The board was provided with several samples of printed ads and editorial featuring Winchester-Frederick County, including the Virginia Travel Guide, the Virginia Hospitality and Travel Guide, and Cooperative Living Magazine. The CVB also assisted writer Judy Colbert with a section on Winchester-Frederick County in her book, *Scenic Routes & Byways in Virginia*, which was displayed.

Mrs. Coates informed the board that the official 2014-2015 Visitors Guide is currently at the printers.

Old Business:

Report on Geocaching event – Renee Bayliss

Mrs. Bayliss reported that there was excellent attendance at the Geocaching kick-off event, despite the bad weather. Mrs. Bayliss noted that the launch of the Geo-Trail had good coverage in the media prior to the event. The CVB presented volunteer geocacher, Wallace Shipp, with a plaque to thank him for his efforts in creating the trail and coordinating volunteers. Wayne Eldred from Newtown History Center attended, representing one of the included sites on the trail, and Tootie Rinker attended, representing the tourism board. So far, 20 groups of people have completed the trail and claimed their prize bags. Mrs. Bayliss reported that the event also sparked interest in the Historical Tour of Winchester, and 31 groups from four different states have now completed that tour. Refreshments for the kick-off event were provided by the CVB.

New Business:

News from Belle Grove Plantation – Kristen Laise, Executive Director

Ms. Laise gave the board an update on Belle Grove Plantation, including special events, a new exhibit, and their Belle Grove 1797 Whiskey. The new exhibit features graffiti from the attic of the Manor House. Using photographs and a video tour, visitors will be able to see messages left by people throughout Belle Grove's history, beginning with soldiers in the Civil War and continuing through the 1920s when the home served as an inn for travelers. Admission to the exhibit is \$5 for those 12 and older, and included with purchase of a Manor House tour ticket. Ms. Laise told the board about Belle Grove Whiskey and Whiskey Chocolates. The whiskey, which has been very popular, is created from a recipe by the owner of Belle Grove, and is available at local ABC stores. Ms. Laise provided the board with a listing of Belle Grove's upcoming events for 2014, including the Of Ale and History Beer Festival, Wine Festival, Garden Fest, Battle of Cedar Creek 150th Reenactment, Antiques Appraisal & Traditional Crafts Fair, and Christmas Candlelight Tours.

Public Comments

Mr. Eric Campbell reminded the board that the Civil War HistoryMobile will be at Lord Fairfax Community College this weekend, and Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park will be hosting special programs in conjunction with the event. Mr. Dan Martin announced the date of the upcoming Evans Home Chili Dinner fundraiser, and Mr. John Marker noted that applications are now being taken for the Apple Blossom Festival's Apple Pie Baking Contest.

Ms. Rebecca Ebert asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, John Marker made a motion, seconded by Bill Hottel, meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Renee Bayliss, Visitor & Community Relations Specialist, City of Winchester