

Minutes
Page County Tourism Council
Regular Meeting
May 17, 2023

Members Present

Helen Morton, Chairwoman / Industry Representative
Karen Riddle, Vice Chairwoman / District 2
Seretha Judy, District 1
Randy Howan, District 3
Bart Price, District 4
Charlie Jenkins, District 5
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

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 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 17, 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** to adopt the May 17, 2023 meeting agenda as presented with an amendment that the consideration of a proposed amendment to the tourism council bylaws be added to the agenda under "new business." The motion was seconded by Councilman Price and carried unanimously.

Action Matters

Approval of Meeting Minutes

A **motion** made by Councilwoman Judy to approve the meeting minutes of April 12, 2023 as presented, seconded by Councilman Howan, passed unanimously.

Old Business

FY2024 Visitor Center Funding

The council reviewed an updated TOT request from the Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce to fund FY2024 operations at the visitor center in Downtown Luray. The \$138,692 request includes \$91,624 for salaries; \$7,330 for payroll taxes; \$3,000 for postage and shipping; \$6,000 for rent; \$4,000 for

utilities; \$1,500 for office supplies; \$2,700 for communications; \$1,500 for office equipment; \$5,000 for janitorial services; \$600 for insurance; \$1,830 for dues and subscriptions; \$1,000 for education; and \$12,608 for administrative fees (10 percent of the items requested to “cover inflation”).

Following a discussion about tourism marketing efforts by both the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism and the local chamber, staff responsibilities at the visitor center/chamber, visitor center traffic and calls, and possible collaborations between the groups, Councilman Cave **moved** that the tourism council fund half of the chamber’s \$138,692 TOT request for a term of six months, then later review a request for the second half of the fiscal year. The motion did not garner a second and failed.

Councilman Jenkins made a **motion** to fully fund the chamber’s \$138,692 TOT request for FY2024 visitor center operations with the understanding that Director Page County of Economic Development and Tourism Nina Fox and President of the Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce Gina Hilliard collaborate on tourism projects and initiatives. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Riddle and carried in a 6-to-1 vote, with Councilman Cave dissenting. The motion serves as a funding recommendation to the Page County Board of Supervisors, who will vote on the request at an upcoming supervisors’ meeting.

Visitor Guide Update

Fox updated the council about the upcoming Page Valley Visitor Guide, currently in production. The non-dated guide is set to showcase key attractions and include QR codes linking readers to landing pages on pagevalley.org, highlighting additional attractions and providing visitors with a more comprehensive overview of offerings to plan their stays. The guide is tentatively scheduled to head to press in June.

New Business

2023 VTC Grants

Fox announced that the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism was recently awarded grant funding from the Virginia Tourism Corp. (VTC) — \$20,000 through VTC’s Marketing Leverage Program (MLP) and \$20,000 through VTC’s Regional Marketing Program (RMP). Grant projects include the creation of an inspiration guide, digital and print ad campaigns and targeted videos.

Fox noted that in addition to Page Valley’s campaigns, three local campaigns received \$20,000 each in MLP dollars to market the area: Stanley’s Wisteria Farm and Vineyard, Luray’s Shadow Mountain Escape and the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association (SVTA). Page Valley partnered with Wisteria in its “Stanley Loves Families” campaign and offered letters of support for Shadow Mountain Escape and SVTA’s respective campaigns.

The Downtown Creative Update

Fox reported that work continues with The Downtown Creative to create and capture high-quality images and video content to use on the website, in advertisements and on social media platforms, and to provide to industry partners.

Q2 Industry Newsletter

Fox reported that work is underway to release the spring newsletter to industry partners.

Civil War Trails

Fox reported that the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism recently committed to funding 12 signs at a rate of \$200 each in Page County through the Civil War Trails program.

Tourism Council Bylaws

Council members reviewed a proposed amendment to the Bylaws of the Page County Tourism Council that, if approved, would begin staggering terms in 2025 so that no more than four membership terms would expire at any one time. The proposed amendment reads that “Districts 1, 3, and 5 will be appointed to serve a regular two (2) year term, whereas Districts 2, 4, and the At-Large representative will serve an initial shortened one (1) year term to create the staggering of appointments.” Fox noted that the bylaws allow up to 10 members and that she recommends adding one attraction and one campground member to the council.

Councilman Cave **moved** that the tourism council approve the proposed amendments. The motion was seconded by Councilman Howan and carried unanimously. The Page County Board of Supervisors must approve the proposed amendments before they take effect.

Director’s Report

Fox reported that the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism/Page Valley DMO is now a member of the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging, and Travel Association; the Virginia Association of Destination Marketing Organizations; the Shenandoah Valley Travel Association; and the Shenandoah Valley Travel Partnership. She noted that stories featuring Page Valley appeared in the spring issue of Blue Ridge Digest and that Page is set to be featured again in the magazine’s summer issue, and that Page Valley was recently featured in the season finale of the PBS series “Get Out of Town.” Fox reported that through a partnership with SVTP, Page recently participated in a Canadian Media FAM Tour. She noted that staff is working to amend ARPA projects and that Wisteria Farm and Vineyard recently debuted a new LOVEWork.

Open Public Comments

President of the Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce Gina Hilliard asked Fox if the county has voiced an opinion for or against a draft permit from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for the Luray RV Resort and Campground. Fox noted that she cannot speak on behalf of the Page County Board of Supervisors. She noted that as the director of economic development and tourism, she supports DEQ’s public comment and permit process.

Council Members’ Time

Councilman Cave asked if the Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce received TOT funding from the Town of Luray. Hilliard said the town does not allocate TOT to the chamber.

Adjourn

A **motion** made by Councilman Jenkins to adjourn, seconded by Councilwoman Judy, passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at about 5:45 p.m.