

Montgomery Regional Tourism Development Council

Meeting Minutes

May 22, 2014

I. Call to order

Lisa Bleakley called the regular meeting of the MTDC to order at 8:30 a.m. at the Montgomery County Government Center

Present

Krishna Chachra (v)	Chair-Blacksburg town Council Representative
Tom Norman (v)	Vice Chair-Blacksburg Hotel Representative
Matt Gabriele (v)	Board of Supervisors Representative
Ray Alcorn (v)	Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Representative
Marie March (v)	Christiansburg Restaurant Representative
Barry Helms	Christiansburg Town Manager
Marc Verniel	Blacksburg Town Manager
Steve Huppert	Christiansburg Town Council Representative
Connie Hale (v)	County Restaurant Representative
Heather Browning	Town of Blacksburg Community Relations Manager
Diane Akers	Blacksburg Partnership
Lisa Bleakley	Executive Director, Tourism
Ruth Richey	Montgomery County Public Information Officer
Carol Edmonds	County Deputy Administrator
Sharon Scott	Executive Director, Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce

Absent

Melissa Richards (nv)	Virginia Tech Representative
Craig Meadows	Montgomery County Administrator
Trish Cook (v)	Christiansburg Hotel Representative
Joyce Beliveau (v)	Blacksburg Agritourism Representative
Becky Wilburn	Town of Christiansburg Public Information Officer

Guests: Gwen Harrington, Director of Alumni Relations, Travel and Young Alumni Programs at VT

II. Motion carried for approval of meeting minutes from March 27, 2014.

III. The decision not to sponsor the VA Science Festival this first year was rendered in favor of seeing how the first year goes.

IV. Discussion

- Lisa presented brief on program's progress including budget overview. Budget details will be shared. She also shared the brand development plan with timeline and introduction to the agency and creative team.
- Matt mentioned the VDOT Park and Ride project on Roanoke Street. Discussion of opportunities to incorporate a welcome center into the project. Permanent construction begins in 2015. Diane asked if this could be a tie-in with the expanded rail system.
- Diane mentioned that Fork and Cork was a "sell out" and that Blacksburg Restaurant Week is scheduled for June 21-25. Brew Do is scheduled for October.
- Heather mentioned that Market Square Jam is scheduled for June 4.
- Marc discussed the NRU soccer tournament in town the weekend of May 24. He also said that there are some restaurant liquor license issues that are giving pause for caution.
- Carol said she is sitting in in Craig's absence.
- Tom stated that the business was great during graduation weeks. Requests are already being taken for 2015. Weddings are also bringing good business. There is a concern over a lack of advance reservations for football season. Could be due to team performance, less disposable income, trend of shorter lead time for buying decision.
- Ray added part of the problem may be the biannual reseating of the stadium, it is nerve-wracking. Ideas? He also discussed the benefit of holding a Hotel Owners Group meeting to bring the owners up to speed and understand the mission, goals, and current status of the tourism program. Marc said it would be helpful to hear from the owners regarding their challenges and industry trends. Ray shared that one trend has been especially challenging

to the lodging industry: Online Travel Agencies (OTA). For the first time in years, hotel brand websites are gaining back share from the OTAs adding that use of destination tourism websites is declining.

- Sharon mentioned that the Chamber Magazines will be in place soon. They are looking towards digital production and distribution. Planning an August local food event modeled after TeraVita in Chapel Hill. The event will feature a white coat competition. Will be bringing in Tom Griffin, Director of Virginia Green to discuss the program during a breakfast information session.
- Steve mentioned that there was a well-attended baseball tournament hosted by the Christiansburg Parks and Rec last weekend. The HT Bridge at 114 is up and scheduled to open in mid-October. More events include the truck rodeo in September, 5K race is in place for 1st week in November. Farmers Market in downtown being explored.
- Krishna mentioned the Community Farmers Market is now open along. This, added with the Blacksburg Market Square Farmers Market, gives the consumer options. She is proud of the 70 mil in development, new restaurants, Constructions starts July 7 at First and Main. Two new merchants added: Alumni Hall and Run about Sports. Up on the Roof had approximately 500 ppl attend last Thursday. Social Scene Magazine with Phillip Vaught is going well.
- Connie Hale mentioned that Art n Barn is coming up at Sinkland Farms. Buffalo and More Restaurant will be among the vendors. It is the New River Land Trust's event. Buffalo and More is also working on Farm Tours.

Adjournment at 10:30 a.m.

Minutes submitted by: Lisa Bleakley

Minutes approved by: