

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, July 16, 2020. The meeting began at 8:25 a.m. and was held virtually.

Board Members Present: Lani Pendleton, Andy Gyurisin, Karen Helm, Kristen Laise, Eddie Richard, Priya Patel, Gwen Walker, Arthur Kearns

Board Members Absent: None

Staff: Justin Kerns, Renee Bayliss

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Holly Redding, Old Town Advancement Commission; Blaine Dunn, Frederick County Board of Supervisors; Judy Mckiernan, Winchester City Council; Cynthia Schneider, Top of Virginia Regional Chamber; Shawn Hershberger, Winchester Economic Development; Janine Renoy, City of Winchester IT Department; Brian Brehm, Winchester Star

Call To Order: Lani Pendleton, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

Roll Call: Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

The June minutes were approved on a motion by Kristen Laise, seconded by Arthur Kearns.

Status of Tourism in Win/Fred Co. during COVID-19 and Reopening

Mr. Kerns reported that data collected by Destination Analysts is showing that travelers are now feeling less comfortable with traveling. This is a decrease in confidence, after previously seeing an increase. He also noted that it is important for Winchester and Frederick County to show that we are a safe destination and follow health guidelines.

Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director's Report was emailed to board members in advance of the meeting for review. Lani Pendleton asked the board for questions or comments. No discussion at this meeting.

Committee Reports:

Board Appointment and Nominations Committee – Kristen Laise and Lani Pendleton

Lani Pendleton said that the board is waiting for the current nominees to be approved by the City, and a new opening is available due to Shannon Moeck's resignation.

Marketing Committee – Kristen Laise and Lani Pendleton

Kristen Laise reported that due to the advertising agency (BCF) going out of business, a new RFP was sent out and the two firms that responded were companies that split off from BCF Agency. The Committee chose one of the firms to complete the photo and video assets and to finalize the campaign. Completion is projected to be September or October.

Personnel Committee – Andy Gyurisin

Andy Gyurisin told the board that the Committee discussed current staff concerns relating to health and safety, that the new position is on hold due to current conditions, and they are asking Mr. Kerns to plan for any future needs that may arise. Lani Pendleton appointed Gwen Walker to serve on the Personnel Committee to replace Shannon Moeck.

Finance Committee – Priya Patel and Kristen Laise

Priya went over the budget with the board, which was distributed via email. She explained how a portion of the ad campaign funds will now be moved to the next fiscal year, and she noted that there will be about \$7,000 in unused funds set aside in reserves. She said that the food line item shows an overage due to tourism's budget being used for the Sysco Pop Up Grocery Market, but that amount will be washed out. She also told the board that the tourism department may be able to get some of the CARES Act funding that was received by local governments.

Video Featurette Ad Hoc Committee – Arthur Kearns and Gwen Walker

Mr. Kearns told the board that the video for West Oaks Farm Market is almost completed, and Tropical Island Café's video will begin production on Monday. He said that after these are complete, it will be necessary to start advertising the opportunity to local businesses and distributing applications.

Unfinished Business:

Justin Kerns gave an update on the Destination Ambassador program, which will be held as a COVID edition. Three guest speakers including a Shenandoah University professor will speak on how to deal with stress working on the frontlines in hospitality. The Newcomer Event did not have enough interested vendors to participate, so a welcome video featuring those organizations was produced and placed on the CVB's website. Mr. Kerns also explained that the tourism office has applied for a WanderLOVE grant from Virginia Tourism Corporation.

New Business:

Lani Pendleton mentioned an upcoming discussion on the CVB's bylaws, but said that will be held at a later time.

Mr. Kerns asked for feedback from the City and County liaisons. Blaine Dunn said that the National Travel and Tourism Week video shown at the Board of Supervisors meeting was very well done and asked the tourism office to apply for the CARES funding. Judy McKiernan said that she appreciates the effort to conduct the Tourism Ambassador program, and also said she would like to hear from the tourism department regarding their request for CARES funding.

Cynthia Schneider asked if there were any comments on the closing of the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center. While Mr. Kerns noted that it was a business decision, he also said that there are three new hotel properties opening. Mr. Dunn asked about the conference center, and although Mr. Kerns agreed it will be missed, he said that the Hampton Inn North is in the process of renovating their conference center. Lani Pendleton asked Holly Redding if she had anything to report from the Old Town Advancement Commission. She replied that COVID has been difficult for the businesses, but that the City has offered grants, and new workplace regulations by the Governor will be helpful.

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

Respectfully Submitted by Renee Bayliss, Creative Design and Visitor Services Manager, City of Winchester