

# Montgomery Regional Tourism Development Council

## Meeting Minutes

February 27, 2020

### I. Call to Order

Lisa Bleakley called to order the regular meeting of the **MTDC** at **9:09 a.m.** in the Library Room at the Great Road on Main in downtown Christiansburg.

### II. Present

Lisa Bleakley	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Executive Director
Irene Kilmer	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Visitor Relations Manager
Jason Dowdy (v)	Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Milestone Development Partner
Sam Bishop (v)	Christiansburg Town Council- Primary
Tom Norman (v)	Courtyard by Marriott, General Manager
Randy Wingfield	Town of Christiansburg, Town Manager
Lea Wall (v)	Christiansburg, Blacksburg, NRV Mall Holiday Inn, Director of Sales
Lauren Colliver (v)	Blacksburg Town Council
Craig Meadows	Montgomery County, County Administrator
Connie Hale (v)	Chair- Buffalo & More, Owner
Tess Obiso (v)	WhiteBarrel Wine and Tapas Bar, Owner
Heather Browning	Town of Blacksburg, Community Relations Manager
Mike Larkin	On Main Street Inc., Owner

### III. Absent

Luke Brugh (v)	Vice Chair- Brugh Coffee Company, Owner
Sara Bohn (v)	Montgomery County Board of Supervisor
Marc Verniel	Town of Blacksburg, Town Manager
Melissa Powell	Town of Christiansburg, Public Relations Director
Diane Akers	The Blacksburg Partnership, Director
Bryan Katz	Montgomery County Planning Commission Liaison
Jennifer Harris	Montgomery County, Public Information Director

### IV. Consensus of Agenda

- a. Connie Hale calls for a motion to approve the consent agenda.
  - i. Sam Bishop makes the motion to approve the agenda. Jason Dowdy seconds the motion. All say aye. The agenda is approved.

### V. Approval of Minutes: May 23, 2019, August 22, 2019, November 21, 2019

- a. Connie Hale calls for a motion to approve the outstanding 2019 minutes from May, August, and November.
  - i. Sam Bishop makes a motion to approve the minutes from May 23, August 22, and November 21, 2019. Tom Norman seconds the motion. All say aye. Minutes approved.

### VI. Officer Elections and 2020 Meetings

- a. Nominations for the 2020 chair and vice chair were received via email. Luke Brugh nominated Jason Dowdy for chair and Sam Bishop for vice chair. Tom Norman make a motion to elect Jason Dowdy as chair and Sam Bishop as vice chair. Lea Wall seconds the motion. All say aye.

### VII. Introduction to New Space

- a. Mike Larkin welcomes the MTDC to the Great Road on Main space. Previously the building was for single use but is now transforming into a multi-use facility. The Ignite Life Pacific College is now officially back over at CrossPointe and has no affiliation with the building. Great Road on Main is happy to have the tourism office as a partner and new tenant to the space. Moving forward, the focus will be to have the space be an incubator for other businesses and tenants.
- b. A third birthday party will be held on March 20<sup>th</sup> at Great Road on Main at 5:30pm. Great Road Coffee and Great Road Catering are also in the works in the Celtic Hall.

## VIII. Updates

### a. **Marketing**

- i. Lisa updates the group on the placement of the advertisement inside of Cassell Coliseum during the Virginia Tech Basketball. The ad can be seen on the ACC Network under one of the baskets during games. The ad is good exposure for the tourism brand.
- ii. The contract has been awarded to BCF for the integrated marketing campaign. The kickoff meeting has occurred and the creative team will be in Montgomery County during the last week of March for an immersion tour. The team will further explore who we are as a community and the things that sets us apart from any other community in Virginia. Please share any ideas of interesting people that the team should meet.
- iii. The FY21-23 Strategic Plan is still in the works. The plan will be delivered by June.
- iv. The tourism office is going to Blitz the Virginia Welcome Center at Lamsburg for the fourth year. The décor will focus on the seasons in Montgomery County. The display will be up for the entire month of March. Partners are also able to spend the day at the welcome center to highlight their business and interact with the travelers.
- v. The tourism office has been working with the production company Susie Films for a show highlighting Blacksburg on the ACC Network. The production team will be visiting town in early March.

### b. **Micro Grant Deadline of March 2<sup>nd</sup>**

- i. Application forms can be found on [www.montva.com/tourism](http://www.montva.com/tourism).

### c. **Hospitality Nominations Deadline is March 31<sup>st</sup>**

- i. The award ceremony will occur on April 29, 2020. The tourism office is looking for participants to be on the nomination review committee. Let Irene know if you would like to be involved in the committee.

### d. **Part-time Position for Christiansburg Location**

- i. The position will allow up to 28 hours for administrative tasks. The employee will work out of the Christiansburg location.
- ii. Lauren Colliver recommends looking into the talent recruitment platform Handshake to spread the word about the job position.

### e. **Regional Tourism Work**

- i. The 5 New River Valley (NRV) destination marketing organizations are working with the Regional Commission on a regional website. Discussions have been brought up to town managers for a more formal collaborative work environment among the destination marketing organizations. Conversation is ongoing.

### f. **Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Monthly Update**

- i. Lisa is the current tourism liaison to the Chamber board.
  - 1. Multiple parks are in discussion for development in Christiansburg and within the county. Schools are talking about upgrades to their sporting facilities.
    - a. This helps to prove that we need sports tourism to fill gaps.
  - 2. Sinkland Farms is not open as a brewery anymore.
  - 3. Roam NRV will soon be all electric assist bikes. They are changing the colors. The name will change to just Gotcha bikes and not roam. There is the potential for sponsor opportunities.

4. The Wyngate and Days Inn have taken reservations for rooms for graduation. This is problematic as the Wyngate might not be open in time and the Days Inn Conference Center has been demolished. What can the tourism office do to alleviate the potential upset? Is there something we can do to be proactive?
  - a. Lea Wall suggests having a list of hotels with availability to have on hand for lodging around Salem, Dublin, and even as far as Wytheville.

## IX. New Business

- a. Intern Excursion on June 8, 2020 with Onward NRV
  - i. All 5 DMOs will host the interns in an outdoor activity. The goal is to have them interns consider the NRV as a place to stay and work. The age range is 18-23.
  - ii. In Montgomery County the interns will be riding Roam bikes on the Huckleberry Trail while completing a scavenger hunt. So far we have almost 50 participants signed up.

## X. Around the County Updates

- a. **Randy Wingfield** → A site plan has been submitted for a new hotel on Hampton Blvd. Two major restaurants are set to be open by August at marketplace.
- b. **Connie Hale** → An update on Riner is given. There is a new fire station, lot of houses going up, and people moving into the area. The Board of Supervisors is discussing a potential park site by the fire station. Connie started a discussion on creating a Riner trail with the local business owners.
- c. **Tess Obiso** → Business is picking up in Blacksburg again. Valentine's Day was a tipping point. Whitebarrel Winery has live music every Friday.
  - i. Products from Avila Herbals, their hemp company, will be available next week. Avila Herbals is an agritourism business of local grown, produced, and packaged CBD oil. Will also sell in Bburg space.
  - ii. The Virginia Tech Wine Festival will now be the White Barrel/Virginia Tech Wine Festival. Will occur sometime in June. The event was previously planned by the VT Alumni Association. There are current thoughts to have it at the German Club.
  - iii. April 28<sup>th</sup> Planting Festival for White Barrel.
- d. **Tom Norman** → The Courtyard by Marriott is enjoying the 200 rooms missing from the Holiday Inn Express Blacksburg and the Inn at Virginia Tech.
- e. **Jason Dowdy** → The Holiday Inn Express Blacksburg is prepping for renovations. They are hoping to be back open by August. 2016 and 2017 were not good years for hotels in the market. There are a bunch of new rooms about to hit the market. Hotels can still use the help in June. Outdoor sports with travel teams has the potential to be a big boost in June.
- f. **Heather Browning** → Market square jam is now 7-9pm.
- g. **Lea Wall** → Feeling the same as Tom. Slammed but have a skeleton crew. Basketball helped January.
  - i. Printed first directory for the NRV Homegrown. Working on getting the schools involved.
- h. **Lauren Colliver** → Fork and Cork will be on May 2. The Blacksburg Chocolate Festival and International Street Fair will occur on April 26<sup>th</sup>.
  - i. Blacksburg students that traveled to Texas for a drone competition. Is it possible to have something like that in Montgomery County? There is currently a drone class in the high schools. Torc sponsors those kind of competitions for students.
- i. **Irene Kilmer on behalf of Luke Brugh** → Brugh Coffee teamed up with Mama Crockett's Donuts again over the weekend and it was a big success!
  - i. Slider Kings food truck is setting up. March 7th at 6pm for a board game night.
  - ii. We're also teaming up with Mockingbird Cafe to host an Open Mic Night in their blue room on March 21st.
  - iii. If anyone wants to collaborate with us feel free to pass along my information and we can brainstorm.
  - iv. Lastly, some businesses like the hotels, restaurants, VT or even you all may be interested in checking out Wolford Media. They're local. They do photos and videos. They're able to do drone

shots. They did a number of pictures for Brugh Coffee, as well as did a video overview of our storefront and some action shots of different drinks they make.

- j. **Irene Kilmer** → Idea presented for keeping momentum going in between advisory council meetings. The tourism office would hold informal breakout meetings with the local voting representatives of lodging, dining, and council representation. The MTDC believes this is a good idea and worth planning out.
  
- k. Requests from the voting hotel MTDC members to touch base with Teresa if they are booking conferences with the students moving out.

### **Adjournment**

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

Minutes submitted by: Lisa Bleakley

Minutes approved by: