

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, January 21, 2016. The meeting began at 8:00 a.m. and was held at the Winchester-Frederick County Visitors Center.

Board Members Present: Rebecca Ebert, Bill Hottel, Karen Helm, Kristen Laise, Eric Campbell

Board Members Absent: Dan Martin, Eddie Richard, Sharon Farinholt, Priya Patel

Staff: Justin Kerns, Renee Bayliss

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Bob Hess, Frederick County Board of Supervisors; John Hill, Winchester City Council; Gwen Walker; Tiffany and Derrick Niide, Inn at Vaucluse Spring.

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

Roll Call: Mrs. Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

The December 2015 minutes were approved on a motion by Bill Hottel, seconded by Eric Campbell.

Executive Director's Report – Justin Kerns, Executive Director

Mr. Kerns described work being done on a regional beer, wine, and spirits trail, that is being funded through a VTC grant and is a partnership between several local counties. He is also working with a group of Northern Shenandoah Valley DMOs (Destination Marketing Organizations) to brand and promote the area.

New Business:

2016 Visitor Guide Strategy – Justin Kerns and Renee Bayliss

Mr. Kerns reported that work on the new Visitors Guide has begun. He will be contacting businesses to raise approximately \$17,000 in advertising. The size will change to a magazine style layout. He is waiting to have the advertising contract approved by the city attorney. Ms. Ebert asked Mrs. Bayliss about the layout of the guide. She noted that there will be more listings, due to including some businesses without requiring them to place an ad, and also that the ads will likely be placed in the back of the guide.

Visitor Center Gift Shop Strategy – Justin Kerns

Mr. Kerns noted that selling locally produced items is a popular request in the gift shop, and would like to bring in some of these items. He is planning to sell locally-produced beer, wine, and cider in the Visitors Center. Mrs. Karen Helm asked if it would be an "off" license. Mr. Kerns replied that it would be, and that he has spoken with the City Manager and County Administrator for an informal approval. Ms. Ebert asked for a motion to approve beer and wine sales, Ms. Kristen Laise made a motion, seconded by Bill Hottel, all approved. In regards to other locally-produced food items in the gift shop, Ms. Kristen

Laise noted that it's important to note expiration dates on products, and to promote the sale of local goods to the community as well.

Old Business:

Artisan Trail Progress Update – Karen Helm

Mrs. Helm gave an update on the progress of the Artisan Trail. Plans first began in January 2014, and the Artisans Center gave a presentation at the July 2014 board meeting. The Winchester-Frederick County CVB committed \$15,000 for the trail development, and \$5,000 for the first year after it was launched. The first management team meeting was one year ago, and since that time, many of the team has dropped off. There are eight people on the team, and they meet 6 hours a month. The inauguration of the trail has been moved from May to September 2016. Artisans will be able to sign on until April. She noted that there was interest in adding Clarke County. Mr. Kerns explained that some of the team considered adding Clarke, and after speaking with the involved parties, they would like to do so. Clarke County Tourism would be asked to contribute funds to participate. Ms. Karen Helm said that it is feasible, but they want to keep their deadline intact. Ms. Ebert asked for a motion to approve allowing Clarke County to be a part of the Top of Virginia Artisan Trail project. Mr. Campbell made a motion, seconded by Kristen Laise, all in favor.

Presentation – New Owners of the Inn at Vaocluse Spring – Tiffany and Derrick Niide

The new owners of the Inn at Vaocluse Spring introduced themselves to the board. They moved here from Hawaii, after searching the West and East coasts for a property to purchase. They explained that they have been very pleased with their decision to locate in the area so far. They are looking at adding yoga, meditation, and stress reduction retreats at the inn. Their chef is Alan Brown, and they noted that they are open for dinner, even if you are not an overnight guest. Ms. Ebert asked if they host weddings, and they said they are able to accommodate small weddings. The board thanked them for attending the meeting.

Public Comments

Mr. John Hill announced that the first Friday in February is the beginning of the Black History Month Exhibit at the Shenandoah Arts Council. Ms. Ebert reminded everyone that the Old Town Chocolate Escape is February 6. Ms. Kristen Laise gave an overview of the upcoming events at Belle Grove Plantation.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 am on a motion by Karen Helm, seconded by Eric Campbell.

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