

# Tourism Board Meeting Minutes

8:30 a.m. April 17, 2020

ZOOM Meeting due to COVID-19

**In attendance:** Marc Verniel, Craig Meadows, Randy Wingfield, Irene Kilmer, Lisa Bleakley

**Craig Meadows call the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.**

## **1. Consensus of the Agenda**

- a. Marc Verniel moves to adopt the consent agenda. Randy Wingfield seconds the motion. All agree. The agenda is adopted.

## **1. Approval of Minutes from January 31, 2020.**

- a. Craig Meadows calls for a motion to approve the October 18, 2019 board minutes. Marc Verniel makes the motion. Randy Wingfield seconds the motion. All say Aye. Minutes approved.
- b. The February board meeting was cancelled due to conflicts of schedule. The March board meeting was cancelled due to COVID-19.

## **2. Financial Report**

- a. March Financials
  - i. The Board reviews the current financials for March 2020.
- b. FY20 Budget Amendment Timing
  - i. Before the end of FY20 the board will amend any deficit budget line items to show a revised budget accordingly.
  - ii. Keep to first week of June. Look to keeping FY20 to the same and work on/keep FY 21 very conservative. Accumulate any line items, etc. to have it all cleaned up in June.
  - iii. Bburg will have their April and May filings by then to make better estimations
- c. FY21 Budget Planning
  - i. The towns will keep us updated on their budgets as the tourism office plan for the fiscal year 2020 budget.
- d. STR report
  - i. Lisa will email the March STR report to review.

## **3. Old Business**

- a. MTDC Representatives
  - i. Virginia Tech representative still needed.
    1. Should be under Undergraduate Admissions? Or someone from the Inn at Virginia Tech? Maybe a Director at Alumni Relations?
    2. Craig to reach out to Tom Cupo with the Inn at Virginia Tech.
  - ii. The Blacksburg Restaurant Representatives
    1. Marc Verniel mentions reaching out to Cody Thompson from Zeppolis for the position.
  - iii. Lauren Colliver and Sam Bishop will remain as the tourism representatives on behalf of the town councils.
- b. Strategic Tourism Plan
  - i. We were able to edit the direction the plan was leaning towards with the new impact of COVID-19. The plan will contain strategies for COVID recovery.
  - ii. The tourism office will reach out to other small towns with large state colleges to compare the impact and see what . Clemson.

- c. Marketing Campaign Update
  - i. When restrictions are lifted, our industry leaning towards marketing locally, regionally and then visitors that live 1-2 hours away. We are shifting from our original plan of a Spring/Summer campaign to focus on creating a bridge campaign. We are currently having weekly calls with BCF to work out details.
- d. 2019 Annual Tourism Report
  - i. Will be distributed during National Travel and Tourism Week in May.
- e. Staff Status
  - i. Alden Morikawa has been hired for the part-time tourism assistant position. She had her first day on April 16<sup>th</sup>.
  - ii. The board is comfortable with Alden's planned flexible schedule.
  - iii. The Towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg have hiring freezes – they are only hiring essential positions if open

#### 4. Grants

- a. None applied for and none received since last month

#### 5. New Business

- a. COVID-19 Impacts and Updates
  - i. Planning for transitional opening and recovery
  - ii. Holding weekly conversations with the hoteliers, Chamber, and other local merchant associations and town departments. The tourism office is working with them to create package deals that are not reliant on Virginia Tech's schedule
  - iii. We are currently participating in the Virginia Tourism Corporation's campaign of "We'll Be Waiting."

#### 6. Other

- a. Kevin Byrd extended an invitation for the tourism office to join the subgroup of the NRV Emergency Taskforce for small businesses. Marc agrees we will be a good player there to share information and not duplicate efforts.
- b. In terms of local businesses and restaurants reopening: Look to the NRV Health Task Force. They will approach them about the different levels when we begin to reopen. Everyone is looking at taking a regional level for when we reopen. They are the place to point people for information.
- c. Craig asks that the tourism office continues to stay plugged in with the various groups and merchant associations around the county.
- d. Reach out to the Virginia Tourism Corporation for assistance in passing along the realities of the economy to Virginia Tech and Radford University on the economic impact of no students living in town due to class cancellations, etc. due to COVID-19.
  - i. Write a letter – Marc can send over drafts of what we've sent. Marc can send language to emphasize to hit state legislators and Griffith and Kane's offices. Hit hard with lost revenues.
- e. The Town of Christiansburg has delayed on moving forward with the Truman Wilson Park. Town council would like to discuss the plan again in the Fall.
- f. The Marketplace in Cburg is still on track and building during this time.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:20am**

#### **Upcoming Meetings in 2020**

Tourism Board: May 15 at 8:30

MTDC: May 28 at 9am