

# **Montgomery Regional Tourism Development Council**

## **Meeting Minutes**

August 25, 2016

### **I. Call to order**

Tom Norman called to order the regular meeting of the **MTDC** at **9:05 a.m.** on **August 25, 2016** in the Montgomery County Multipurpose Room 2.

### **II. Present**

Tom Norman (v)	Chair-Blacksburg Hotel Representative
Lisa Bleakley	Executive Director, Tourism
Steve Biggs	Christiansburg Town Manager
Ruth Richey	Montgomery County Public Information Officer
Craig Meadows	Montgomery County Administrator
Becky Gabris	Regional Manager of Milestone Development
Harry Collins (v)	Secondary Christiansburg Town Council Representative
Jason Dowdy (v)	Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Representative
Lea Wall (v)	Christiansburg Hotel Representative
Sam Bishop (v)	Christiansburg Town Council Representative
Kathleen Carr (v)	Blacksburg Agritourism Representative
Bryan Katz	Montgomery County Planning Commission Liaison
Irene Kilmer	Montgomery County Tourism Office
Connie Hale (v)	Vice Chair- County Restaurant Representative
April DeMotts (v)	Board of Supervisors Representative
Sean Taylor	Holiday Inn Blacksburg/ Christiansburg
Caroline Porter	Virginia Tech Hospitality & Tourism Student

### **Absent**

Krishna Chachra (v)	Blacksburg Town Council Representative
Heather Browning	Town of Blacksburg Community Relations Mgr.
BJ Norris (nv)	Virginia Tech Representative
Diane Akers	Blacksburg Partnership
Marc Verniel	Blacksburg Town Manager

### **III. Approval of minutes of May 25, 2016**

Tom Norman makes a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting on May 25, 2016. All said aye. Minutes approved.

#### IV. Discussion

- Lisa discusses 2016 Mountains of Music Homecoming and shares letter from Executive Director Jack Hinslewood.
- Lisa shares economic impact fact sheet for southwest Virginia. Report by Virginia Tech Economic Development office.
- Reminder about website/map integration. Lisa encouraged members to take a sticker and share the URL.. Feedback should be provided via the survey on the homepage of the website.
- The tourism office is experimenting with options in elevating the awareness of the website, including, SEO and the purchase of Google Ad Words.
- Lisa welcomes Irene as the new full-time Visitor Relations Manager to the Tourism Office. Irene manages the new Blacksburg office in the Community Arts Information Office (CAIO). There are two interns assisting at the CAIO office.
- Discussion ensued about ways to attract visitors into the CAIO space, such as signage and sampling.
- The council was reacquainted with the tear off map to discuss options for future funding. Advertising was the predominant options discussed.
  - All agreed that advertisers should be related to visitor products or services.
  - Criteria will be established for advertisers.
  - Jason Dowdy mentioned adding the chamber of commerce to the tear-off map
  - Bryan Katz suggested two versions of the map, one targeting the Virginia Tech audience looking for local services.
  - Group recognized this as something to pursue, tourism office will discuss with the chamber on how to partner on this idea. Jason suggested cross selling the two maps while trying to find advertising.
  - Jason Dowdy suggested putting gthe map into the welcome pakets along with the keycards for hotel guest during high impact weekends. Jason suggested working will hotels to be in agreement with the distribution during the high peak times.
  - Sean said a pocket size would be a great option to hand with the hotel key card.
  - Lea suggested combining tear-off map with Virginia Tech map.

- Kathleen Carr suggested that the map be distributed at Virginia Tech Parking Services in addition to the Virginia Tech Visitor Center.
- Lisa updates the council on the social media handle. @GoToMontVa has replaced @VisitMontVa on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Pinterest.
- Irene presents the draft of the Go Guide that will serve as the official visitor information guide for Montgomery County, Blacksburg, and Christiansburg.
- Lisa led a small group exercise asking for five must-haves and attractors for planning content within the visitor guide. The groups also brainstormed what should be included when thinking of a cover image for the Go Guide. See last page for group comments.
- Four final t-shirt designs are presented to the council. Members are encouraged to vote on the design of their choice for the t-shirt. Designs were solicited from Design Crowd.
- A local t-shirt design contest was suggested for more promotional work.
- Lisa advised that it is time to begin planning strategy for 2017-2019. The Tourism Board recommends using the Virginia Tourism Corporation again to facilitate the process. In addition to the MTDC the process will be opened up to strategic government offices and community organizations.
- Lisa opens the floor to member updates.
- Sam updated on weekend events including the Gospel Sing and Heritage Day, both occurring on August 27. He also mentioned that the extension of the Huckleberry Trail has now extended to Food Lion. It is approximately 8 miles long now. The next Christiansburg extension will extend to the Christiansburg High School.
- Kathleen updated the council that Beliveau Estate Winery will now be hosting a Wednesday Dinner Series from October 26-December 7<sup>th</sup>.
- Harry introduced new town manager of Christiansburg, Steve Biggs. He also mentioned the Touch a Truck event happening at the New River Valley Mall.
- Bryan says that the Planning Commission is not currently working on tourism related items, unless speaking of solar energy connections.
- April Demotts mentioned that the apartments have been busy with the students moving in. She suggested reaching out to the leasing agents and the international student center with our maps.
- Steve deferred to Harry and Sam's comments.

- Craig is glad to have Irene on board in the tourism office as a full time employee.
- Jason Dowdy updated the council that the Fairfield renovation. He mentioned that there is some instability during the month of June. It would be helpful to solidify events to have another guaranteed full month.
- Members offered possible reasons during the discussion relating to the slight decrease in occupation during the summer months compared to 2015.
  - Lea suggested that fewer bowling tournament events could be a contributing factor to the decrease. Weather, relating to outdoor sports events, as well as changes to the university orientation process could also have been a factor.
- Becky said Jason covered her thoughts.
- Tom Norman said they have putting the hotel back in place from move-in. They are getting ready for football season and are excited to see the new coach in action.
- Lea Wall promoted the Wilderness Trail Festival, along with the Smokin' in the Mountains festival. The Holiday Inn is exploring bicycle rentals and has met with Kristy Straight with the Regional Commission. There will be a meeting at the Holiday Inn to discuss alternate transportation in the New river valley and Roanoke Valley. There are seats left available. If you would like to attend please contact the New River Valley Regional Commission.
- Sean mention that the Holiday Inn is about to celebrate its 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary on September 22. All are invited.
- Connie Hale said they had a good summer at Buffalo & More. They are gearing up for fall, their busiest season. There have been increased inquiries to see the buffalo. They will be a food vendor at upcoming events including the, Gospel Sing in Downtown Christiansburg, the Riner Parade on September 10<sup>th</sup>, and the Dublin Festival on September 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Blues Brews & BBQ add to a very eventful weekend of August 27<sup>th</sup>.

## V. Adjournment

Tom Norman adjourned the meeting at 10:34 a.m.

Minutes submitted by: Lisa Bleakley

Minutes approved by:

<b>5 Must Have Things in the Go Guide</b>	<b>Attention Grabbing Image Ideas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lodging</li> <li>• Fun Things to Do</li> <li>• Restaurants/Food</li> <li>• Pet Friendly Section</li> <li>• Family Section – Kid Friendly</li> <li>• Keep it unique to our area</li> <li>• Emergency Contact Information</li> <li>• Area History</li> <li>• Trails, Parks &amp; Rec</li> <li>• Attractions (sports venues, etc.)</li> <li>• Yearly Events</li> <li>• Link to the website</li> <li>• Youth Sports</li> <li>• Virginia Tech</li> <li>• Outdoors</li> <li>• Food/Shops</li> <li>• How to use/ enjoy the river</li> <li>• Trail Guides for hiking/ walking/ &amp; biking</li> <li>• Dining options/ variety</li> <li>• Connection to Virginia Tech that showcases the energy of being a college community. (Campus is beautiful)</li> <li>• Action in the Pictures</li> <li>• History- Smithfield</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pets</li> <li>• Food</li> <li>• Huckleberry Trail</li> <li>• Bike</li> <li>• Cross Generational</li> <li>• Aquatic Center</li> <li>• Arts Center</li> <li>• Coupon to make people pick it up</li> <li>• Vivid colors</li> <li>• People walking or trails/bridge</li> <li>• Pictures of the Events</li> <li>• Nightlife picture</li> <li>• Picture of the Farmers Market</li> <li>• Show a Variety of Ages</li> <li>• 2 pictures/cut differently</li> <li>• Details/ phone numbers</li> <li>• More action/ emotion in the cover photo</li> <li>• College Avenue Promenade &amp; Henderson Lawn</li> <li>• Panjammers? Or other music pictures. Mingle? Market Square Jam?</li> <li>• Alexander Black House</li> <li>• Oaks Victorian Inn</li> <li>• Scene shots should include action</li> </ul>