

Minutes
Page County Tourism Council
Regular Meeting
Aug. 9, 2023

Members Present

Karen Riddle, Chairwoman / District 2
Randy Howan, Vice Chairman / District 3
Brittany Montgomery, District 1
Bart Price, District 4
J.D. Cave, At-Large

Staff Present

Nina Fox, Economic Development and Tourism Director
Rebecca Armstrong, Communications and Marketing Coordinator

Others Present

Gina Hilliard, Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce President
Bill Huffman, Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors / Luray Caverns

Call to Order

Chairwoman Karen Riddle called to order the regular meeting of the Page County Tourism Council at 4:08 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 9, 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

Councilwoman Montgomery **moved** to adopt the Aug. 9, 2023 meeting agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Howan and carried unanimously.

Action Matters

Approval of Meeting Minutes

A **motion** made by Councilman Cave to approve the meeting minutes of July 12, 2023 as presented, seconded by Councilwoman Montgomery, passed unanimously.

virginia.org banner/mobile footer ads, January-June 2024

Councilwoman Montgomery made a **motion** that the Tourism Council recommend that the Page County Board of Supervisors approve a request for \$7,920 for banner and mobile footer ads on virginia.org, to be funded with Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue. The motion was seconded by Councilman Howan and unanimously carried.

The monthly click-thru banner ads will begin on Jan. 1, 2024 and will serve as the hero image on the site's regional Shenandoah Valley landing page (www.virginia.org/places-to-visit/regions/shenandoah-valley/) through June 2024. Additional mobile ads will further promote Page Valley on the state's tourism website.

Shenandoah Valley 2024 Travel Guide ad

The Council reviewed Page Valley's ads in the 2023 Shenandoah Valley Travel Guide as well as rates for the 2024 guide. Councilman Howan made a **motion** that the Tourism Council recommend that the Page County Board of Supervisors approve a request of up to \$8,363 in Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue to secure the inside front cover of the upcoming guide. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Montgomery and unanimously passed.

About 150,000 copies of the Shenandoah Valley 2024 Travel Guide are set to be distributed to regional visitor centers and attractions; state welcome centers and rest stops; locations along I-81, I-64, I-95 and Tidewater and Peninsula locations; and travel shows. Five thousand copies are set to be mailed directly to visitors who request the guide annually.

VRLTA 2024 Travel Guide ad

Council members reviewed Page Valley's ad in the Virginia Restaurants, Lodging, and Travel Association's 2023 Travel Guide and rates for the 2024 guide. Noting that the publication's space reservation is not until February 2024, the Council by consensus tabled a decision. The Council is set to pick back up the discussion at a future meeting.

Book Direct

The Council reviewed information about Book Direct, including informational slides, terms and conditions and a cost summary. The content aggregator, offered through a partnership with Simpleview, builds and maintains direct connections to both chain and non-chain reservation engines, PMS and RMS systems and major distribution channels, allowing for rate and availability content for content for lodging, supplier, vacation rentals and flights to be displayed on destination websites.

Fox noted the benefits of incorporating it on pagevalley.org, including live rate and availability content, reporting for engagement and performance, no commissions or fees and access to real-time data. Council members touted the benefits of allowing visitors to book their room or vacation rental directly on pagevalley.org, but noted the timing of beginning the services, since fall foliage drives visitation throughout the valley and the majority of Page Valley lodging is already booked.

Councilman Howan made a **motion** that the Tourism Council recommend that the Page County Board of Supervisors approve a request of \$9,000 (\$3,000 for a one-time setup cost and \$6,000 for annual licensing) in Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue for Book Direct, but that the contract not begin before Jan. 1, 2024. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Montgomery and unanimously carried.

Old Business

PR update

Fox reported that she is awaiting a Google Ads spend breakdown and PR summary. The information is set to be presented at an upcoming meeting.

Industry Partner newsletter

Fox reported that the next industry partner newsletter is scheduled to go out via email in September, and that efforts continue to encourage community partners to sign up for the communications. The Council discussed sending a year-in-review newsletter in December.

Page Valley Visitor Guide update

Fox reported that guides had been printed and were set to be distributed in the coming week. The guides are available locally at the Luray-Page County Visitor Center in Downtown Luray and at the Shenandoah Welcome Center and Train Museum. A digital version of the guide is set to be shared on pagevalley.org.

Staff is working with Simpleview to finalize a call-to-action graphic for the guides, which will appear in the footer of the website.

New Business

June SEO report

Council members reviewed June's SEO report for pagevalley.org, which indicated a 74-percent increase in organic traffic over May.

TOT funding policy

Council members reviewed a TOT funding policy (www.pagecounty.virginia.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3287/County-of-Page-Economic-Development-and-Tourism-Transient-Occupancy-Grants-and-Funding-Policy) and considered a proposed noncompliance/penalty policy, as reviewed by legal, according to Fox. The section reads: "If an organization fails to comply with our policy, they will be subject to a penalty of \$1,000. Additionally, as a consequence of non-compliance, the organization's access and use of our digital assets will be immediately discontinued, and they may be held liable for any further legal actions deemed necessary."

Council members discussed warning and notification responses, as well as who will enforce the policy. Fox told Council members that those in violation of the policy would be given a warning. She said the policy would be enforced beginning with a letter from the Page County Economic Development and Tourism Department/county administration, and "elevate" as needed.

Councilman Cave **moved** that the proposed noncompliance/penalty policy be added to the Page County TOT Funding Policy, seconded by Councilman Howan. The motion unanimously carried.

Digital asset policies

The Council discussed digital asset policies currently in place for sharing photos and videos captured and/or paid for by the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism, as modeled after policies by the Virginia Tourism Corp. Staff reported that during a discussion with The Downtown Creative, Page Valley's content team, concerns were raised about sharing raw video assets and other video assets that can be edited and

Visitor newsletter

Fox reported that plans were underway to release a visitor newsletter in the coming month or two as efforts continue to build a visitor audience through newsletter signups.

VTC Valley Visit, Becky Nave

Fox reported that Becky Nave, Director of Destination Development for the Virginia Tourism Corp., was set to visit Page County on Aug. 17. Nave and Destination Development Manager for VTC Kelli Williams were set to visit Shenandoah National Park and meet with Morton, before heading to the Pavilion at Shenandoah Woods to meet with Fox, Armstrong and Henry.

Director's Report

Following the retirement of Jean Clark, Director of Tourism at Lexington and Rockbridge Area, Fox reported she had accepted the role as interim chairperson of the Shenandoah Valley Tourism Partnership, following a unanimous vote for Fox to step into the role during the regional group's monthly meeting in Lexington on Aug. 3. Fox reported that the Luray-Page County Chamber of Commerce's Tourism Council voted to relinquish the chamber's tourism social media pages to the Page County Department of Economic Development and Tourism in an effort to streamline marketing efforts.

Open Public Comments

None

Council Members' Time

Riddle noted that she was proud of the recent work by staff.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.