

Montgomery Regional Tourism Development Council

Meeting Minutes

December 6, 2018

(Meeting was rescheduled from November 15, 2018 due to weather)

I. Call to Order

Connie Hale called to order the regular meeting of the **MTDC** at **9:05 a.m.** in the Multipurpose Room of the Montgomery County Government Center.

II. Present

Lisa Bleakley	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Executive Director
Irene Kilmer	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Visitor Relations Manager
Joelle Soulard	Ph.D. Candidate at Virginia Tech
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)	Christiansburg, Blacksburg, NRV Mall Holiday Inn, Director of Sales
Tom Norman (v)	Chair- Courtyard by Marriott, General Manager
Lauren Colliver (v)	Blacksburg Town Council
Connie Hale (v)	Vice Chair- Buffalo & More, Owner
Tess Obiso (v)	WhiteBarrel Wine and Tapas Bar, Owner
Steve Huppert	Christiansburg Town Council
Luke Brugh (v)	Brugh Coffee Company, Owner

III. Absent

Marc Verniel	Town of Blacksburg, Town Manager
Craig Meadows	Montgomery County, County Administrator
Melissa Powell	Town of Christiansburg, Public Relations Director
Heather Browning	Town of Blacksburg, Community Relations Manager
Diane Akers	The Blacksburg Partnership, Director
Bryan Katz	Montgomery County Planning Commission Liaison
Jason Dowdy (v)	Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Milestone Development Partner
Gabe Minnich (nv)	Virginia Tech, University Relations, Visitor Center
Jennifer Harris	Montgomery County, Public Information Director

IV. Approval of Minutes: February 22, 2018 and August 23, 2018

Minutes from February 22, 2018 and August 23, 2018 could not be approved as edits were requested.

V. Discussion

- a. Election of 2019 Chair and Vice-Chair

- i. As per the vote in August, nominations were sent via email to Lisa Bleakley. Connie Hale, Tom Norman, and Lea Wall were nominated for the Chair position. Luke Brugh and Connie Hale were nominated for Vice-Chair. Eight council members voted.
 - ii. Connie Hale was elected as the 2019 Chair. Luke Brugh was elected as the 2019 Vice-Chair.
- b. Welcome Center Research
 - i. The tourism office has been researching and collecting data on other visitor centers within a 100 mile radius. That research will be sent to the MTDC. Any location discussed for the Montgomery County visitor center will be researched based on traffic counts, the annual visitor profile study, and more.
 - ii. The funds for the creation of the visitor center will be accumulated from a capital reserve fund implemented by the tourism board.
 - iii. It is up to the MTDC to determine what the timeline should be to assist in the creation of a business plan for the proposed sites to present to the board.
 - iv. Concrete details will be further researched and created in the visitor center breakout committee.
- c. Annual Activities to Highlight the Value of Tourism and the Local Industry
 - i. Lisa announces that in 2019 the first ever hospitality and tourism industry awards will be held after spring graduation to celebrate those that have an impact on this industry in Montgomery County. Nomination forms will be sent 30 days or more out from the event.
 - 1. April DeMotts states that the nomination form should make sure to have a catch-all to not leave anyone out. Maybe have students and professors as a part of the reviewing committee – that is how the apartment council does it. Someone neutral on the reviewing committee that is not in hospitality would also be beneficial.
 - ii. Lisa states that there will be another tourism research summit held in June of 2019. Ezra Calvert, the Director of Research from the Virginia Tourism Corporation, will present research from the state level and how it effects Montgomery County. Dr. Vince Magnini from Virginia Tech’s hospitality and tourism management degree will be presenting about the most recent visitor profile study for Montgomery County.
- d. Fiscal Year 2020 Marketing Opportunities
 - i. Infrastructure is mentioned. The Smart Way Bus and rail initiative is mentioned as possible transit for future students at the NOVA campus to travel to and from Montgomery County. Randy Wingfield gives an update on the Rail 2020 initiative.
 - ii. Lisa presents that Erik the Travel Guy has closed captioning sponsorship available for *Beyond Your Backyard* Season 2 on PBS.

1. The committee agrees that the sponsorship is a no brainer for the coverage and the price. There has been lots of good feedback from people saying they have been seeing the episode.

e. Updates

- i. Lea Wall → The Holiday Inn NRV Mall has a New Year's Eve package available.
- ii. Tom Norman → Christmas lights are up on the Courtyard by Marriott. Huge swim weekend coming up. Winter graduation is also coming up. December is looking up compared to last year.
- iii. Connie Hale → Buffalo and More is serving up local seafood. The restaurant has things planned for New Year's Eve.
- iv. Lauren Colliver → TubaChristmas coming up. Santa at the Lyric. The Parade will occur the same night.
- v. April DeMotts → The Board of Supervisors voted to allocate \$100,000 on renewable energy to the Montgomery County Improvement Council. The Valley to Valley Trails forum – Galax to Botetourt. Figuring out where the connections need to be. Good connection between trails and tourism. The VA Outdoor Foundation awarded a \$1.2 million grant to Montgomery County for the purchase on land on Brush Mountain. Plans for a forested park and trail connections to the poverty creek trail system and other existing trails.
- vi. Tess Obiso → Program of government state grants for solar energy for winery and farm buildings to be totally solar. Would cost \$200,000 but with the grants could be around \$36,000. Anyone classified as a farm can apply for these incentives. There is currently a push from OSCIA to start inspecting wineries due to them being a food manufacturing facility. This could become an issue with breweries as well in the future.
- vii. Sam Bishop → Christmas at the Market will be in Downtown Christiansburg at the Town Mall from 4-8pm with the parade taking place at 7pm on December 14th.
- viii. Randy Wingfield → PPA for development of the Truman Wilson Park was received. Waiting on competing proposals. Beginning on Martin Luther King Day Christiansburg is expanding the bus service down Roanoke Street and part of Radford Street.
- ix. Steve Huppert → Christiansburg Town Council meets on every 2nd and 4th Tuesday.
- x. Joelle Soulard → Virginia Tech's Hospitality and Tourism Management Department received a grant for a new food lab.
- xi. Retaining trained staff is an issue all over. Programming similar to the June 28, 2018 meeting, and more educational programming for staff retention would be welcome for the industry as a whole. This statement was reflected by everyone.

Adjournment

Connie Hale adjourned the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Minutes submitted by: Lisa Bleakley

Minutes approved by: