

Montgomery Regional Tourism Development Council

Meeting Minutes

August 24, 2017

I. Call to Order

Tom Norman called to order the regular meeting of the **MTDC at 9:10 a.m. on August 24, 2017** in Multipurpose Room 2 in the Montgomery County Government Center.

II. Present

Lisa Bleakley	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Executive Director
Tom Norman (v)	Chair- Courtyard by Marriott, General Manager
Jason Dowdy (v)	Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, Milestone Development Partner
Sam Bishop (v)	Christiansburg Town Council- Primary
Krishna Chachra (v)	Blacksburg Town Council
Randy Wingfield	Town of Christiansburg, Interim Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager
Irene Kilmer	Montgomery County Regional Tourism, Visitor Relations Manager
April DeMotts (v)	Montgomery County Board of Supervisors

Absent

Marc Verniel	Town of Blacksburg, Town Manager
Craig Meadows	Montgomery County, County Administrator
Ashish Malothra (v)	Blackstone Grill, General Manager
Bryan Katz	Montgomery County Planning Commission Liaison
Jennifer Harris	Montgomery County, Public Information Director
Lea Wall (v)	Holiday Inn Christiansburg, Blacksburg, NRV Mall, Director of Sales
Becky Gabris	Milestone Development, Regional Manager
Gabe Minnich (nv)	Virginia Tech, University Relations Visitor Center
Melissa Powell	Town of Christiansburg, Public Relations Director
Heather Browning	Town of Blacksburg, Community Relations Manager
Harry Collins (v)	Christiansburg Town Council- Secondary
Connie Hale (v)	Vice Chair- Buffalo & More, Owner

III. Approval of Minutes of February 23, 2017 and May 25, 2017

Tom Norman makes a motion to approve the minutes from the February 23, 2017 meeting. Motion is seconded by Sam Bishop. All said aye. Minutes approved

Tom Norman makes a motion to approve the minutes from the May 25, 2017 meeting. Motion is seconded by Jason Dowdy. All say aye. Minutes approved.

IV. Discussion

- Suggestion to send 2018 meeting appointments via Microsoft Outlook
- Advertising Revenue Opportunities
 - The tourism map pads have been extremely popular.
 - Matt from the Apartment Council received a case to distribute to the local apartments.
 - Tom great feedback at the hotel
 - Z-Card format with ad space

- Visitor Guide
 - April D. suggested to add Mount Tabor Ruritan Fish Frys: May-Sept.
- Premium listing on interactive map (website)
- Sponsored pages on website
- Lisa's updates
 - Shared details of Kickoff event for SWVA Brew Trail. Senator Warner attended.
 - We worked to bring in Rally Appalachia Car Rally event from Pennsylvania. The "race" started in downtown Christiansburg on July 11 and traveled the Appalachian region finishing in Rome GA. Approximately 70 cars with an average of 2 people per car. Stayed in area hotels. Will most likely come back. "Guaranteed group business is great business! Sam mentioned that Mayor Barber was pleased with the event.
 - Tennis competition, June 2018. 2-300 athletes with families totaling an estimated 700 attendees. Tom and Jason said this will be a good time of year!
 - VT announced they will be doing a BIG reunion in June 2018 to replace many smaller ones.
 - Upcoming activity
 - NOVA Blitz during the VT vs. WVU at Fedex field and Labor Day period.
 - Attend the Residence Inn Grand opening
 - Participated with DBI on VT student orientation.
 - Need help to review the Montgomery VA Tourism Marketing grant by December to be ready to open Fe. 1, 2018.
 - Tom mentioned funds are only intended for new activity. It is not a sponsorship.
 - Sam asked how the grant works and Lisa described.
 - The local hospitality industry is challenged with labor problems in attracting and retaining employees for entry level positions. We created a closed Linked In group for sharing information among local industry management.
- Group Discussion- The strategic plan is currently more of a list of tactics. Discussion ensued to determine the gap between where we are as a destination and where we want to be. This leaves the "how we get there" question. Therein lies the real strategy!
 - Various examples such as Roanoke were discussed. How did Roanoke get from historically a railroad town to where they are now? Much was by necessity as Norfolk and Southern and other companies left who historically had driven the economy. The city paired their natural assets with the traditional things that businesses look for when locating and expanding. Jason mentioned working with developers. Making destination more accessible/attractive to younger people. Roanoke had a strategy to get there. Tourism and EcDev works off of each other. April mentioned that practically speaking; tourism and EcDev should work to achieve more than the status quo.
 - When asked about targeted strategies for Montgomery County, Jason replied that attacking June would be a good start. Go through each month to break down the soft spots. Tom said that meeting with the Director of Sales is good. Look forward at dates on the books, weeks that are softer than others. Lisa transitioned into an overview and explanation of the most recent STR report, explaining the primary metrics. Strategy 1 is to fill those need periods. Look for business. REVPAR is a very important metric. Jason likes the idea of going after teams and tournaments and repeat business. There are fields in Shawsville that could be added to the overall inventory of ball fields for tournament play. Future fields planned in Riner and Christiansburg (Peppers Ferry area).

- Group tours (motor coach). Lisa mentioned we joined the VA and NC Motor Coach Assns. While we may not be a destination, we have what it takes to be a great overnight stopover. Tom mentioned that loyalty points incentivize travel. The brand hotels could offer additional points for a travel campaign. Tom and Jason were up for this.
- Youth sports travel- Look into relationships with NR United Soccer Club, Christiansburg Soccer Club, Lacrosse clubs and Parks and Recreation to work as local ambassadors. Tom cautioned that these are generally price sensitive groups. The numbers do not work to extend rebate, discount and a low rate to a group.
- Bring Economic Development into conversation- Tom mentioned that rooms could be offered at discount or comp rate to get economic development here. (Corporate). Sun-Thursday is when you can make most of the revenue.
- Renewed focus on Downtown Christiansburg and Cambria area (Randy). Potential for microbrewery and shops, conference center (think Stonewall Jackson in Staunton). Wayfinding signage is in initial stage. N. Franklin and Cambria road work, Passenger Rail in 2020
- Truman Wilson Park (Randy)- Soccer fields, softballs fields, amphitheater. Accessible for all bodies playground
- Randy mentioned a Wyngate branded hotel being constructed behind Quality Inn.
- Jason asks for more corporate travel. Need to make it through the winter. Generate businesses that bring in other partnering businesses. An anchor with other supporting businesses. CRC needs to grow. We're all fighting over the same business.
- April said the County just bought land in Falling Branch to bring in more businesses. Need min. of 20 acres.
- Krisha asked for the number of beds in the market. As of April 2017, there were 2,212 rooms in the County.

Adjournment

Tom Norman adjourned the meeting at 10:50 a.m.

Minutes submitted by: Lisa Bleakley

Minutes approved by: