

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, May 18, 2017. The meeting began at 8:05 a.m. and was held at the Winchester-Frederick County Visitors Center.

Board Members Present: Andy Gyurisin, Karen Helm, Kristen Laise, Priya Patel, Mary Braun

Board Members Absent: Dan Martin, Eric Campbell, Eddie Richard, Sharon Farinholt

Staff: Renee Bayliss, Justin Kerns

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Mayor David Smith, Winchester City Council; Jennifer Bell, Winchester Downtown Manager; Shawn Hershberger, City of Winchester Development Services Director; Albert McGilvray

Call To Order: Priya Patel called the meeting to order.

Roll Call: Mrs. Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

The April meeting minutes were approved on a motion by Karen Helm, seconded by Andy Gyurisin.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Kerns reported on the activities of the past month, which included distribution of the 2017 Visitors Guide, pursuing a refresh to the visitwinchesterva.com website and moving it to a new platform, and the completion of the Patsy Cline exhibit update. The exhibit will open once the finalized agreements are in place.

Winchester-Frederick County hosted the Blue Ridge Parkway Association's AAA FAM tour, which included a visit to Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. A Civil War Cluster meeting was also held focusing on Civil War Weekend, and Mrs. Bayliss noted that the CVB will be hosting a driving tour in partnership with the McCormick Civil War Institute on the topic of "The African Americans' Civil War in Winchester." Other items of interest included the upcoming media launch event for the Shenandoah Valley DMO group and an upcoming expansion of the Shenandoah Spirits Trail to include Warren, Page, and Clarke Counties.

Kristen Laise asked if there has been a press release for the CVB's new logo. Mr. Kerns explained that the branding company's recommendation was to have a soft rollout of the new branding, rather than an announcement.

Committee Reports:

Marketing Committee – Sharon Farinholt and Kristen Laise

Kristen Laise reported that the Marketing Committee has not met recently.

MATPRA Marketplace Committee – Karen Helm and Mary Braun

Mary Braun reported that the group met at the Discovery Museum where one of the events will take place. The main topic of discussion was itineraries, and they will be starting on sponsorships soon. Mr. Kerns also explained that Virginia Tourism Corporation is bringing a PR expert to Winchester from New York to host a special workshop to prepare local businesses for travel writers.

New Business:

Southeast Tourism Society Congressional Summit – Justin Kerns

Mr. Kerns reported that he will attend the summit as a representative to advocate for tourism.

Tourism Master Plan – Justin Kerns

Mr. Kerns told the board that he hoped to get started on the Tourism Master Plan already, but is making plans to begin soon. He suggested creating a sub-committee to work on the project after the MATPRA Marketplace event in September.

Special Guest Presentation – Shawn Hershberger, Development Services Director, City of Winchester

Mr. Shawn Hershberger introduced himself to the tourism board. He noted that he is from Cumberland, Maryland and his position will now oversee the City departments of Old Town, Economic Development, Planning, and Tourism. Mary Braun asked Mr. Hershberger about what his initial projects will be, and he explained that the development of the Winchester Towers site is a priority. Mr. Kerns asked him to elaborate on his Master Plan for Economic Development. Mr. Hershberger explained that the four pillars of the Master Plan include Tourism, Business Recruitment, Workforce Development, and Product Development. Before adjourning, the tourism board members went around and introduced themselves to Mr. Hershberger.

Public Comments

Jennifer Bell displayed the new Old Town Winchester inserts that were in the Winchester Star and reminded everyone of upcoming events including the Old Town Farmers Market, KidzFest, Loudoun Street Mile, and Hop Blossom Craft Beer Festival. Karen Helm noted that the Patsy Cline Historic House is starting to see visitors that have also been to the new Patsy Cline Museum in Nashville. Andy Gyurisin announced that a traveling cartoon truck character from Adult Swim will be including the Alamo Drafthouse as a tour stop. Kristen Laise reported that the Of Ale and History Beer Festival was smaller this year due to the weather, but that over 1,000 people still attended. Belle Grove is also hosting Garden Fest on June 3. Priya Patel reported that Apple Blossom went well for her hotels, and also explained Summit Point and the potential loss of government business that could be difficult for local lodging establishments.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 am on a motion by Kristen Laise, seconded by Karen Helm.

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