



Patrick County Tourism Advisory Council

Called meeting of August 17, 2023

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

Also Present: James Houchins, Tourism Director; Grace Cooper, Assistant Tourism Director; Rebecca Adcock, Chamber of Commerce; Kim Rakes, Media Representative; Denise Stirewalt, Board of Supervisors; Sarah Wray; Olivia Booth; Trinity Goad; Michael Ray Fain; Randy Clark; Jared Smart; Christina Crace

Absent: None

The Patrick County Tourism Advisory Council meeting was held on August 17, 2023 in the conference 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 Wayne Kirkpatrick and carried, the Council approved the August 17th meeting agenda and the June 15th meeting minutes.

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

Voting No: None

Abstaining: None

Absent: None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Christina Crace spoke, representing the PC Young Professionals for the Spooktacular. This is a free event for families and children for Halloween. They are requesting \$3,000 to help support advertising, printing handbills, posters, and a PC magazine ad, along with The Enterprise, Martinsville Bulletin, WHEO, and Facebook. Community organizations have participated through donations and passing out candy the night of. They are trying to expand and reach more people in nearby counties including neighboring North Carolina counties.

Trinity Goad, representing the Meadows of Dan Folk Fair, requested \$1,750 to cover the cost of advertising and t-shirts. They will be advertising to Galax, Greensboro, and Winston Salem over radio. This year marks the 20th annual Folk Fair, and it will take place Saturday, August 19.

Michael Ray Fain and Randy Clark represented Dominion Valley Events requesting a \$5,500 sponsorship. The funds will be used for promoting and sponsoring a country music show on September 30 at Dominion Valley Park. The show will include Michael Ray Fain and his band along with Kelly Ratcliff. The pre-show - which will take place approximately during the first hour - will include different genres of music. Randy stated this event should bring a different group of tourists to Patrick County compared to the normal events at Dominion Valley Park. Kurt asked approximately how many attendees they expect. There were approximately 250 people at a previous event at the Star Theatre; however, there is no estimate how many might attend since this is the first time an event of this nature has happened. Advanced tickets are being sold at Stagecoach Coffee. Tickets are \$15 in advance and \$20 the day of the event.

Wayne Kirkpatrick requested \$2,000 for the Apple Dumpling 5k in conjunction with the Festival. This amount will go towards purchasing t-shirts and snacks, and any proceeds will come back into the county supporting the trails.

Mary Dellenback Hill represented the Willis Gap Community Center, requesting \$2,500 for the printing of a brochure including the LOVE sign, which will be distributed to Welcome Centers in Virginia.

Jared Smart and Randy Clark requested \$4,325 to help pay for marketing expenses for MannaFest 2023. This is the 2nd year of this event. Last year approximately 500 people attended coming from North Carolina, Tennessee, Richmond, surrounding counties, and locally. The hope is to triple the number of people to 1500 this year. Everything at this event is free excluding merchandise (t-shirts). Other groups are covering the expenses of food, talent, games, etc.

CHAMBER REPORT

Rebecca reported that the Chamber received \$40,000 from the revitalization fund. This includes the planning for two buildings for downtown Stuart, the former Panel Building and the Old Patrick Building Supply building. The committee will make recommendations for the best usage of the monies, and they hope to have their recommendations within a month and a half.

On Friday, the Appalachian Regional Commission stated the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the revitalization project has moved up to the federal level. They have to wait for government approval regarding the other section of the grant. Rebecca is not sure when we will hear from this project. The Town has purchased the Star Theatre and are working on a report for operators as the town will serve as a landlord. Representatives from the Virginia Farmers Market Association attended the local Farmers Market. They stayed approximately 3 hours and were impressed with the market.

Rebecca reported that the final edits for the Fall 2023 magazine are ready for upload and will go into the publishing system. The number of copies printed will be cut from 25,000 previously to 18,000. They will be meeting with the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. Ribbon Cuttings were

held in Woolwine at The Backyard Cow and the Woolwine Early Learning Center. There will be some upcoming meetings to discuss the Dam behind Walgreens and Walmart. This should help with fishing and safety. It will be a long process; however, it could make the channel deeper, which would make it more suitable for kayaking.

MARKETING REPORT

David was not present at the meeting; however, James mentioned the web-site is coming along, and they are working on any issues that may occur. They want to create an itinerary page where tourists may plan destinations and offer suggestions. David is presently working on the magazine. Jeanie Clark and Noah Mabe have been working on cleaning up and painting the county Welcome signs. James stated over the next year the slogan "Experience the simple life." will be removed from the signs and replaced with "Find yourself here." They hope to have the magazine complete before the Fair. Kurt mentioned Angel Overlook and how good the flowers there look. James stated there will be a brochure holder coming. James is concerned about items being stolen or vandalized.

MEDIA REPORT

Kim Rakes presented a report, going over media highlights. She indicated that June started out slow; however, it turned out to be the best month. They had put up 17 videos and events. The June videos highlighted the Meadows of Dan and Ararat areas, with the video on the Visitor Center obtaining 18,587 views, the Mayberry Trading Post garnering 10,329 views, the Willis Gap Open Jam having 7,231 views and Poppy's getting 7,034 views. In July the Quilted Colors Quilt Shop obtained 7,543 views. The Kibler Valley River Run received 7,477 views. Other popular videos were the Pickle & Ash Garden, Mayberry Trading Post, and the Farmers Market. Numbers are up, and shop owners are appreciative of what all is being done.

FINANCE/TOURISM REPORT

James reported the budget appropriation is approximately \$688,067, and expenses were approximately \$44,205 this month. A Tourism van was approved and purchased for the Tourism department. This is a county vehicle and will eventually be wrapped. James is continuously keeping up with the budget. Discussions about completing an audit have been put on hold until more information is received. Discussions are being held about funds and balances. James stated that some of the sponsorship applications were taken out of last year's budget. The van was purchased for \$38,000 and paid for. James is hoping to gain a better understanding of the monies available including the money in the reserve.

The Tourism department had a busy few months with lots of shows attended. They attended all of the First Friday Events and the River Run. Grace attended the Red Wing Roots Festival in northern Virginia. They have been catering to northern Virginia, the Raleigh-Durham area, Winston Salem, among other places. They are working with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation,

looking at water in the county in the hopes of getting river access, which will be a way to grow outdoor recreation. Operation Game Changer, the ATV trail, will not be happening, and James sent a letter requesting the \$30,000 back. This should be transferred back into the tourism account. The Downtown area received a grant from Friends of Southwest VA for \$170,000 to be used for a feasible study for outdoor recreation.

Maps have been updated, and Noah distributed 8 boxes throughout the county. The brochure will be reprinted. Lots of hard work was displayed at the Cruise In, but the weather was not good. They are considering moving the event downtown next year so that in case of rain, the concert can be held inside the Star Theatre. National Night Out was a success. Olivia Jo did an outstanding job and it was the largest night attended.

Discussions were held concerning the brochures. James indicated they will be proofed, and the map will be accurate before printing occurs. James indicated that volunteers will be needed to man the Tourism booth at the Fair. Grace will be sending a sign up sheet for the Fair soon.

On motion by Chris Prutting, seconded by Brian Alley, the Council voted to approve \$3,000 for marketing expenses for the Stuart Spooktacular.

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

Voting No: None

Abstaining: None

Absent: None

On motion by Chris Prutting, seconded by Wayne Kirkpatrick, the Council voted to approve \$1,750 for marketing expenses for the Meadows of Dan Folk Fair.

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

Voting No: None

Abstaining: None

Absent: None

On motion by Kurt Bozenmayer, seconded by Wayne Kirkpatrick, the Council voted to approve \$5,500 for sponsorship for a Night of Country Music Under the Stars.

Voting Yes: Bessie Weber; Mary Dellenback Hill; Kurt Bozenmayer; Wayne Kirkpatrick; Chris Prutting

Voting No: None

Abstaining: Jeanie Clark; Brian Alley

Absent: None

On a motion by Brian Alley, seconded by Kurt Bozenmayer, the Council voted to approve \$2,500 for the Willis Gap community brochure.

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

On motion by Chris Prutting, seconded by Kurt Bozenmayer, the Council voted to approve \$4,325 for marketing expenses for MannaFest 2023.

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

Kurt updated the council on the audit report. Kurt met with Tim Hall to explain the need for the audit. He stated that Tim had all of the documentation in front of him. Tim stated that there could be a separate audit report as long as the expense comes from the Tourism account. Kurt then contacted Scott Wickham and asked about him conducting the audit. They indicated they would need supplementary documentation about our status in relation to the Board of Supervisors and our position as being a separate organization. He did not understand why the Council had not been filing IRS reports the previous year. Kurt indicated since the council does not handle money, we do not have to report. Kurt stated he feels the surplus should be used for the \$300,00. He stated the new county administrator should be able to make changes when he or she takes the seat. The auditors state the Council needs a request from the new county administrator. In response to Kurt's requests, Lori stated that in 2022 each month, every line of the Tourism budget is paid out of the general fund and then transferred to the Tourism account. Kurt indicated that in 2022 the Board of Supervisors received 40% of Tourism funds, of which they paid 50% of the administrative expenses including all of the salaries. Kurt stated in 2023, the County covered 50%; however, in 2024, the Tourism committee will be responsible for 100% of salaries. Kurt stated that the 40% received by the Board of Supervisors will not cover any of the salary expenses. James feels he needs one full-time employee, which the Board of Supervisors did not approve in a previous budget. At the present time, however, it does not feel necessary to implement any new policies until a new county administrator is hired. James plans to write a letter and speak with the Board about a full-time position.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council agreed to adjourn until September 21, 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 Jeanie Clark, seconded Kurt Bozenmayer, the Tourism Advisory Council voted to adjourn.

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

Voting No: None

Abstaining: None

Absent: None