

Minutes
Page County Tourism Council
Regular Meeting
April 12, 2023

Members Present

Helen Morton, Chairwoman / Industry Representative
Karen Riddle, Vice Chairwoman / District 2
Seretha Judy, District 1
Randy Howan, District 3
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 Coordinator

Others Present

Travis Clark, Chairman of the Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors
Gina Hilliard, Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce President
Bill Huffman, Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors, tourism division chairman

Call to Order

Chairwoman Helen Morton called to order the regular meeting of the Page County Tourism Council at 4:02 p.m. on Wednesday, April 12, 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

A **motion** made by Councilman Cave to adopt the April 12, 2023 meeting agenda, seconded by Councilwoman Judy, passed unanimously.

Action Matters

Approval of Meeting Minutes

A **motion** made by Vice Chairwoman Riddle to approve the meeting minutes of March 8, 2023 as presented, seconded by Councilman Cave, passed unanimously.

Old Business

Pagevalley.org Update

Staff presented an update of pagevalley.org, highlighting the addition of events and lodging amenities, landing page changes and data from a March SEO report by Simpleview.

Moore Public Relations

Fox updated the council about services contracted with Kathy Moore of Moore Public Relations, noting

that staff, along with Chairwoman Morton, met with Moore on March 22 to discuss upcoming campaigns, including Google Ads. The campaigns are aimed at driving traffic to pagevalley.org, building the Page Valley brand and establishing brand recognition.

New Business

TOT Request: Shenandoah Valley Racket Ters

The council reviewed a request by the Shenandoah Valley Racket Ters for \$5,000 in Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue to use toward marketing the group's 10th annual Mid-Atlantic Pre-War Swap Meet, scheduled for May 2024. According to the application, about 400 people are expected over a two-day period at the event, resulting in a projection of 260 hotel room nights in Page County. The addition of an annual Model T Tour in Page and the Shenandoah Valley, scheduled for the days immediately following the swap meet, is projected to further increase the number of overnight stays, as well as overall visitor spending. A **motion** made by Vice Chairwoman Riddle, seconded by Councilman Cave, to recommend that the Page County Board of Supervisors allocate \$5,000 in TOT revenue to the Racket Ters passed unanimously.

Page Valley Cultural Center and Market

The council discussed the possibility of constructing a cultural center and market aimed at serving visitors, spotlighting Page Valley-made goods and showcasing the county and its three towns as a premier overnight destination. Fox presented plans for a community center commissioned by former economic development and tourism director Liz Lewis as a capstone project through Virginia Tech, noting features that could be utilized in the construction of a cultural center and market. The plans utilize county-owned property situated where routes 211 and 340 intersect in Luray. Fox noted the thousands of visitors who travel through the area — especially along Route 211 between Luray Caverns and Shenandoah National Park — and the potential to draw them into Downtown Luray. Fox highlighted the center as a facility for both visitors and office space for the economic development and tourism department and potentially, other organizations focused on business and economic development. Fox estimated project costs would total between \$2.6 and \$5 million, which could be funded by TOT revenue. A **motion** made by Councilman Howan, seconded by Vice Chairwoman Riddle, to recommend that \$200,000 in TOT revenue be earmarked toward the potential project unanimously passed.

TOT Request: Luray-Page County Visitor Center

Vice Chairwoman Riddle made a motion to add the presentation of a TOT request by the Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce for the Luray-Page County Visitor Center to the agenda under “new business.” The motion was seconded by Councilman Cave and passed unanimously. Chairwoman Morton noted that the council would hear the request, but would take no action, since the request was not submitted prior to the meeting — a requirement of all TOT requests.

Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce Travis Clark led the presentation, noting that operating costs of the visitor center in Downtown Luray — funded by the county through TOT revenue and staffed and overseen by the chamber — are up. Clark noted that the chamber last year underestimated the visitor center's costs for the current fiscal year. As a result, he continued, the chamber has “been in the red this year as far as the visitor center,” but that the chamber “recognizes a need for one” and is willing to continue overseeing operations in the coming fiscal year if the chamber's funding request is approved.

Clark presented a budget request for fiscal 2024, noting that without necessary funding, the chamber will no longer oversee the operations of the visitor center for the county. He noted that the chamber would in that case operate solely as a chamber of commerce.

For the coming fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2023, the chamber requested \$161,300 — an increase of about 60 percent over \$100,814 allocated for the visitor center in fiscal 2023. The FY2024 request

includes \$120,747 for labor; \$12,060 for utilities; \$6,000 for rent; \$3,000 for postage and shipping; \$1,830 for dues and subscriptions; \$3,000 for office equipment and supplies; and a 10-percent administrative fee of \$14,663.

Following a discussion about staffing, hours of operation, work completed by staff for chamber initiatives versus visitor center responsibilities and more, the council by consensus requested that the chamber provide more detailed information. Requested information includes supporting documents for the TOT request; a chamber budget that breaks down both the organization's and the visitor center's costs; employee job descriptions, hourly rates and weekly hours; and statistics from the visitor center.

Director's Report

Fox reported that design work for the Page Valley Visitor Guides is underway, with production slated for later this spring, and that the June 17 Taste of the Valley event has so far drawn a total of 15 vendors. Fox noted a Canadian FAM Tour organized by the Shenandoah Valley Travel Partnership that is scheduled for May throughout the valley. Six Canadian journalists are scheduled to travel to Page on May 15 and May 16. She reported that a YouTube video posted on April 3 by influencer Kendall Gray that features Page Valley had so far garnered more than 73,000 views.

Open Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Council Members' Time

Council members had no comments.

Adjourn

A **motion** made by Vice Chairwoman Riddle to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Judy, passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 5:19 p.m.