

**The Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority
Board of Directors & Executive Committee Meeting
Lee County Airport, Jonesville, VA
March 5, 2025 – 11 am
MINUTES**

Board/Staff Attendance:

Rita Surratt, Dickenson County – Chair	Present
Matthew Fields, Buchanan County – Vice Chair	Present
Beth Walker, City of Norton – Treasurer	Virtual
Shiloh Lyttle Brooks, Russell County – Secretary	Present
Katie Dunn, City of Norton	Virtual
AJ Robinson, Tazewell County	Virtual
Austin Bradley, Breaks Park	Present
Brooke Boyd Charles, Buchanan County	Virtual
Edward Wright, Jefferson Ntnl. Forest	-
Karen Maggard, Lee County	Present
Ked Meade, Wise County	-
Leslie Litton, Lee County	Present
Maddie Gordon, Russell County	Present
Natalie Chapman, Wise County	-
Jennifer Pike, Scott County	Present
Brittany Robertson, Scott County	-
Rick Wood, Tazewell County	-
Sharon Buchanan, DCR/VA State Parks	-
 *Jeff Hess, Executive Director	 Present
*Tim Shortt, Staff	Present

Guests:

Michelle Workman, VTC
Richard Johnson, UVA Wise Econ Dev
Jessie Gilliam, Town of Pennington Gap

Call to Order – Ms. Surratt called the meeting to order at 11:12am, recognized there was not a quorum of the full board. Items can be discussed but no action items can be voted on. Ms. Surratt called for review and approval of the agenda. The Executive Committee will make the motion and vote.

Motion: Matt

Second: Shiloh

Vote: All Aye

Introductions – Ms. Surratt asked all present to introduce themselves to benefit guests and new members.

Ms. Surrat noted that previous meetings' minutes cannot be approved until the next full board meeting due to no quorum.

Approval of Financial Reports (November, December, January) – Ms. Surratt noted again that the financial reports can't be approved due to no quorum but let Tim give a summary. Tim noted that the financials are still trending well, and he and Jeff are watching the budget close and trying to cut spending where it could.

Rita asked if there were any questions. Austin asked how much the appropriations for the year were and thought it was \$400,000. Tim announced it was \$450,000. The current financial statement did not reflect the quarterly \$112,500 because of a deposit delay on not getting the check in the current month. Will vote at the next meeting due to no quorum.

Evaluation Form: Rita announced that the 'current' evaluation form needed changed to reflect job description. Shiloh has created a new form. This form will be used for Jeff's upcoming evaluation. Rita asked Tim to email the board this form and have it completed before the next board meeting. Rita will then have the results at the next full board meeting in June.

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Bylaws: Rita noted that several topics need attention to, and edits/revisions made. The 2 none voting needs to come off, regarding quorum voting. Currently this would make having 9 present. AJ noted to keep the meeting in St. Paul as a central location for easier travel. AJ also asked if the meetings can be held at 10am to help with work schedules. It was also discussed to have verbiage of a 'majority' instead of a number. The current bylaws were provided in the board packet and Rita asked everyone to review and have suggestions/edits by the next June meeting.

AJ requested that the Commonwealth Calendar needs to reflect "board of directors and executive committee" to have voting issues resolved.

Closed Session was next on the agenda. Rita noted this can't happen due to no quorum. These items will need to be discussed at a future meeting with a quorum.

Directors Report: Jeff thanked Leslie and Karen for hosting and organizing lunch. Jeff noted that Lee County is so close to Knoxville and was a great destination for tourists. Jeff discussed the organization's mission, which is to promote tourism in the eight localities of the region. He mentioned that he has been visiting various localities to introduce himself and thank the board members for their service. He also discussed the unexpected addition of \$250,000 in the budget, which was designated for the 3 Rivers Destination Center. Jeff also mentioned that they have received civil penalties, which was a pleasant surprise. He also discussed their current programming, which includes partnerships with various magazines and radio stations. Jeff emphasized the importance of the marketing budget for the next fiscal year, including initiatives such as the "3 Day Stay and Play" to include "Small Team Retreats." He also discussed the possibility of joining the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) and the potential benefits it could bring to the organization. Jeff asked Tim to give more details on VRS. Tim noted a phone call that he and Jeff had to VRS back in January. VRS staff suggested that HOA was risky due to very few employees. The cost was provided. VRS staff suggested that HOA 'join' another locality which is not as risky. HOA would then reimburse the locality monthly. Austin also commented that the VRS is a great benefit and ability to recruit and retain employees and suggested moving forward with this.

VTC Updates – Michelle Workman:

MLP programs are open and close March 13. Virtual orientation is coming up March 26 and March 27, 9am-12pm

DMO Regional Updates/Announcements:

Richard – Cumberland Forest Community Fund. \$100K will be distributed this go around. No match required. March 28 deadline.

Business from closed session:

Vice Chair Matt mentioned the closed session marketing meeting prior to the full board and the results will be taken care of with a quorum next time. AJ noted a lot of errors with social and those things need re-evaluation.

Rita announced the next Executive Meeting will be March 27 at 10:30am at Lebanon at the Government Center, Shiloh is hosting.

Rita announced the next HOA full board and executive meeting will be in St. Paul the June 4 at 10am at the Oxbow Center. Make sure to include the words full board and executive meeting when posting on the Commonwealth calendar.

Adjourn – With no further business to discuss, Ms. Surratt announced meeting adjourn at 12:04pm. No motion because of no quorum.

Lunch was served.

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Shortt