

Montgomery Regional Tourism Development Council

Meeting Minutes

August 23, 2018

(Meeting in May was cancelled due to Visitor Profile Presentation June 28)

I. Call to Order

Lisa Bleakley called to order the regular meeting of the **MTDC** at **9:04 a.m.** in the Multipurpose Room 2 of the Montgomery County Government Center.

II. Present

Jason Dowdy (v)	Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Milestone Development Partner
Sam Bishop (v)	Christiansburg Town Council- Primary
April DeMotts (v)	Montgomery County Board of Supervisors
Randy Wingfield	Town of Christiansburg, Town Manager
Lea Wall (v)	Holiday Inn Christiansburg, Blacksburg, NRV Mall, Director of Sales
Gabe Minnich (nv)	Virginia Tech, University Relations Visitor Center
Brenda Watson	Virginia Tech, University Relations, Assistant Director of Marketing
Lisa Bleakley	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Executive Director
Irene Kilmer	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Visitor Relations Manager
Jennifer Harris	Montgomery County, Public Information Director

Absent

Tom Norman (v)	Chair- Courtyard by Marriott, General Manager
Marc Verniel	Town of Blacksburg, Town Manager
Lauren Colliver (v)	Blacksburg Town Council
Craig Meadows	Montgomery County, County Administrator
Melissa Powell	Town of Christiansburg, Public Relations Director
Connie Hale (v)	Vice Chair- Buffalo & More, Owner
Tess Obiso (v)	Whitebarrel Wine and Tapas Bar, Owner
Heather Browning	Town of Blacksburg, Community Relations Manager
Diane Akers	Blacksburg Partnership, Director
Bryan Katz	Montgomery County Planning Commission Liaison

III. Approval of Minutes from February 22, 2018

Minutes could not be approved as quorum was not achieved with voting members.

IV. Discussion

Grants:

- Submitted for Montgomery County, a VTC MLP Grant- Come Find Home campaign - \$35,000 (2:1 match)
Awarded - \$17,500 (2:1 match)
- Partnered in the New River Valley agritourism “Blue to New” application- \$5,000 (1:1 match)
Awarded- \$2,500 (1:1 match, spread between 3 partners)

Directors Report: Lisa highlighted recent marketing activity that spurred discussion.

Better Distribution of Area Events and Activities

Ways to better distribute events and activities throughout the week/months/year

A tool that was discussed was an Events and Activities Planning Calendar.

It is a challenge however, to have one master calendar. Virginia Tech is very individualized in how events, activities and meetings are planned. It is difficult to know what meetings and conferences (likely to spur an influx of visitors) are scheduled.

Suggestions:

- Encourage organizational use by indicating "heavy" dates to shy away from when planning. Shading of dates can illustrate heavy activity.
- The Tourism office can populate the calendar by use of a Pick-up Sheet – before the event. Address this at next HT partnership meeting.
- Make this calendar available for all ahead of time for their use in planning.

Gabe offered to "dig into" the University network to find out about future scheduled activity such as: conferences, events, sports (in addition to football) activity likely to fill hotel rooms and affect staffing levels of restaurants. The activity can be categorized as:

1-50 (small and inconsequential unless the activity occurs across same dates as other events).

51-150 (medium)

150 plus (large) - This is the group that stands to affect the market more than others. If we can determine when these are happening, the rest could sort of work around these densely populated periods.

Examples of group activity to identify on the calendar ahead of time:

Virginia Tech Rec Sports and Tournaments

Virginia Tech STEM

Christiansburg Sports (Swim, Baseball, Bowling etc.)

Looking for an academic side – symposium

Virginia Tech Reunion → 2019 and beyond

Large signature events

VT and RU orientation, graduation dates, parent weekends

Motor Coach Conference

Jason shared that this is great filler business especially, for the interstate hotels.

Gabe asked for a copy of the Mary Draper Ingles Tour Sheet distributed at the MCASC-VA-NC show in August.

CRC Media Day Hospitality Sponsorship

Jason concurred that everyone benefits when the CRC and other business areas are developed and expanded. His is a good focus.

2017 Visitor Profile on June 28

- Gabe used it later with her staff – One little encounter can make a big difference
- Lisa mentioned the survey highlights will be an annual presentation to the industry and would like to tie this in with a recognizing the industry day. One of the goals would be to recognize the value of the industry and to show appreciation to the people in the local industry. Possibly hold in May as part of National Travel and

Tourism Week. Jason mentioned that Bertha Kraggett was awarded “Employee of the Year” for the entire Fairfield hotel chain.

Tourism Presentation to elected officials: Fall 2018

- Sam – requested summary of June 28 presented to Town Council. Lisa added that we could do that as part of the fall presentation to both councils and the Board of Supervisors. Presentation to Council – 15-20 mins
- It was suggested that we should ask Bertha to accompany us. – Jason will ask her. Another employee in the local industry could accompany to the Blacksburg and County presentations; one who works in those respective communities.
- April – would be nice to have BoS appraised – more impactful coming from the Tourism Director.
- Lisa will set up date these dates for fall 2018.

FY 19 Marketing Activities

- Come Find Home – IMG new refurbished show
 - Questions about the look of the graphical representation
 - Gabe mentioned that the patio at Farmhouse, looking out – feels like home.
- No other detailed conversation about the activities as presented in the list.

Visitor Center

- Considered current options being discussed: Downtown Blacksburg (old Eucalyptus Spa), Corner of Main and Depot, Christiansburg, Exit 114 (CrossPointe), Exit 118B, Exit 118C-(Cracker Barrel area- high traffic counts), Mall area with MCCC.
- Lisa asked for advice in establishing a task force to explore options and make recommendations to the tourism board. All agreed this would be a good idea.
- April asked Lisa to look into how other localities have determined where to locate and collect lessons learned. She said to kick off the meeting with as much information as possible.
- Gabe mentioned the need for esthetics in the location. Can look at U of Louisville for a good example of drive-through “out-posts”.
- When asked for volunteers for the group, Jason, Lea, and Gabe raised their hands. While April would be a great asset on this team, she felt there could be a conflict of interest should the project get to the place that capital investment would be requested from the County.

Fall 2019 VTC Travel Counselors FAM

- No firm date until after 2019 football schedule is released. We will need comp rooms.

Updates from the Members

- **Lisa-** Good News from VTC
 - Travel Expenditures up by 6.2%
 - Lisa will share reports after Sept. 5 embargo date as set by VTC.
 - Also broke up by region and allowed comparisons between Virginia’s Mountain Region and Blue Ridge Highlands.
- **Sam** - TOC improve the looks of downtown
 - Art downtown – mural on the police station downtown. Lisa will research Mural trails in Virginia to see if we can be listed.
 - Permission to put up 2nd LOVE sign (from VTC)! Center of Christiansburg. Talking about the design
 - Casey – Community crossings brochures on history of Christiansburg.

- **Gabe-**
 - At the new traffic circles off of 460: Construction of Pavilion kiosk area and map component
 - Archway to take picture with VT Shrub
- **Lea**
 - Radford University Move-in This week
 - Looking at re-branding the restaurant
- **Jason**
 - Montgomery County Chamber working with Roanoke to join all the trails initiative to take it all the way to the beach – Mayor Barber
 - Over 100 miles of trail
 - Linking – 20 year vision for the trails. Supervisor DeMotts said that she and Supervisor Fijalkowski leading effort for the County BoS.
 - Chamber did vote to publicly “go for” the mid-town development in Blacksburg
- **Brenda**
 - Virginia Tech campaign for 2019 Reunion
It’s a go. Water bottles advertising the reunion will be distributed to alumni through area participating hotels. Homecoming and one other game
- **Jennifer**
 - Ideas for some promotion to work with the media more. Will meet with Lisa and Irene to discuss.
- **Randy**
 - Redevelopment with Marketplace scheduled to begin in September. In talks.
- **April**
 - Roam NRV Bike share program launched! Stations all over Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and Virginia Tech are being used.
 - Growth conversations always comes up in joint meeting with TOC, Blacksburg Town Council, School Board, and Board of Supervisors.
 - Vendor availability for projects such as: painters and builders
 - Be aware that July and August that could impact hotels as these services have to be imported from other places to meet time lines. We do not have enough year-round work to sustain crews year-round.
 - Growing pains

Adjournment

Lisa Bleakley adjourned the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

Minutes submitted by: Lisa Bleakley

Minutes approved by: