

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, November 19, 2015. The meeting began at 8:00 a.m. and was held at the Winchester-Frederick County Visitors Center.

Board Members Present: Rebecca Ebert, Karen Helm, Kristen Laise, Eddie Richard, Priya Patel, Eric Campbell

Board Members Absent: Dan Martin, Bill Hottel, Sharon Farinholt

Staff: Justin Kerns, Renee Bayliss

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Jennifer Bell, Winchester Downtown Manager; Onofrio Castiglia, The Winchester Star; Christine Kriz, Top of Virginia Regional Chamber.

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

Roll Call: Mrs. Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

The October 2015 minutes were approved on a motion by Eric Campbell, seconded by Priya Patel.

Executive Director's Report – Justin Kerns, Executive Director

Mr. Kerns distributed a packet of statistics to the board which covered economic impact, tourist spending, employment trends, and hotel occupancy. The charts showed that tourism spending in our area has been steadily increasing. Mr. Kerns noted that he has been working on the budget for the next fiscal year, which is due at the end of this month. He has recently been involved with providing input for the City's Strategic Plan, and the County's Comprehensive Plan, regarding tourism. He also has plans to participate in council/board meetings in Stephens City and Middletown.

Mr. Kerns also participated in Tourism Tuesday this past month, and has been doing site visits at tourism related businesses and organizations, including the Winchester Regional Airport.

Old Business:

Third party ticket sales at Visitors Center for events – Tourism Board

The board agreed that they would like to encourage the sale of tickets to local events at the Visitors Center. Until a new POS system is installed at the front desk, staff will only be able to accept cash or check for ticket payments.

Christmas Ornament compromise – Justin Kerns

Mr. Kerns discussed the decision on the ornament, which was to include “Middletown, Virginia” on the ornament, and a hang tag with the Convention & Visitors Bureau logo, Winchester-Frederick County, Virginia, and text on the back regarding Belle Grove Plantation. Ms. Kristen Laise, of Belle Grove Plantation, offered to sell the ornaments at their gift shop, on consignment. The board agreed they were pleased with the ornament.

New Business:

Reception for new Director – Tourism Board

The board discussed holding a welcome reception for Mr. Kerns, and decided to plan for December 17, from 8-9:30am, in lieu of the board meeting that would have been held on that date. Ms. Priya Patel volunteered to assist in the planning.

Presentation – Ms. Christine Kriz, Top of Virginia Regional Chamber

Ms. Christine Kriz introduced herself as the new Executive Officer of the Top of Virginia Regional Chamber. She explained that the chamber has approximately 800 members, and their purpose is to assist small businesses by communicating legislative issues, providing networking for business owners, providing education through their mentoring program, and more. Other activities held by the chamber include Business & Breakfast, Business After Hours, and lead share groups. Ms. Kriz remarked that the chamber will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2017. She also gave a brief history of some of the chamber’s notable accomplishments that have helped Winchester grow.

Public Comments

Ms. Jennifer Bell distributed Old Town Winchester’s holiday events postcard, and reminded the board of the upcoming events including, Plaid Friday, Small Business Saturday, the Christmas Parade, Holiday House Tours, Santa’s Headquarters, and Holly Jolly Old Town Celebration. Ms. Kristen Laise informed the board that Belle Grove Plantation will be open on Black Friday, their “Christmas Around the World Tours” run from December 4-30, and that they have joined the Artisan Trail. Mr. Eddie Richard announced that Richard’s Fruit Market will be hosting an art show and wine tasting this Saturday. Ms. Karen Helm reported that the Patsy Cline Historic House may have had their best year ever, in terms of visitors. The home will not conduct holiday tours this year.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 am on a motion by Priya Patel, seconded by Karen Helm.

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