

Lexington and Rockbridge Area Tourism Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 16, 2020 at 8:30am, by Zoom

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

Staff Present: Jean Clark, Patty Williams, Marie Plank

Board Chairperson Shana Layman had problems with her audio, so Board Vice Chair, Jerry Price called the meeting to order at 8:32 am.

Kristina Ramsey made motion to approve the minutes of the Wednesday, August 19, 2020 Dennis Ayers seconded the motion, all present voted aye, and the August minutes were approved.

Buena Vista Report

- Kristina Ramsey told the board that Ed Walker is working on selling as many Buena Vista downtown properties as possible by September 30. All unsold properties will be sold at auction in October.
- Ms. Ramsey stated that Buena Vista is currently working on the Community Block Development Grant for downtown revitalization. Buena Vista is also working with Studio Ammons on the downtown strategic plan.
- Kristina also told the board that Mountain Day will be held on October 10, 2020 with special safety modifications to the space, and that the downtown Trick or Treat will still take place on Friday, October 30 from 4pm to 6pm.
- Ms. Ramsey said that they are continuing to map the trails in Glen Maury Park, and are ready to begin trail naming.
- She said that Southern Virginia University students are back on campus. There was no decline in enrollment.
- She also informed the board that there is a new manufacturing contract in the works for Buena Vista's industrial park.

Lexington Report

- Dennis Ayers announced that on September 3, 2020, Lexington City Council approved changing the name of Stonewall Jackson Memorial Cemetery to Oak Grove Cemetery
- Mr. Ayers also told the board that both VMI and W&L have a COVID-19 information tab on the dashboard of their university websites. At the time of the board meeting, VMI was reporting three COVID-19 cases, and W&L reported six new cases.
- Dennis announced a virtual presentation of the consultant's concept for the Jordan's Point Park Master Plan is scheduled for September 19, 2020 at 7pm.

Rockbridge County Report

- Leslie Ayers told the board that Rockbridge County Economic Development Authority has used \$155,000 of the available **CARES** funding.
- Ms. Ayers announced two new appointments to the Economic Development Authority, Anne Herring and David Hawkins.
- Leslie also said that Spencer Suter worked on getting a grant in to the Soil and Conservation District. The grant would partner the county with Boy Scouts of America to help with sediment control.

Marketing Director Report

- Patty Williams shared pictorial highlights of the initiatives Small Towns, Big Backyards, Wander LOVE, and PACT.
- Patty announced that she applied for and received a \$10,000 grant for the Wander LOVE campaign.
- Patty played an audio clip of the radio spot for a Wander LOVE adventure beginning in Lexington.
- Ms. Williams said that the PACT Facebook campaign had launched, and that forty hospitality businesses have signed up to participate.
- Patty said that a 2021 Visitor Guide is in development
- She reviewed the visitor center, Facebook, and web statistics for the month of August.
- At Jerry Price's question on ad sales, Patty responded that ad sales have been extended to October 2, 2020. Options were discussed if the sales goals are not met.
- Board member Kristina Ramsey offered help by making direct contact with some of the Buena Vista advertisers, and Patty will check with Leisure Media and follow-up with Kristina.
- Ms. Williams played a video of a Wander LOVE, Small Town Big Backyard Road Trip on screen for the board. This will show up on programmatic advertisements and on the tourism website.

Executive Director Report

- Director Clark announced the LOVE Works unveiling at Natural Bridge State Park on Friday, September 25 and the Discovery Trail grand opening on Friday, October 9.
- Ms. Clark told the board that the NBSP had its biggest revenue collection day ever on Labor Day, September 7, 2020. Approximately \$85,000 was received in revenues that holiday weekend.
- She also stated that NBSP was the highest producer in the VA State Park system, even with reduction in staff.
- Jean told the board about closure of the Blue Ridge Parkway around Roanoke due to landslides. It is unsure when the roadway repair will be complete.
- Ms. Clark met with County Supervisor David McDaniel, and feels that it was a good, productive visit.
- Jean told the board that mileage markers are going up for the Upper James River Water Trail, and that there are new river safety signs up in Glasgow.
- Jean is working with Redi-Grant and GoVA applications.
- Ms. Clark told the board about Brownsburg Museum's new exhibit on Remembering the Country Store. It has been a very popular exhibit and attended by many people already.
- Jean also announced the opening of Quaker Steak and Lube in Raphine on September 23, 2020, and an Open House at Season's Yield Farm on Saturday, September 19, 2020.
- Corey Berkstresser talked a bit about the layout of the new Quaker Steak and Lube, its menu, and the added attractions in the restaurant.
- There was no new business brought before the board. Corey Berkstresser made the motion to adjourn the meeting, Dennis Ayers seconded the motion, and Jerry Price adjourned the meeting at 9:24 am.

Time of next meeting: Wednesday, October 21, 2020

Minutes recorded by Marie Plank