

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, November 10, 2016. The meeting began at 8:05 a.m. and was held at the Winchester-Frederick County Visitors Center.

Board Members Present: Eric Campbell, Andy Gyurisin, Karen Helm, Eddie Richard, Sharon Farinholt, Priya Patel, Mary Braun

Board Members Absent: Dan Martin, Kristen Laise

Staff: Renee Bayliss, Justin Kerns

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Josh Janney, Winchester Star; Tyler Schenck, City of Winchester; Robert Hess, Frederick County Board of Supervisors

Call To Order: Sharon Farinholt called the meeting to order.

Roll Call: Mrs. Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

The October meeting minutes were approved on a motion by Priya Patel, seconded by Andy Gyurisin.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Kerns reported that he attended the MATPRA quarterly meeting in PA and learned about tips for planning the 2017 event in Winchester. Several members volunteered to be on the committee at last month's meeting, which will need to have only two board representatives. The Shenandoah Valley DMO group now has a logo and is working on an ad campaign. Mr. Kerns and Mrs. Bayliss visited Capon Springs Resort in nearby West Virginia. Winchester is the closest city and the resort sends many visitors here. Mr. Kerns noted that the fall foliage photo library is being added to, as two hired photographers have been working on these items. Mr. Kerns is participating in a FAM tour for potential FBI employees that would be relocating to the Winchester area. In addition, a design has been developed to add to the existing sign for the Visitors Center. Mr. Kerns also distributed a to-do list of upcoming projects that the office is working on.

Committee Reports:

Marketing Committee –Sharon Farinholt and Kristen Laise

The Marketing Committee has not met in the past month.

Branding Committee – Andy Gyurisin and Priya Patel

The Branding Committee met with Mikula-Harris regarding the research results. Creative work will be coming in December.

By-laws Committee – Dan Martin and Karen Helm

The By-laws Committee has not met in the past month.

MATPRA Marketplace Committee – Justin Kerns

Mr. Kerns noted that the MATPRA Committee will be meeting in the next month.

New Business

Big projects (current and pending) list and update – Justin Kerns

Mr. Kerns reviewed the list that was distributed to the board and went over the progress on each item. One item discussed was a front-line employee appreciation event at the Visitors Center. Karen Helm suggested giving out free tickets to local attractions. Visitor Center signage was also discussed, including how often visitors have difficulty seeing the sign, and ways to get more visibility for the center. Several members also mentioned the apple statues and the possibility of having one relocated to the Visitors Center. Mr. Hess pointed out the importance of updating the MOU between the City and County.

Special Presentation – Tyler Schenck – Interim Director of Winchester Economic Redevelopment

Mr. Schenck announced that the Taylor Hotel has been sold, and Macado's Restaurant will soon be locating in the building. Demolition has begun on the Winchester Towers site, and Mr. Schenck noted that it will likely be the largest redevelopment project in the City's history. The study that was done by the Strategic Advisory Group showed that the Winchester market can support the project if the tourism department helps to promote it. The project should be completed in late 2018 or early 2019. The board inquired on the size and capacity of the conference center, and Mr. Schenck replied that it will be 10,000 square feet, but is not sure how many people it will be able to accommodate.

Sharon Farinholt asked Mr. Schenck how the hotel and conference center will compete or take business away from the George Washington Hotel and Shenandoah University's event center. Mr. Schenck said that he originally had similar concerns, but that the product will be different from Shenandoah University's event facilities, and that the conference center and hotel will actually give the George Washington Hotel more business due to overflow. Andy Gyurisin asked about how the City will handle the increased traffic in the area, and Mr. Schenck noted that they are experienced with handling traffic during special events, and does not foresee it being a problem.

Public Comments

Mr. Gyurisin announced that the new movie, "Loving," that is based in Virginia will be opening soon, in addition to another movie that is a fictional story but features a past Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival Queen. Mary Braun pointed out that the Discovery Museum will have special Veteran's Day events on Friday and Saturday. Eddie Richard announced that the Richard's Fruit Market will be having sales on apples.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 am on a motion by Mary Braun, seconded by Priya Patel.

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