

Steering Committee Minutes
Northwest North Carolina / Southwest Virginia
Regional Tourism Initiative
Hampton Inn, Exit 93, Dobson, NC
1:00 PM, Friday October 19, 2007

Jim Harrell welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 1:15 PM.

Steering Committee
Members Present:

Don Adams, Alleghany County
Donnie Turner, Carroll County
Mike Maynard, Grayson County
Stanley Smith, Stokes County
Bryan Steen, Stokes County
Jim Harrell, Surry County
Macon Sammons, Jr., Surry County
Zach Henderson, Wilkes County
Eric Williams, Yadkin County
Jessica Icenhour, RTI Tourism Advisory Committee

Others Present:

Kathy Surratt, Carroll County
Dennis Thompson, Consultant
Betty Ann Collins, Mount Airy Chamber of Commerce
Randy Arno, UVA Southside
Chris Knopf, Surry County
Tom Holder, NC Heritage Tourism
Susan Medlin, Vintage Marketing Group

Minutes

The minutes of September 11 meeting were declared approved as submitted, as no changes or corrections were offered.

Financial Report

Macon noted total receipts through September 18 were \$56,908.05 and expenses were \$11,401.76, leaving a balance of \$45,506.29. Most of the current expenses are for marketing strategy development, with Vintage Marketing.

Grant Search

Dennis and Macon noted that 12 grant inquires have been sent out in NC and 11 in VA. A lead opportunity appears to the US EDA, for which Dennis and Macon are preparing a pre-application for about \$40,000, which will have to be matched. Other promising sources appear to be the NC Rural Center and Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. The search is continuing.

City of Galax

On motion by Donnie, second by Stanley and unanimous vote, it was agreed that an invitation would be extended to the City of Galax to join the RTI as a voting member at a special annual rate of \$2,500.

Marketing Considerations

Susan presented a video clip projected on a screen to show how the website homepage should be modified to better capture our market. She also showed mock-up magazine ads and billboards.

Jessica and Donnie suggested that this information and related marketing strategy should be presented to the Tourism Advisory Committee, and after discussion, it was agreed that a TAC meeting would be set for 10 AM on Friday, November 9th at the Exit 93 Hampton Inn. Susan and Dennis were asked to attend to staff the meeting.

There was discussion on the possibility of conducting a focus group of lead vendors in the region on November 9th, but the Steering Committee deferred this idea.

Don, Donnie and Mike noted the vendors and attraction owners need to see what “value added services” they would receive from membership in the RTI. Tom was asked to provide examples of such fees and services rendered elsewhere.

After further discussions, it was moved by Mike, seconded by Zach and unanimously voted that the creative content for the website from Vintage Marketing be accepted by the Steering Committee.

Zach asked how the RTI transitions from Vintage Marketing to a self-sustaining marketing effort? Susan suggested using a staff person, or a call center initially.

No date was set to present the marketing strategy and the website to the membership and tourist related businesses, but it was agreed that the Steering Committee would ask the TAC for a plan to “roll it out”. Kathy noted that the Crooked Road did this with a dinner meeting when the marketing plan was presented. Tom Holder will give the Tourism Advisory Committee and Steering Committee sample budgets and financial plans.

It was agreed that another Steering Committee meeting would be set for 1–3 PM on Friday, November 16, 2007 at the Shelton’s Hampton Inn at Exit 93.

Bylaws

It was reported that Randy, Dennis and Macon have been working on RTI bylaws. Macon thanked Randy for taking the lead in this process and doing the bulk of the drafting work. Jim asked Steering Committee members to be ready to act on bylaws at the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.

Respectively submitted,

Macon C. Sammons, Jr.
Assistant Secretary

MCS/th