

Minutes
Page County Tourism Council
Regular Meeting
Feb. 15, 2023

Members Present

Helen Morton, Chairwoman / Industrial Representative
Randy Howan, District 3
Bart Price, District 4
J.D. Cave, At-Large

Staff Present

Nina Long, Economic Development and Tourism Director
Rebecca Armstrong, Communications and Marketing Coordinator
English Henry, Economic Development and Tourism Specialist

Others Present

Elisabeth Alger and Stephanie Breeden, Page Valley Fair Association
Gina Hilliard, Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce President

Call to Order

Chairwoman Helen Morton called to order the regular meeting of the Page County Tourism Council at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023, in the Board of Supervisors' Room, located on the second floor of the Page County Government Center at 103 S. Court St. in Luray.

Adoption of Agenda

Councilman Cave moved that the Tourism Council adopt the agenda with an amendment that the consideration of TOT requests be added to the agenda under "new business." The motion was seconded by Councilman Howan and passed unanimously.

Action Matters

Approval of meeting minutes

After reviewing the draft meeting minutes of Jan. 11, 2023, Councilman Cave asked that any reference to Helen Morton as "chairman" be changed to "chairwoman." Councilman Howan made a motion to approve the minutes with the amendment, seconded by Councilman Cave. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

pagevalley.org

Fox noted ongoing progress to pagevalley.org, with more than 400 business and lodging listings and 80 of 136 planned pages now live on the site. The Council discussed secondary navigation pages planned for the site, including weddings, and filter categories for lodging listings, such as air conditioning, WiFi and number of guests. The Council by consensus asked staff to research adding "log homes" or "log cabins"

as a page under “places to stay.”

Winter 2023 tourism newsletter

Fox reported that on Jan. 27, 2023 a winter newsletter was emailed to 236 local tourism and hospitality partners who signed up to receive email correspondence, and that it was opened by 124 email users. Fox reported that she received positive feedback from community members about the newsletter. The Council expressed its support and underscored the importance of quarterly newsletters.

Page Valley Launch Party: English Henry

Henry reported that more than 50 industry partners had RSVPed to a launch party in celebration of pagevalley.org, scheduled for 4 to 6 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 23, at the Mimslyn Inn in Luray. Fox told Council members that the open-house-style event was set to showcase the new website, marketing campaigns and videos.

Marketing update, print and digital ads: Rebecca Armstrong

Armstrong shared final print and digital ads with the Council, including a two-page branding ad in the Virginia 2023 Travel Guide; print ads in the upcoming Shenandoah Valley and Virginia Restaurant, Lodging and Travel Association guides; a photo listing in the 2023 Blue Ridge Parkway Travel Planner; and a click-thru ad in the first email deployment of the 2023 Shenandoah Valley E-Mail Marketing Cooperative.

Winter 2023 MLP and DMO marketing grants

Fox reported that the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism Office was preparing to apply to the Virginia Tourism Corporation’s Marketing Leverage Program (\$20,000 request plus \$20,000 cash match) and Virginia DMO Marketing Grants program (\$20,000 request plus \$10,000 cash match). If approved, the grants would help fund several projects, including the creation of an inspiration guide. Fox reported that ARPA-approved projects, including the creation of a visitor guide, were set to move forward in the coming months.

Budget discussion

Fox reported that a \$100,000 TOT allocation request, unanimously recommended by the Tourism Council during its January meeting, was set to be presented to the Page County Board of Supervisors during the Board’s Feb. 21 meeting.

Fox requested that the Council consider renewing an annual agreement with AirDNA to collect short-term rental data analytics. A motion made by Councilman Howan and seconded by Councilman Price to earmark \$13,000 in TOT funds for AirDNA passed unanimously.

Councilman Cave made a motion to recommend that the Page County Board of Supervisors earmark \$25,000 each for the towns of Luray, Stanley and Shenandoah in the current fiscal year to fund tourism-related marketing campaigns and efforts. The motion was seconded by Councilman Howan and passed unanimously.

A motion made by Councilman Cave and seconded by Councilman Price to approve up to \$5,000 in expenses associated with the Feb. 23 launch party passed unanimously.

New Business

TOT Code Amendment

Fox reported that the Page County Board of Supervisors recently reviewed a proposed Transient Occupancy Tax Code Amendment that, if approved, would expand definitions and ensure that the Page

County Commissioner of the Revenue has the authority to collect TOT generated by online booking sites such as Expedia, Airbnb and Vrbo. Page County's current code was written in 1986 and covers only a short-term rental property's owner or agent. Supervisors are scheduled to hold a public hearing on the proposed TOT Code Amendment during the Page County Board of Supervisors' regular meeting at 7 p.m. on March 20.

ViewPoint Video project

Fox reported that the Page County Board of Supervisors during its Jan. 17 meeting by consensus approved that administration move forward with plans to contract services by Viewpoint Video using TOT revenue. Located between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Md., Viewpoint provides ENG and EFP services for broadcast and cable networks, according to Viewpoint's website. Fox reported that filming was set to begin in Page County this spring and estimated to cost \$25,000. A motion made by Councilman Howan and seconded by Councilman Price to support the project with TOT funding passed unanimously.

TOT requests

The Council reviewed a TOT grant application submitted by the Page Valley Agricultural and Industrial Fair requesting \$12,000 to update the fair's website. The new website, according to the application, "will help the Page Valley Fair be more marketable to visitors and aid in obtaining records of who is in attendance." Stephanie Breeden of the local fair association told Council members that the nonprofit group planned to use the new website not only to market the annual fair, but other events held at the fairgrounds throughout the year. A motion made by Councilman Cave and seconded by Councilman Price to recommend that the Page County Board of Supervisors allocate \$12,000 to the fair for the creation of a new website passed unanimously.

The Council reviewed TOT grant applications submitted by Racine MultiSports, LLC requesting \$5,000 for the 2023 Luray Half Marathon and 5K and \$2,000 for the 2023 Luray Swim Fest, as well as a \$10,000 request by Rip It Events, LLC for the 2023 Luray Triathlons. Funds would be used to market the annual events at Lake Arrowhead and in Downtown Luray. Councilman Howan made a motion to recommend that the Page County Board of Supervisors allocate the requested funds, with a stipulation that the applicant(s) must first meet virtually or in person with staff to go over the events' marketing plans. The motion was seconded by Councilman Cave and passed unanimously.

Director's Report

Fox reported that she was exploring several housing development programs and that the Page County Economic Development Authority (EDA) was considering initiatives for workforce housing. Fox added that the EDA on Feb. 7 held a special meeting for the presentation of a meat processing facility feasibility study and that the EDA was scheduled to vote on next steps during its Feb. 27 meeting.

Open Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Council Members' Time

Council members had no comments.

Adjourn

A motion made by Councilman Cave and seconded by Councilman Price to adjourn passed unanimously.