

Montgomery Regional Tourism Development Council

Meeting Minutes

September 25, 2014

I. Call to order

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

Present

Tom Norman (v)	Vice Chair-Blacksburg Hotel Representative
Matt Gabriele (v)	Board of Supervisors Representative
Ray Alcorn (v)	Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Representative
Barry Helms	Christiansburg Town Manager
Marc Verniel	Blacksburg Town Manager
Steve Huppert (v)	Christiansburg Town Council Representative
Krishna Chachra (v)	Chair-Blacksburg town Council Representative
Melissa Richards	Virginia Tech Representative
Craig Meadows	Montgomery County Administrator
Connie Hale (v)	County Restaurant Representative
Heather Browning	Town of Blacksburg Community Relations Manager
Diane Akers	Blacksburg Partnership
Becky Wilburn	Town of Christiansburg Public Information Officer
Ruth Richey	Montgomery County Public Information Officer
Lisa Bleakley	Executive Director, Tourism
Kristina Ruiz	Tourism Assistant- VT Intern

Absent

Joyce Beliveau (v)	Blacksburg Agritourism Representative
Marie March (v)	Christiansburg Restaurant Representative
Trish Cook (v)	Christiansburg Hotel Representative

Guests: BCF Agency- Nilesh Patel and Ginny Petty

II. Motion carried for approval of meeting minutes from July 24, 2014.

III. Discussion

- Lisa introduced BCF team assigned to the Montgomery County brand development project. Nilesh Petty and Ginny Petty presented progress thus far on the project which is in stage 3 of the 4 stages of development. The presentation also reiterated what a "brand" is and what it can do for the tourism marketing initiative. The "brand" will be the cornerstone for all else to follow. It is the point of difference that we can deliver. We need to get this right. The process requires time to unfold to provide. An example was shared of what could result should proper time, research and attention not be given to the project. The eventual message could be very generic, confusing and ultimately ineffective. There was a period of QA. The approach and the findings so far seemed to be positively received by the MTDC at large.
 - Craig commented that BCF has done a good job of identifying who we are.
 - Marc commented that the big challenge will lie in the brand *name*.
 - Tom commented that it is important to illustrate the diversity of activity etc. in our area as came through in the Aspen video.
 - Melissa underscored that the "sense of belonging" spills over and that a "non-local" is made to feel like a local regardless of not having grown up here. While VT is an important anchor, there is so much more.
 - Krishna commented that brand support through social media is a great concept. The idea of evoking emotion as an attractor rather than simply dispersing information, makes sense.

- Lisa highlighted a few items on the Director's report that was distributed with the agenda.
 - Shared 2013 tourism statistics that indicated Montgomery County travel expenditures were up 2.5% over that of 2012.
 - She presented a revised draft of the Tear-off map. This version incorporated additional information and design elements. We're getting closer to the final product. Comments solicited for further improvement.
 - She advised she would be meeting with Howard Feiertag of VT HTM next week to discuss Hospitality Training.
- Tom presented Chairman's report
 - He commented hotel occupancy has been good the last couple of months. People are coming back into town for the games despite a lackluster season so far. It has been challenging to sell off the last couple of rooms during the home game weekends.
- Remaining comments from the council include:
 - Ray shared Chamber of Commerce activity updates including: follow-up on the strategic plan recently completed; Eggs and Issues October 2 Topic: Tourism; Business Lunch on Customer Service Oct. 14, Ribbon Cuttings, Business After Hours, Biz Expo Nov. 5, Annual Dinner Dec. 4.
 - Several members added to the event list: Food Truck Rodeo date corrected to 9-26; Brew Do on Oct. 25; Sinkland Farms Harvest Festival during the month of October; Virginia Science Festival October 4-11. Opening day in Blacksburg; Market Square Jam will move into the Alexander Black House for the cooler months: October-May on the first Thursday of each month from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.; Christiansburg Rescue Squad Spaghetti Dinner on October 3; VT President installation for Dr. Sands to be held on October 17 at 2 pm. The public is encouraged to attend. There will be many community and family events held around this ceremony.
- Lisa advised the November meeting falls on Thanksgiving Day. She will send a doodle poll to determine a reschedule date. The dates suggested are November 3 and 5 at 830 am. Look for the email with poll link!

Adjournment at 10:30 a.m.

Minutes submitted by: Lisa Bleakley

Minutes approved by: