

The regular monthly meeting of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board was held Thursday, April 16, 2015. The meeting began at 8:00 a.m. and was held at the Winchester-Frederick County Visitors Center.

Board Members Present: Rebecca Ebert, Karen Helm, Tootie Rinker, Bill Hottel, Priya Patel, Eric Campbell

Board Members Absent: Eddie Richard, Sharon Farinholt

Staff: Amy Simmons, Renee Bayliss

Non-Voting Board Members, Guests & Media: Jennifer Bell, Winchester Downtown Manager; Derek Gomes, Winchester Star; Lee Sheaffer, Appalachian Trail Biennial Conference

Call To Order: Ms. Rebecca Ebert, Chairman, called the meeting to order.

Roll Call: Mrs. Renee Bayliss

Approval of Minutes

The March 2015 minutes were approved on a motion by Tootie Rinker, seconded by Karen Helm.

Executive Director's Report – Amy Simmons

Mrs. Simmons reviewed the activities of the CVB since she began her position as Interim Director of the CVB. She participated with Ms. Coates on her final Tourism Tuesday radio show, and noted that on the next show, she will host guests from the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Conference and the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival. On April 7, Virginia Tourism Corporation, along with Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Maurice Jones, met with Mrs. Simmons and representatives from the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival to present a tourism marketing grant to the festival at the Visitors Center.

Mrs. Simmons was pleased to report that the Wilderness Road informational sign has now been installed and is on display in the Visitors Center, and that Julie Fudge, Patsy Cline's daughter, has approved the design for the new Winchester themed bags that will be sold in the gift shop. Mrs. Simmons displayed the bags to the board, which are available in three styles and will be sold exclusively at the Visitors Center. She also attended a meeting at the Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission regarding the creation of a group comprised of area tourism-related organizations that will be tasked with promoting tourism to the area. The annual AAA Travel Counselor FAM Tour took place this past weekend, and Mrs. Simmons welcomed the group at the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema. Winchester is the first stop on the tour, and it will continue south to North Carolina. The counselors were from nine U.S. states and Canada.

Finally, Mrs. Simmons noted that after speaking with the City Manager, she has been notified that the job opening for the Executive Director's position should be advertised by May 15, with the goal of having the new director start August 1.

New Business:

2015 Appalachian Trail Biennial Conference – Lee Sheaffer, Co-Chair, ATC Conference

Mr. Lee Sheaffer informed the board of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy's Biennial Conference, which will be held July 17-24 at Shenandoah University. Winchester was chosen for its convenient location along I-81 and proximity to Shenandoah National Park, Harper's Ferry, and other outdoor attractions. Mr. Sheaffer noted that Shenandoah University is providing one of the best facilities they have used for the conference. He predicts a larger turnout than usual, with a conservative estimate of 1200 attendees. The CVB will be represented at a booth in the exhibit area to welcome the participants.

New Director Qualifications – Rebecca Ebert

Ms. Rebecca Ebert presented the board with a job description for the new Director, which she developed with Interim Director, Amy Simmons. The board reviewed the job description, and noted additions that should be made. Several board members suggested adding technology and social media elements to the description, as well as emphasizing the need to foster tourism partnerships and cooperative marketing programs.

Old Business:

New Board Member Appointment Status – Amy Simmons

Mrs. Simmons informed the board that the new board members have been approved by Frederick County, and the item is on the agenda for an upcoming Winchester City Council meeting.

Public Comments

Mrs. Jennifer Bell announced the dates for the new Old Town Farmers Market. Mrs. Karen Helm reminded the board that Historic Garden Week Tours will be April 25. She also reported that the Patsy Cline singing contest took place at the Apple Blossom Mall, and it was well attended, with 25 contestants. The winner will perform at the Patsy Cline Music Festival on Labor Day Weekend, 2015. She also updated the board on the Artisan Trail progress. The trail is gaining members and a naming event will take place in May.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 am on a motion by Karen Helm, seconded by Priya Patel.

Respectfully Submitted by Renee Bayliss, Visitor & Community Relations Specialist, City of Winchester