

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, January 27, 2022. The meeting began at 8:12 a.m. and was held at the Winchester-Frederick County Visitors Center.

Board Members Present: Lani Pendleton, Julie Shaffer, Laura Kerr Wiley, Gwen Walker, Ashley Sonntag

Board Members Absent: Rebecca Taylor, Arthur Kearns, Joey Gawrysiak

Staff: Justin Kerns, Renee Bayliss, MiKayla Hatfield

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Holly Redding, Old Town Advancement Commission; Phil Milstead, Winchester City Council; Cynthia Schneider, Top of Virginia Regional Chamber

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

Roll Call: Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

The December minutes were approved on a motion by Laura Kerr Wiley, seconded by Gwen Walker.

Executive Director's Report

Justin Kerns discussed changes and a reorganization for the VADMO organization, of which the CVB is a member. Recap meetings of Audacy and Arrivalist data were held this month to review the success of the ad campaign. He also reported that he will be attending the Southeast Tourism Society's Domestic Showcase in Virginia Beach next month. He has also been in discussions with participating localities on dissolving the Shenandoah Spirits Trail. The amount of wineries and breweries has grown enough that they may split the trail into wine and beer, and Winchester-Frederick County may handle its own trail. Mr. Kerns also reviewed statistics that showed hotel revenues are up almost 20% over 2019.

Committee Reports:

Member & Officer Nominations Committee – Lani Pendleton and Laura Kerr Wiley

The committee did not meet in the past month, but they have accepted resignations from Arthur Kearns and Rebecca Taylor; both are leaving their positions at their place of employment.

Marketing Committee – Julie Shaffer and Joey Gawrysiak

Julie Shaffer reported on putting out an RFP for the spring/summer ad campaign. She said that the winter photo/video shoot went well, and they discussed when to start the local Uncommon to the Core campaign. Due to funding, it may not start until July 1.

Personnel Committee – Ashley Sonntag and Julie Shaffer

The committee said that they had not met. Justin Kerns reported that reviews are coming up and the committee will meet soon.

Finance Committee – Gwen Walker and Laura Kerr Wiley

Laura Kerr Wiley reported on the ARPA funding. The plan that was submitted by December 31 was actually supposed to be for the entire amount, rather than the first half of the advance funds. The committee is asking members to submit ideas for spending opportunities as soon as possible. The deadline was missed for the advance funds, but plans can be updated later in the year. Gwen Walker noted that the board approved the Sports Tourism and Uncommon to the Core local campaign for half of the funds. There was a discussion of highway signage, and possibly including that on the list for the rest of the funding.

Video Featurette Ad Hoc Committee – Arthur Kearns and Rebecca Taylor

Justin Kerns reported that Winchester Book Gallery was chosen for this round of retail shops. Winchester Ciderworks is being shot again, and the video for Village Square is in progress.

Sports Tourism Ad Hoc Committee – Rebecca Taylor and Joey Gawrysiak

The committee members were not present at the meeting, but it was reported that the last update was deciding to hire a consultant to evaluate the existing sports related assets using ARPA funds.

New Business:

Northern Shenandoah Valley Agritourism Initiative – Justin Kerns

Mr. Kerns discussed an event that the CVB is hosting in partnership with Clarke County Tourism and Economic Development, the Virginia Extension Office, and Frederick County EDA, called Growing Your Agribusiness. It will be held February 25 at the Clarke County Fairgrounds. There will be an education and input session to determine what kind of agritourism marketing effort to pursue.

City and County Liaison Comments

Council member Phil Milstead introduced himself and said he is interested to being serving as a liaison to the tourism board and to learn more about the CVB. Lani Pendleton told him that she will reach out to him about his participation with the nominating committee, since he will be a part of that process.

Public Comments

Cynthia Schneider reported that the Chamber is partnering with the man who purchased WINC to start a community television channel. She also mentioned some ideas for community art projects, and signage ideas. Holly Redding told the board that she is pleased with the possible creation of a beer trail, and gave an update on OTAC being dissolved. She will no longer be the representative for Old Town. She also said that some of the events that had typically been held in Old Town will be returning.

The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Gwen Walker, seconded by Laura Kerr Wiley at 9:02 am.

Respectfully Submitted by Renee Bayliss, Creative Design and Visitor Services Manager, Winchester-Frederick County Convention & Visitors Bureau.