

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, May 26, 2016. (On the fourth Thursday instead of the third due to a scheduling conflict) The meeting began at 8:05 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: Renee Bayliss, Justin Kerns

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Bob Hess, Frederick County Board of Supervisors; Andy Gyurisin, Alamo Drafthouse Cinema

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

Roll Call: Mrs. Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

The April 2016 minutes were approved on a motion by Bill Hottel, seconded by Eric Campbell.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Kerns informed the board that the Tourism Tuesday radio show has a new host, and that Gary Auerbach of WinLife TV has left and started his own live video show on Facebook. Mr. Kerns will be filming monthly updates of local happenings at various locations around the area. The blog he created on the CVB website has three posts so far, and analytics show that it is increasing traffic. The ABC License application is still in the process of approval.

Mr. Kerns noted that he is working with Old Town Winchester and the Winchester Parking Authority to create a bus parking plan for Old Town. The goal is to streamline bus parking access for groups. Mr. Kerns also participated in a FAM Tour for new employees relocating here to work at the FBI building. In addition, a new travel counselor, Gillian, has been hired to work in the Visitors Center.

New Business:

Virginia Tourism Corporation Marketing Leverage Grant – Justin Kerns

Mr. Kerns informed the board that he has begun drafting a Virginia Tourism Marketing Leverage Grant application for a Winchester/Frederick County rebranding and marketing campaign. Previously, the CVB had not applied for its own grants, but would use its funds to help other organizations leverage their funds. Applications are due June 28, and must be approved by City Council. Grant awards are announced in late July and early August.

Committee Updates – Marketing – Kristen Laise

Kristen informed the board that the Marketing Committee has met twice, and they have reviewed the Interim Director, Amy Simmons' draft of the Marketing Plan. The group may split the plan into two separate documents. Mr. Kerns provided the committee with a dollar amount for the total marketing budget, and noted several ads he suggests removing, and referred to the committee's input for several others that are in question.

Committee Updates – Nominating Committee – Rebecca Ebert

Ms. Ebert informed the board that Karl Littman of Candy Hill Campground declined the offer to serve on the Tourism Board. Mary Braun of the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum was accepted as a Board member by Winchester City Council and the Frederick County Board of Supervisors, as well as Andy Gyurisin of the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema. Mr. Dan Martin will continue to serve on the board in his new position at Hampton Inn.

Committee Updates – New Committee formation – Rebecca Ebert and Justin Kerns

Mr. Kerns discussed possible updates to the Tourism Board bylaws, and the creation of a new committee to oversee the changes. Ms. Rebecca Ebert suggested that the board postpone creation of the committee until the new members start their terms.

Old Business:

Top of Virginia Artisan Trail Update – Karen Helm

Mrs. Karen Helm informed the board of the progress of the Artisan Trail. They have selected the cover image for the marketing piece, and the end of May is the deadline for applications for this year. The trail will be launched in September, and 10,000 brochures will be printed. Sponsorships would allow them to be able to print an additional 10,000.

Regional Initiatives Update – Justin Kerns

Mr. Kerns briefed the board on the regional groups that he has been meeting with regularly and their projects, which include a regional spirits trail and a farm to fork event. Groups that meet regularly include the Shenandoah Valley DMOs, Shenandoah Valley Travel Association, and the local Civil War cluster group.

Presentation – Justin Kerns, Winchester-Frederick County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Mr. Kerns attended Southeast Tourism Society's Marketing College last week, and reported on his experiences. The region the organization covers includes 13 states. Classes are taught by industry leaders and professionals. After completion of the program, participants receive a Tourism Marketing Professional designation. He noted several industry trends which were emphasized, including the importance of data, quality images and video, and understanding Millennials.

Public Comments

Mrs. Bayliss announced that Civil War walking tours will take place every Friday in Old Town Winchester this year, for the first time, and that there are several trolley tours planned, including one for June 11. Ms. Rebecca Ebert reminded the board that the Handley Library will now be open additional hours on Thursdays, after eight years of reduced hours. Ms. Kristen Laise noted that Belle Grove will be hosting story times and other reading events in conjunction with the library this summer.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 am on a motion by Karen Helm, seconded by Eric Campbell.

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