

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, December 17, 2020. The meeting began at 8:03 a.m. and was held virtually.

Board Members Present: Lani Pendleton, Karen Helm, Kristen Laise, Gwen Walker, Arthur Kearns

Board Members Absent: Julie Shaffer, Josh Huff

Staff: Justin Kerns, Renee Bayliss

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Judy McKiernan, Winchester City Council; Shawn Hershberger, Winchester Economic Development; Brian Brehm, Winchester Star; Cynthia Schneider, Top of Virginia Regional Chamber; Blaine Dunn, Frederick County Board of Supervisors; Joey Gawrysiak, Shenandoah University; Laura Wiley, Museum of the Shenandoah Valley

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

Roll Call: Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

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

Special Address to Members by Chair – Lani Pendleton

Lani Pendleton announced that she is resigning her role as Chair of the Tourism Board but would like to remain a member. She thanked the board for the opportunity to serve. Gwen Walker announced that the board has accepted her resignation. Justin Kerns read the section of the bylaws regarding how to handle her resignation. Gwen Walker nominated Kristen Laise to serve as Chair. Ms. Laise accepted the nomination to fill Ms. Pendleton's remaining term. Ms. Pendleton seconded the nomination of Kristen Laise. Renee Bayliss took a roll call vote and the board confirmed Ms. Laise's appointment as Chair.

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

Justin Kerns reported that while the lodging statistics have seemed to plateau, traffic to the website is up, even over 2019. He also noted that AirBnB numbers are up significantly. Karen Helm asked if it would be possible to create a FAQ sheet to assist people with what needs to be done to start an AirBnB. Mr. Kerns agreed, and said that he started doing so before Covid, and will look into it further. There was also a discussion about hotels listing their rooms on AirBnB, and how that may affect the statistics.

Executive Director's Report

Kristen Laise asked if anyone has questions related to the Executive Director's report that was sent to board members in advance of the meeting. There were no questions at this time.

Committee Reports:

Board Appointment and Nominations Committee – Kristen Laise and Lani Pendleton

Kristen said that Laura Wiley's application is moving through the process of confirmation. The board is also waiting on a decision from the City and the County regarding changes to the MOU. She thanked Ms. Wiley and Joey Gawrysiak for attending the meeting today.

Marketing Committee – Kristen Laise and Lani Pendleton

Kristen Laise reported about the committee's last meeting, where they discussed the CARES campaign and plans for the full campaign, which will be launching in the spring. They are also working on planning a launch event at a local venue with Covid precautions. Lani also announced that a travel writer is visiting the area this January.

Personnel Committee – Gwen Walker and Julie Shaffer

Gwen Walker told the board that the new personnel committee held their first meeting, where they discussed the role of the potential new position and an evaluation of the Executive Director. Justin Kerns gave some examples of the duties that the new employee would be tasked with. Ms. Walker also discussed meeting with the City Manager to determine a process for the Executive Director's performance evaluation.

Finance Committee – Priya Patel and Kristen Laise

Kristen Laise said that the committee worked with Mr. Kerns regarding the budget that is due this month. They reviewed the finances and she noted that the CVB is underspending this year due to Covid. She also mentioned that they are reducing the rates on the Visitors Guides ad for 2021 to assist the participating businesses.

Video Featurette Ad Hoc Committee – Arthur Kearns and Gwen Walker

Arthur Kearns gave an update on the activities of the video committee. They have recently completed their seventh video feature. He noted that they are reviewing the schedule and frequency of business categories for 2021. He also asked the board to assist in discussing how to handle members of the board that may want to apply to have their business featured. Karen Helm mentioned that she thought the board had decided that if the person was on the board they would abstain from voting. Several members commented that they think board members should not be penalized for serving on the board, and should be able to apply. Judy McKiernan noted that it would be possible to ask the City's legal counsel just to confirm.

Unfinished Business:

City/County MOU Update – Justin Kerns

Justin Kerns noted that progress has been made on updating the MOU between the City and the County. The Joint Finance Committee will be meeting January 6. He said it will be held virtually and anyone who is interested can find the meeting on the City's website meeting calendar. This will affect the CVB's funding mechanism and the appointment process for new board members.

New Business:

Cynthia Schneider announced that the Covid-19 Economic Response Team, which includes the CVB and the Chamber of Commerce, has launched a "Shop Local" campaign that will include gift card prizes for shopping at local businesses.

City and County Liaison Comments

Judy McKiernan said that she really liked the idea of the FAQ sheet for potential AirBnB owners and said that she is sure that City staff would be willing to assist with that project.

Public Comments

None.

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Lani Pendleton, seconded by Arthur Kearns at 8:49am.

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