

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, September 17, 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, Bill Hottel, Eddie Richard, Sharon Farinholt, Eric Campbell, Priya Patel

Board Members Absent: Dan Martin, Kristen Laise

Staff: Amy Simmons, Renee Bayliss

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Jennifer Bell, Winchester Downtown Manager; Derek Gomes, The Winchester Star; Kimberly Murray and Shirley Dodson, City of Winchester Economic Redevelopment

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

Roll Call: Mrs. Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

The August 2015 minutes were approved on a motion by Sharon Farinholt, seconded by Eric Campbell.

Executive Director's Report – Amy Simmons

Mrs. Simmons discussed some recent attention the area has received, including a reporter from Sydney, Australia writing an article, a TV personality from New York City filming a segment, an article in the Washington Post, and Fidelity Investments naming Winchester as a great place to retire. She noted that Mrs. Bayliss continues to work on trip ideas for the website, and we have received over 200 leads from our ad in Southern Living. Mrs. Simmons participated in the Tourism Tuesday Radio Show, and highlighted events in Frederick County and Old Town Winchester.

Winchester-Frederick County will be represented at the MATPRA (Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations Alliance) annual Marketplace next week. The CVB has partnered with several other Shenandoah Valley DMOs to provide information about our localities during the event.

Mrs. Simmons informed the board of the Governor's Report on Virginia and Local Economic Impact. This has been distributed to the board, in addition to the CVB's July and August visitation statistics. Mrs. Bayliss and Mrs. Simmons will be attending several meetings in Harrisonburg today, including a meeting of the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association, Shenandoah Valley DMOs, and the Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association's Tourism Summit.

Old Business:

New Director Recruitment Update – Amy Simmons, Interim Director

The new Director, Justin Kerns from Mecklenburg County, VA, has been hired and will begin next month. Mrs. Jennifer Bell noted that she saw him give an excellent presentation on the Virginia Main Street program recently. Ms. Rebecca Ebert said she was impressed by the extra effort he displayed at his interview.

Marketing Plan Final Review – Amy Simmons, Interim Director

At this time, the board noted no additional changes to the Marketing Plan. Mrs. Simmons reminded the board that it is still in a draft format, and will remain a draft until the new Director begins and has been able to review it and make changes.

Discussion:

City Economic Redevelopment/Tourism –Kimberly Murray, Director, Winchester Economic Redevelopment

Ms. Murray informed the board of the function of her department, which includes a strategy to build on existing resources by finding adaptive reuse for buildings located in the city. This method is referred to as asset-based economic development. She noted that Frederick County follows a more traditional model of economic development due to the amount of available land to develop. Her office builds public/private partnerships to achieve its goals. She also discussed the ways that economic development and tourism support one another. Ms. Ebert asked Ms. Murray whether the department has resources to purchase buildings, and Ms. Murray replied that they do. Ms. Farinholt, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, expressed an interest in the Chamber collaborating with the tourism and economic development departments to achieve their goals.

New Business:

Christmas Ornament Options – Amy Simmons, Interim Director

Mrs. Simmons displayed the ornaments to the board. The board agreed that the photos were less vibrant than last year, and the ribbon should be changed.

Tapestry Project – Rebecca Ebert, Chairman

Ms. Ebert displayed an image of Winchester-Frederick County to the board that some artisans will be making into a tapestry. Ms. Ebert suggested that it could be displayed at the Visitors Center.

New Director Reception Discussion – Rebecca Ebert, Chairman

Ms. Ebert discussed plans for a reception to welcome the new director, and allow him to meet the CVB's tourism partners. The board decided it should be a breakfast meeting, held at the Visitors Center, from 8-9:30am.

Public Comments

Ms. Sharon Farinholt told the board of the Battlefield Half Marathon, which will be held the first weekend in November. Mrs. Jennifer Bell informed the board of the Main Street Agriculture Day this Saturday, Jazz Concert this Sunday, Celebracion next Saturday, and the OctoBeer Fest next month. Ms. Ebert reminded the board of the Shenandoah Valley Apple Harvest Festival. Ms. Ebert asked Ms. Patel about the status of the Summit Point, WV government contract, which will affect many hotels in the area. Ms. Patel noted that she was told that they are still tentatively locked in to the contract for another five years. Mrs. Karen Helm reported on the Patsy Cline Music Festival. Due to comments from attendees, the festival may move from the park so they are able to serve alcohol. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 am on a motion by Bill Hottel, seconded by Karen Helm.

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