



**Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes from April 2, 2024
William King Museum of Art at 9am**

Present were: Dwayne Anderson, Olivia Bailey, Deirdre Cole, David Dalton, Amber Fiorini Mike Hennessy, Walter Jenny, Karen Moore, Cassie Rowe, Janice Thayer, Lorin Zehr, and Visitor Center staff members Tonya Triplett, Chad Thompson and Diana Blackburn.

Marketing Update – Tonya shared that the Tourism Department has applied for 3 Virginia Tourism grants; placed ads in *Global Heros*, *Our State Magazine* and *Food & Travel* publications. She also provided an overview of upcoming visits from travel writers and tour groups and that Chad has become a certified Remote Pilot. This will allow him to fly a drone to capture content for commercial use.

Chad shared that voting for the USA Today 10Best (Food & Southern Small Town) and Best of Abingdon are both complete. Chad will be attending his second year of Marketing College (a 3-year program offered by the Southeast Tourism Society) and has received a scholarship to cover costs.

Diana provided an update on Visitor Center activities. There has been a 49% increase in visitation in March over February and merch sales is up 40% over the same period last year. The Creeper Trail Welcome Center will open on weekends beginning in April and full-time hours beginning in May (Thursday – Monday 10am-4pm).

TAC Meeting Subjects/Training Interest – Tonya posed the question to the committee about what type of subjects or training that would be of interest to the group.

Topics discussed: social media best practices; Meta Business; QR code to direct lodging guests to food, arts, history, outdoors, etc., cooperative advertising, and Google Adwords (now called Google Ads).

Amber will reach out to Amanda Shell to see if she is available to be our guest at the next meeting to talk about Google Ads.

Round Table Discussion: Committee members provided updates on events and activities for their organization/business. Discussion about challenges for West Main Street businesses.

Next Meeting: May 7, 2024: Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator at 3pm

Meeting Adjourned at 11:24am

Future TAC Meeting Dates/Times/Location:

June 4, 2024: The Arts Depot at 9am

July 2, 2024: Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator at 3pm

August 6, 2024: Barter Theatre, Smith Stage at 9am

September 3, 2024: Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator at 3pm

October 1, 2024: Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator at 3pm



November 5, 2024: Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator at 3pm
December 3, 2024: Barter Theatre, Smith Stage at 9am