



Patrick County Tourism Advisory Council

Called meeting of June 15, 2023

Present: Bessie Weber, Chair; Kurt Bozenmayer, Co-Chair; Jeanie Clark, Secretary; Mary Dellenback Hill; Wayne Kirkpatrick

Also Present: James Houchins, Tourism Director; Grace Cooper, Assistant Tourism Director; Rebecca Adcock, Chamber of Commerce; Kim Rakes, Media Representative; Lee Ayers, Blue Ridge Motel

Absent: Denise Stirewalt, Board of Supervisors; Chris Prutting; Brian Alley

The Patrick County Tourism Advisory Council meeting was held on June 15, 2023 in a classroom 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 Wayne Kirkpatrick, seconded by Kurt Bozenmayer and carried, the Council approved the June 15th meeting agenda and the May 17th meeting minutes.

Voting Yes: Bessie Weber; Jeanie Clark; Kurt Bozenmayer; Mary Dellenback Hill; Wayne Kirkpatrick

Voting No: None

Abstaining: None

Absent: Chris Prutting; Brian Alley

PUBLIC COMMENT

Wayne Kirkpatrick, representing Stuart Rotary, requested \$7,525 for the July 29th Cruise In. Wayne noted the expenses for the band and expressed his desire to secure a less expensive group. He has secured the old Alexander's parking lot and is in the process of purchasing a certificate of liability. Bryce Simmons with the Town stated that he will supply power. Helms Septic will supply Port-A-Jons. They will have a portable stage, flyers printed and other marketing items.

Lee Ayers, representing Blue Ridge Motel, spoke and answered questions concerning a request for \$5,000. Renovations are needed along with signage and other expenses. James spoke on the need for lodging in the county. This would be part of an effort to renovate, update, and market the Motel to get folks off of the parkway.

FINANCE/TOURISM REPORT

James reported that the County budget was approved Monday, June 12th. He provided a hand-out budget report and the tax fund balance for fiscal year 2023. A request had been made for a full-time employee, on which the Supervisors did not take any action. The Supervisors did approve the request for a van that will hopefully arrive by the middle of July. James met with Tim Hall to see what needs to be done to request a full-time employee. Tim suggested writing a letter requesting and presenting it to the Board again. James indicated that the Board did take into consideration other recommendations. There was a significant increase in the budget using more of the reserve.

A discussion was held concerning the 40/60 split of Transient Occupancy Tax monies with the Tourism Department and the Supervisors. The Council discussed the possibility of an audit concerning the Tourism account for which the President of the Tourism Council must account. James would like to match penny for penny the income and expenses. He is hoping to have a more transparent breakdown in the upcoming year.

Kurt reported that he had met with Tim Hall and discussed the audit. Kurt mentioned that the bylaws state that the Council shall cause an auditing and shall receive a report. Tim stated that the audit would need to be placed in the budget as an expense. Kurt researched the historical data of expenditures in which he found:

- In 2018, \$438,000 in expenditures and \$377,000 received, of which the County received 20% and the Tourism Department received 80%.
- In 2019, \$403,00 was received, of which 20% went to the County with salaries/benefits increasing from \$74,000 to \$95,000. Then the County changed from receiving 20% to 40% to cover the expenses.
- In 2022, \$694,000 was received, with 40% going to the County, \$94,298 paid salaries/benefits leaving the County with \$183,000. On 4/18, the Finance Department showed a deficit in the general fund of \$660,000, and at the end of February, a \$179,000 surplus. The County removed their 50% contribution to staff salaries/benefits.
- In 2023, the County is paying out only 50% of salaries/benefits out of their 40% received.
- In the 2024 budget, the County has removed the 50% for salaries/benefits out of their 40% received, leaving the entire expense of salaries/benefits to be paid from the Tourism Department 60% received. Therefore, all of the Tourism expenses are coming out of the Tourism 60%, and none of the expenses are coming from the 40% received by the County.

James stated that the full-time position requested would be taking two part time positions and turning them into one full-time position, which is needed at this time. Wayne asked James to collect the job descriptions, analyze them and consider that in the letter requesting a full-time position. Presently, the full-time position is needed specifically for targeting social media, the web-site, and marketing of the County in general.

Kurt updated the council on the State Corporation Commission. He indicated that the Tourism Council is a corporation in which members are listed and a \$25 dues fee is paid. The corporation was formed in 2007. Kurt will follow-up on the next steps.

James reported that sales for the year have increased with a \$500 profit in t-shirt sales. He hopes to start an online store. The Visitor Center comparison to last year indicated we are down about 20 people from last year at this time. VDOT is still working on tourism signs in town, which is approximately a \$35,000 project.

Grace has been busy attending various events. She will be heading to the Staunton area to attend the Red Wing Roots Music Festival to promote Patrick County. The flower beds are beginning to bloom at Angel Overlook. Someone has been cutting the flowers at the LOVE sign. Recently the Tourism Department went to Wolf Creek Lodge for an interview, which is on the County's YouTube channel. The next interview is scheduled for July 6th with Lora Mahaffey.

MARKETING REPORT

David was unable to attend the meeting; however, James reported that the web page is up and going with a few things left to work out. There has been good feedback. James received the banners for the Beach Music Festival. He is working on a portable postcard on vinyl instead of cloth, which he feels will last longer and be more durable. The old slogan will change back to "Find Yourself Here."

CHAMBER REPORT

Rebecca mentioned there is an upcoming workshop on Canva and Social media on June 28th at P & H. Voting for Chamber awards has opened, and winners will be announced in the Fall Magazine. There is a person interested in bringing trout fishing into the county. He would like to speak with Wayne. The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is underway, and people are beginning to get their books. The town has received CDBG funding for the planning grant. There is discussion about a cover for the Farmer's Market steam area. The Town will conduct a public meeting of the purchase of the Star Theatre on June 21st. Anyone wanting to use the Theatre would pay rent to the Town. The building would be an investment for the Town. The money to purchase the Theatre would come from ARPA funds. The grants total approximately two million dollars.

MEDIA REPORT

Kim Rakes provided the Council with a hand-out for social media within the County. She indicated that it was a great month for postings on Facebook and Instagram. The May engagement was very good; however, the June numbers are down for engagement and sharing. May Instagram engagement was up 68%. James has been reaching out to a third party vendor to expand digital content. He has reached out to Hubbard 1 about more video and drone footage.

NEW BUSINESS

Bessie stated that the re-election of officers needed to be held at this meeting to prepare for the upcoming fiscal year. On motion by Wayne Kirkpatrick, seconded by Mary Dellenback Hill, the Council agreed to keep the present officers for the 2024 year.

Wayne Kirkpatrick reported on the Beach Music Festival. He stated that it went very well with perfect weather. Discussions will be held concerning the event for 2024.

Wayne stated that a discussion was held at the Farm Bureau meeting concerning the Caboose. There is an obvious need for repairs. The Bureau Board would like to put up an electronic display of the value of the railroad to the area. They spoke with Eric Shepard about repairs, and he suggested sandblasting and starting from there. He recommended someone in Sandy Ridge to reach out to.

Wayne stated that the Fair this year will be held September 12-16. There will be an Ag Demo day again this year, and they have partnered with the Master Gardeners.

Wayne would like to provide trucks again for Tire Take Back. He indicated that went really well when the Chamber organized the event. He stated that the cost is approximately \$1,600 per truck, and he hopes that the Farm Bureau Board would be willing to donate towards it. James indicated that there are funds in the budget and that there is a possibility funds could be used for one of the trucks. James stated that they help with the PCMA and are helping with the National Night Out this year.

Wayne mentioned that the tents were used at the Beach Music Festival, and they were great. An agreement form has been created, and a \$100 deposit would be required to use the tents.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

On motion by Kurt Bozenmayer, seconded by Wayne Kirkpatrick, the meeting was called into Executive Session under the appropriate Codes of Virginia to discuss Contracts [Section 2.2-3711 (A) (30)] 1950 Code of Virginia.

On motion by Jeanie Clark, seconded by Kurt Bozenmayer, the Council voted to come out of Executive Session.

On motion by Kurt Bozenmayer, seconded by Mary Dellenback Hill, the Council voted to approve \$7,525 for marketing expenses for the Cruise In.

Voting Yes: Bessie Weber; Jeanie Clark; Mary Dellenback Hill; Kurt Bozenmayer
Voting No: None
Abstaining: Wayne Kirkpatrick
Absent: Chris Prutting; Brian Alley

On motion by Jeanie Clark, seconded by Wayne Kirkpatrick, the Council voted to approve \$5,000 for a small business reimbursement for the Blue Ridge Motel .

Voting Yes: Bessie Weber; Jeanie Clark; Wayne Kirkpatrick; Kurt Bozenmayer; Mary Dellenback Hill

Voting No: None

Abstaining: None

Absent: Chris Prutting; Brian Alley

ADJOURNMENT

The Council agreed to adjourn until July 20th, 2023 at 6:00 pm at the P&H Community room for a special called meeting. The format will be determined at a later date.

On motion by Wayne Kirkpatrick, seconded Kurt Bozenmayer, the Tourism Advisory Council voted to adjourn.

Voting Yes: Bessie Weber; Jeanie Clark; Kurt Bozenmayer; Mary Dellenback Hill; Wayne Kirkpatrick

Voting No: None

Abstaining: None

Absent: Chris Prutting; Brian Alley