

Lexington and Rockbridge Area Tourism Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 19, 2020 at 8:30am, by conference call

Members Present: Dennis Ayers, Leslie Ayers, Kristina Ramsey, Jerry Price, Shana Layman, George Huger

Members Absent: Corey Berkstresser

Staff Present: Jean Clark, Patty Williams, Marie Plank

Board Chairperson Shana Layman called the meeting to order at 8:32am. Dennis Ayers made motion to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2020 meeting, and Jerry Price seconded the motion. All present voted aye, and the minutes were approved.

Buena Vista Report

- Kristina Ramsey announced that the Buena Vista Labor Day Parade and Festival have been postponed, but there will be a fireworks display and food trucks in Glen Maury Park. The political speeches that are usually held at the Labor Day Festival will be live streamed.
- Ms. Ramsey said that Buena Vista received a grant for a downtown mural to be installed by December, 2020.
- She told the board that City of Buena Vista is working with Washington and Lee University to place a disc golf course in Glen Maury Park.

Lexington Report

- Dennis Ayers announced that although the City of Lexington has determined the best economic use of the VDOT property is for residential units, the property cannot be supported by City of Lexington sewer lines. The project may need to be reconsidered
- Dennis also told the board that Lexington City Council will make a final decision on a new name for the former Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery, and that the old cemetery signs have been donated to Rockbridge Historical Society.
- Natural Bridge State Park will be presenting the application for designation as a Dark Skies Park to Lexington City Council, and asking for their sponsorship of the application.
- Mr. Ayers said that both meals and lodging tax receipts were down considerably for July, but were picking back up in August.

Rockbridge County Report

- Leslie Ayers told the board that Rockbridge County had similar tax numbers to the Lexington City numbers for July and August.
- Ms. Ayers announced that the recently passed admissions tax has been repealed
- Leslie also told the board that \$150,000 of **CARES** funding has been earmarked to non-profit agencies.

Marketing Director Report

- Patty Williams told the board that tourism received a \$10,000 grant from VTC for the Wander LOVE campaign. This is a hub and spoke itinerary based on the Small Towns, Big Backyards campaign. The video about this will launch on Monday, August 24, 2020.
- Patty announced that the PACT campaign is launching this week. It will run for three months, and is Facebook based.
- Ms. Williams told the board that the Blue Ridge Country getaway contest is winding up. There have been over 5,000 contest entries.

Executive Director Report

- Director Clark stated that the tourism fund balance is \$463,000.
- Dennis Ayers asked Director Clark about the appointment of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) officer for tourism. He said he would help get the information needed to publish this on the tourism website. Jean told him what information she had received on this subject from the county attorney's office.

- Dennis Ayers moved to appoint Jean Clark as FOIA officer for Rockbridge Area Tourism, and Patty Williams as FOIA backup officer. Kristina Ramsey seconded the motion, and by roll call the vote was:
 - Shana Layman – aye

- George Huger – aye
- Dennis Ayers – aye
- Leslie Ayers – aye
- Kristina Ramsey – aye
- Jerry Price – aye

All present voted aye, and the motion was approved.

- Ms. Clark told the board that Friends of Natural Bridge State Park applied for a grant for LOVE letters. The letters are now at the Park and an installation ceremony will be held in September.
- She also reminded the board that there will be a ribbon cutting for the Kids' Track Trail, and that they have been sent a save the date reminder.
- Director Clark informed the board that she, Tracy Lyons, and Brandy Flint are working on possibilities for GO VA grant funds.
- Ms. Clark said that the Scenic River designation group is ready to start on an application for further scenic river designation for the Maury River.
- Jean said that DRIVE 2.0 will be launched the beginning of 2021. The focus of the initiative is driving tourism to the area.
- There was no new business brought before the board. George Huger made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Jerry Price seconded the motion, and Shana Layman adjourned the meeting at 9:29 am.

Time of next meeting: Wednesday, September 16, 2020

Minutes recorded by Marie Plank