

Montgomery Regional Tourism Development Council

Meeting Minutes

February 23, 2017

I. Call to Order

Tom Norman called to order the regular meeting of the **MTDC** at **9:00 a.m.** on **February 23, 2017** in the Montgomery County Multipurpose Room 2.

II. Present

Tom Norman (v)	Chair- Courtyard by Marriott, General Manager
Lisa Bleakley	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Executive Director
Craig Meadows	Montgomery County, County Administrator
Becky Gabris	Milestone Development, Regional Manager
Lea Wall (v)	Holiday Inn Christiansburg, Blacksburg, NRV Mall, Director of Sales
Sam Bishop (v)	Christiansburg Town Council- Primary
Irene Kilmer	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Visitor Relations Manager
April DeMotts (v)	Montgomery County Board of Supervisors
Gabe Minnich (nv)	Virginia Tech, University Relations Visitor Center
Ashish Malothra (v)	Blackstone Grill, General Manager
Ryan Bradberry	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Tourism Assistant
Bill Foster	Montgomery County Planning Commission Liaison
Jennifer Harris	Montgomery County, Public Information Officer

Absent

Marc Verniel	Town of Blacksburg, Town Manager
Steve Biggs	Town of Christiansburg, Town Manager
Melissa Powell	Town of Christiansburg, Public Relations Director
Heather Browning	Town of Blacksburg, Community Relations Manager
Jason Dowdy (v)	Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Milestone Development Partner
Harry Collins (v)	Christiansburg Town Council- Secondary
Connie Hale (v)	Vice Chair- Buffalo & More, Owner
Krishna Chachra (v)	Blacksburg Town Council

III. Approval of Minutes of November 17, 2016

Tom Norman makes a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting on November 17, 2016. Ashish Malothra seconds the motion. All say aye. Minutes approved.

IV. Discussion

- Lisa Bleakley explains the details about the upcoming strategic planning
- Each table is asked to look through the FY 2014-16 Strategic Plan's goals and objectives to identify if the goals are still relevant, and if they should be a part of the upcoming strategic planning workshops.
 - The tables are as such, Tom, April and Becky at table one, Ashish, Lea, and Gabe at table two, and Craig, Sam, Jennifer, and Bill at table three.
 - Craig expresses to each table that if there is anything missing from the goals to please let Lisa know so as to include it in the upcoming strategic planning.
- Lisa explains how the strategic planning sessions will function. March 15th will be a half-day session from 11-5pm. The day will start with a keynote speaker that will speak for 10-15 minutes to highlight an area that has had a similar path like our office. The Virginia State Tourism Office will be our facilitators and

the attendees will be broken into groups with five per table. March 16th from 8am-noon will be the second session and after both sessions are complete we will then draft a plan out of everyone's thoughts.

- Gabe inquires how this strategic planning session will differ from the first one, as well as why the head count is different. Craig answers by stating that the first strategic planning session was quite a large group and that the session was the first time everyone gathered as a group to discuss this new tourism office. This upcoming strategic planning will have a smaller group that includes many voices that need to be at the table. Lisa points out that this strategic plan will become the work plan for the tourism office.
- Lisa explains about the Tourism Marketing Grant that is currently open for organizations to apply. The grant was created so that the tourism office can support organizations that are creating new events or projects to draw in more visitors to the area, while also supporting the tourism brand.
 - The MTDC group is asked to view the applications that have been received thus far.
 - April asks, "If the budget for the grant is not used, what happens to it?" Lisa explains that the tourism budget is different from the general fund and that any funds not rewarded to the grant applicants, the money will be moved to a different fund for marketing.
- Lisa mentions the rest of the items in the packet including, the director's report, 2017 annual events in Montgomery County, and last meeting's minutes.
 - Bill states that Virginia Tech is doing multiple events this year for the April 16th memorial including the Run in Remembrance and that they should be added to the calendar.
 - Irene explains that as a goal for 2017 the tourism office is working with Google Calendars to create an efficient way for the office to share and record events going on in the area. This calendar has the ability to be shared digitally with anyone that would like a copy.
- Lisa covers the upcoming activities that the tourism office will be participating in.
 - Beginning March 1st we will blitz the Lombsburg Welcome Center on I-77 at the state line of Virginia and North Carolina.
 - March 15th and 16th we will have our strategic planning sessions. Be on the lookout for an email for the official invitation and a link to a website that will have resources needed for the planning sessions.
 - On March 21st the SWVA marketing meeting will be held at the Moss Arts Center.
 - The tourism office will be at the Blacksburg Rotary Chocolate Festival in our Downtown Blacksburg location to raise awareness about the information that is available in the CAIO office.
 - On April 22nd the office will be at the SWVA Outdoor Expo in Bisset Park. This expo was a collaboration between the New River Valley, Friends of Southwest Virginia, and the New River Valley Regional Commission.
- Lisa opens up the floor to find out what's going on in Montgomery County.
 - Craig says that he will be presenting the proposed budget to the Board of Supervisors on March 6th.
 - Sam mentions that the town is working on improving Main Street to make it more pedestrian friendly, as well as gateway and way-finding signage around the town.
 - Bill states that the planning commission will vote on March 8th about a plan of Virginia Tech removing land from under the Smart Road Bridge. This morning Historic Smithfield Plantation lost a 250 year old maple tree. The tree was home to a family of skunks and fell onto the road this morning.
 - Jennifer states that she is excited to be working with Montgomery County as their new Public Information Officer.

- Gabe brings up her concern about the amount of trash that seems to be accruing along the road on 460 and around Prices Fork. The trash seems to be mostly by the on and off ramps. Gabe asks if Bloomin' and Broomin' is still going on.
 - Craig says that Bill Long is the contact for the coordination of Bloomin' and Broomin' and that the event is county wide.
- Ashish asks if there is a business that could pick up their recycling at the Blackstone Grill. For the past 5 years, the restaurant has had to drive their recycling to the Home Depot. Is this something that the town could do?
 - Becky states that it would be good for the hotels to have access to as well for their recycling needs.
 - April mentions that in Blacksburg it is mandatory for a multi-household. She is unaware about the services for businesses.
- Ashish also says that after opening reservations for graduation on January 1st, they were almost full by January 15th.
- Lea invites everyone to the Montgomery County Chamber After Hours at the Holiday Inn on May 18th.
- Becky says that the Fairfield Inn & Suites is done with their renovations and the Homewood is completely finished and they are ready for a good year.
- Tom says that the Courtyard by Marriott has completed its renovation and after the football schedule was revealed, they sold out for the Clemson game in 10 minutes.
- April lets everyone know that the tourism office should think about contacting the apartment complexes in May to give them enough time to place the maps for parents and specifically sophomores moving into their first apartment in August.

Adjournment

Tom Norman adjourned the meeting at 10:19 a.m.

Minutes submitted by: Lisa Bleakley

Minutes approved by: