

**The Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority
Board of Directors Meeting
October 17, 2016 - 10:00 am
Wetlands Estonoa Learning Center, St. Paul
MINUTES - APPROVED**

Call to Order

Chairman Botts called the meeting to order at 10:07 am

Attendance:

Board and Staff:

Stan Botts, Chair/Wise County	Present
Alice Meade, Vice Chair/Russell County	Present
Charles Slemph, Treasurer/Lee County	Absent
Mary Belcher, Proxy/Buchanan County	Absent
Rita Surratt, Dickenson County	Present
Cody Howell, Tazewell County	Present
Pam Cox, Scott County	Present
Chris Jones, Norton City	Present
Kitty Barker, Executive Director	Present
Pam Vance, Administrator	Present

Guests:

Michelle Workman, VTC
Megan Brown, Tazewell County Tourism
Ann Monk, Russell County Tourism
Shay Wilson, Breaks Park
Buzz Witt, Spearhead Trails
Karen Maggard, Pennington Gap

Quorum Recognized: YES

Review & Approve Agenda - Chairman Botts called for review and approval of the meeting agenda as presented. Ms. Vance stated she inadvertently left off staff reports and requested the agenda be amended to include them. Ms. Barker asked to add the Marketing report.

Motion: Meade – to approve the agenda as amended.

Second: Howell

Vote: All members in attendance voted Aye to approve the agenda as amended.

Review & Approve Minutes - Chairman Botts called for review and approval of the minutes as presented.

Motion: Howell

Second: Jones

Vote: All members in attendance voted Aye to approve the minutes as presented

Recognize Visitors/Public Comments - Visitors made self-introductions. Michelle Workman announced VA1 on 11/13-15/2016, and MLP grant applications are due. Buzz Witt mentioned the front page article in the Kingsport paper yesterday/Sunday's edition, about trails and development of the mountain biking and hiking trails. Ann Monk announced the Heritage Museum opening.

Financial Report - Chairman Botts called for review and approval of the September Financial Report. Ms. Barker announced:

Close of 2015-2016 Budget: Ms. Barker met with HOA's bookkeeper, Karen Magee, and closed the fiscal year 2016 budget with \$211 income left over.

2016-2017 Budget Update/Awarded Grants Review: Ms. Barker summarized the budget from the financial packet; reading from the statements; noting \$20K was received from DMME. She directed attention to the new budget, noting the \$50K MLP grant from February and another in August were included; HOA received the Tobacco Commission Grant. She also mentioned the HOA partnership with Spearhead Trails to do their marketing at \$15K per year. Expenses totaled \$265K, with a \$41K cushion in the budget. HOA needs to continue to build a revenue stream to make up for the DMME revenue stream loss. She thanked the TIC members; HOA was in the top 5 of the award process.

Ms. Barker also applied for a Power Grant – over \$500K. The region has 3 distressed counties, 3 at risk counties and 1 transitional county. HOA's match will be 32%.

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Chairman Botts called for a motion to approve the new budget as presented.

Motion: Meade - to approve the new budget as presented

Second: Howell

Vote: All board members in attendance voted Aye to approve the new budget report as presented.

Chairman Botts called for a motion to approve the financial report as presented. Ms. Barker mentioned a "Fish" MLP drawdown, not shown on the financial report, amounts to \$20K and will be in next month's report as well as \$50K from the "Get Motor Running" MLP grant drawdown for December.

Motion: Cox – to approve the financial report as presented

Second: Meade

Vote: All board members in attendance voted Aye to approve the September financial report as presented.

Marketing Report – Ms. Barker shared the development of and outlined the marketing policy for Spearhead Trails. She mentioned the last of the ads, particularly American Road, have been placed. She will be meeting with the HOA Marketing Committee. Filming will occur in Lee, Scott and Big Stone Gap, as well as motorcycle and more ATV footage. She will take the film crew to Stone Mountain trails. The January 6-8 Motorcycle Show promoting Motorcycles and ATVs is on the marketing calendar. She noted HOA funds to do the radio spots for Kaitlyn Baker as well as TV commercials using our footage and theme song. HOA is actively selling ads, noting HOA needs board member's help selling the ads

Old Business

IT Updates/Purchases: HOA's new IT guy spent the day at HOA repairing three lap tops. He added new software and shared that our DSL is inadequate to serve our online needs. He will be looking at Sunset Communications and fiber optic service. The pvnance email is still down; and HOA is getting ready to purchase new equipment for graphic design.

December Meeting: Ms. Barker asked the board for recommendations for the December meeting. Chairman Botts suggested the Inn at Wise.

November Meeting: It was determined HOA will skip/combine the November & December Board Meetings due to the hectic holiday schedules.

November/December Meeting: Tuesday, Dec. 6 @ 6pm Inn at Wise if available. Chairman Botts will tentatively reserve the Inn at Wise and Ms. Barker will follow up with the details. Holiday Inn was mentioned as a second choice if Inn at Wise is taken. A third choice wasn't determined.

Executive Board Nominations: Alice Meade would like to assume Chairman of the Board; Ms. Barker asked for others to volunteer. Chuck Slep was nominated by Pam Cox to continue as Treasurer; Alice Meade nominated Chris Jones as Vice-Chair and he accepted. Official votes will be taken at the December Meeting.

New Business

Hiring New Position: Ms. Barker summarized the resumes received for the admin position. Personnel Committee needs to meet and she will coordinate with them. The TIC grant gave HOA funds to hire a business entrepreneur coordinator, which is a full-time position at 40 hrs./week. Ms. Barker is also still working on obtaining health benefits for full time staff. VML insurance is available. This is a priority project.

Administrative Report - Ms. Vance summarized the administrative report as provided with the board packets, noting she had worked on MLP grant drawdowns, blog work, admin assistant resume collection and review, assisted the executive director with various projects and had attended an advanced Wordpress workshop. She continues to monitor and direct the HOA intern.

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Executive Director Report - Ms. Barker summarized her executive report as provided with the board packets, stating she met with Crooked Road; Carter Fold visitation down, as is Ralph Stanley Museum, Country Cabin and our other venues have reported a decrease of visitation. HOA is supporting our venues as much as we can on Facebook, the HOA website etc. Ms. Barker will be working with the DMOs to partner with HOA major venues on the Crooked Road to promote them even more

Regional & County Marketing Activities

Pam Cox/Scott County – Started Oct. 1 “Explore Scott County” photo contest #scottcountyva – They received 503 entries the first week and 2008 votes. Each week a winner of a \$50 gift card is announced; They recorded a 60K reach on the Facebook ad she placed publicizing the contest. She is hosting a workshop from 6-9 pm at Vo Tech Building with tourism venues this Wednesday. They will discuss needs and avenues for entrepreneurs.

Ann Monk/Russell County – Announced the opening of the Honaker Museum and the Holiday Inn in Lebanon is staying 85% occupied.

Rita Surratt/Dickenson County – Was out a whole day in the county talking to horseback riders, kayakers, motorcycle riders, hikers, fishing etc. The Chambers will host the annual Legislative Breakfast on Nov. 21 at SWVA Community College with Ginger Branton coordinating the event; 8:30 am registration. Halloween events include the Red Onion Prison Haunted House, Breaks Park Haunted Hayride, and Elk Tours through November 19. Tonight she is attending an International Combat Hunger Day presentation. She also mentioned the Pine Mountain Cowboy College and Chamber banquet.

Cody Howell & Megan Brown/Tazewell County – They are seeing a lot of people coming in to visit Spearhead’s OP Trails, the Haunted Houses and they are super excited about the new business - Sweet Street Bakery in Claypool Hill. They have had great turnouts at the corn mazes and there are several trunk or treats planned. Their main focus now is getting ready for the upcoming tradeshow. They also announced the County Christmas Ornament is a wood carved coal miner.

Chris Jones/Norton – Halloween Bash is this weekend, 10/20. Trash to treasures class, senior exercise class Friday 11-12 noon. The High Knob Music Festival has applied for the \$25K grant from State Farm. They are giving away 40 \$25K grants total. They have moved the date of venue to coincide with the Best Friends Fest and Mountains Of Music Homecoming for increased coverage. 10 miles bike trails are complete thanks to Shane Fields and the Woodbooger Fest was attended by over 1000 people in two days. Joe Fawbush did a fantastic job organizing and coordinating the event. The Hellbender race and Benges bike ride were huge successes. He noted the need to have all competitions listed in one place. Their budget is finalized and includes signage for Woodbooger Sanctuary; and a Mama and Baby Booger purchase is in the works. The city park may be the location for the new “boogers.” They are transforming downtown Norton with the river walk and leaving Christmas lights in trees year round to make the district more inviting. Drone footage of the area would be great. He also mentioned their 80K social media reach over the last few weeks due to drone footage posted. Mr. Jones complimented Michael Wampler for his efforts.

Stan Botts/Wise County – Home Craft Days turnout was great; there was also a high school reunion at Powell Valley (60s), and downtown Big Stone Gap took advantage of the increase in visitors. CarnEvil at the Fairgrounds in Wise was also mentioned.

NEXT MEETING: See above, 12/6 at 6 pm – to be determined

Adjourn - Chairman Botts called for a motion to adjourn the October Board of Directors meeting.

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Motion: Cox

Second: Meade

Vote: All board members in attendance voted AYE to adjourn the October meeting of the Board of Directors.

Meeting adjourned at 11:39 am

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Vance, Administrator/Board Secretary

Edited by Kitty Barker, Executive Director