



Patrick County Tourism Advisory Council

Called meeting of March 16, 2023

Present: Bessie Weber, Chair; Kurt Bozenmayer, Co-Chair; Jeanie Clark, Secretary; Mary Dellenback Hill; Brian Alley; Chris Prutting

Also Present: James Houchins, Tourism Director; Grace Cooper, Assistant Tourism Director; Denise Stirewalt, Board of Supervisors; Rebecca Adcock, Chamber of Commerce

Absent: Wayne Kirkpatrick

The Patrick County Tourism Advisory Council meeting was held on March 16, 2023 in the Community Room at P & H Community College.

MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting and the meeting agenda were sent via email and presented. On motion by Kurt Bozenmayer, seconded by Chris Prutting and carried, the Council approved the March 16th agenda as well as the February 16th minutes.

Voting Yes: Bessie Weber; Jeanie Clark; Kurt Bozenmayer; Brian Alley; Chris Prutting; Mary Dellenback Hill

Voting No: None

Abstaining: None

Absent: Wayne Kirkpatrick

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

FINANCE/TOURISM REPORT

James reported that presently we are at 89.82% of the current budget. The ARPA grant has passed through the final stages, and Patrick County should be receiving \$40,000 from those funds as the plan has been approved. The final stage is to submit the receipts and documents. Everything is already in the system, and we should receive \$20,000 soon. James handed out "report highlights" that describe the local economy's upward trend. VTC will be updating actual numbers soon. The documents showed an increase in receipts for 2023. Their hope is to be back to pre-pandemic numbers in the near future. The Tourism office has been busy getting ready for

the Tourism Summit. There are sixty people registered to attend the summit. There will be representatives from VTC, West Piedmont Planning District Commission, Friends of Southwest VA and the VA Economic Development Partnership presenting information. They plan to have each introduce themselves to the attendees to put a face to an organization. Grace and James will hold Zoom workshops after the Summit on how to apply for various grants. Rebecca distributed this information through the Chamber of Commerce email updates. James visited several places to encourage them to attend.

VTC is introducing tourism-related micro business loans that will be opening in October. These loans will help fund small businesses during the down months of tourism.

The early stages of The Moonshine Heritage Trail partnership are going well. VTC has helped with phases 1 and 2 of the plan. We have applied for a grant through VTC to get branding started. The 2nd phase includes marketing, and the 3rd phase is the distribution of materials. They are working to plot various moonshine still sites throughout the county. Danny Martin will be helping with this endeavor. The I.C. DeHart Park will be highlighted as they had a distillery in the 1800's.

The VA250 Committee is in the early stages of trying to get people involved. James attended the main kickoff at Williamsburg, "A Common Cause for All," for those heading up the various organizations. They gave information on how to communicate the event. It was encouraged to use the verbiage of "commemoration" rather than "celebration". Outstanding speakers attended. A reenactment was presented. More information is expected to be shared as the Committee will hold another meeting in April. They will be applying for grants, which will open in May and be a one-to-one match. They hope to double the money for a grant to educate, inform and communicate the VA250 commemoration of independence from England in July of 2026.

Festival season is here. James indicated there will be no Bluegrass Festival this year; however, conversations are being held concerning 2024. On April 28th, there will be a ribbon cutting at I. C. Depart Park to reopen with new place markers on the trails. Anna Lester, who is a part of the Eco Ambassador Council, will hold a small celebration with food, a hike and giveaways. This event will be open to the public. The Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation will hold a meeting on March 29th. There is a new initiative, "Blue Ridge Rising," with whom James will be working to provide more gateway communities, including Meadows of Dan. James is hoping for good representation at that meeting. Noah Mabe has conducted research about the attendance on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Approximately 12,000 people actually traveled through Patrick County to get to the Blue Ridge Parkway above Meadows of Dan in February 2023. James is hoping to get more visibility to that area. James contacted the Parkway Association and is hoping to get signage, public restrooms, music, and a hotel.

James presented a handout that listed Tourism office visits and merchandise sales. He hopes to obtain a credit card machine to help with merchandise sales. Noah will be working soon on sprucing up the Patrick County Visitors signs. The Tourism Department is getting away from "the simple life" and is moving to have "Find yourself here." on all promotional material. Kurt questioned the budget again, with James indicating that he has been working with Lori. James plans to set up another meeting with Lori concerning the budget for next year. The budget

sub-committee has been working on this endeavor for several months, and the budget will be more transparent in the future.

Grace has been working with David and Sarah on content mapping for the directory on the website. Grace stated the flower seeds are in, and she is hoping to begin working on Angel Overlook in Meadows of Dan as soon as the weather permits for planting. She is planning to set up at the Pilot Mountain Outdoor Expo, MerleFest, Rooster Walk, and FloydFest. She is adding a new festival at the end of June, Red Wings Rhythm and Roots, which is located near Harrisonburg. Grace has been creating Canva graphics regarding orchards, overlooks, farms and other things. She will have them printed and taken to these festivals along with other rack cards, and she will be emphasizing outdoor events and activities. Bessie asked about attending any events in the Virginia Beach area. Grace will check that area for any events.

MARKETING REPORT

David was not present at the meeting.

James indicated the magazine will come out this month, and the website should be completed by the Tourism Summit.

CHAMBER REPORT

Rebecca stated the magazine should be out next Friday. The Chamber is presently in their membership drive, and a ribbon cutting will be held on March 31st at the Mayberry Trading Post in Meadows of Dan. Rebecca is working with The Honey Pot on Main Street on their grand opening. The Pick up Patrick campaign is currently in place, with money that has been donated from EMI to spruce up Patrick County. There will be a raffle for groups, clubs, and other organizations that would like to be involved in this process. The Chamber is hosting a poster contest for school-aged children to raise awareness of cleaning up Patrick County. Rebecca has been working with Ronnie Knight for March 22nd to be a “tire take back day.”

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is in the final stages of preparation. Rebecca is planning a job fair for the first of May to encourage high school students to attend. She encouraged anyone receiving an email with 3 surveys attached to please complete them. One is a survey for the opening of a community bank on the mountain. Another is a library survey, and the final survey is a Patrick County health assistant survey. A “Lunch and Learn” will be held April 19th at 12:00 on food, sanitation, and safety. Rebecca had a meeting with Reynolds Homestead and the Artists Thrive organization, which helps artists become professional artists. They have a convention in Winston-Salem in July. They also will conduct a day trip in which they will be coming to Patrick County to have lunch at Pickle & Ash and visit around Patrick County.

The Town Council adopted a Downtown Revitalization plan. They have received the feasibility study of the Star Theatre; however they will discuss it next month. The Town is trying to address blight: they have sent a 30-day notice to the house beside Hardees. They will have 30 days to do something, or the town can take it for demolition and removal. Rebecca suggested making scenic drives that do not include Route 58 currently. Denise stated that blasting takes place on Tuesday and Thursdays.

NEW BUSINESS

A few grant applications have been received, but they will be taken to the sub-committee and presented at the April meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Kurt brought up the application forms and requirements to receive money. It was noted that the Council approved the sub-committee's recommendation for the application forms at the February meeting. It was also discussed that these requirements will be handled by the sub-committee and then brought to the full committee for recommendations for those applying. The sub-committee was formed to filter and ask probing questions to those applying for funds.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council agreed to adjourn until April 24, 2023 at 6:00 pm at the P & H Community room.

On motion by Jeanie Clark, seconded by Brian Alley, the Tourism Advisory Council voted to adjourn.

Voting Yes: Bessie Weber; Chris Prutting; Jeanie Clark; Kurt Bozenmayer; Brian Alley; Mary Dellenback Hill

Voting No: None

Abstaining: None

Absent: Wayne Kirkpatrick