

Howard County Tourism Council, Inc.
Board Meeting Minutes
May 30, 2017

Attendance

Term Ends EOFY		First	Last	Present
		Parker	Jean	
	ex-officio	Bates	Gail	Y
		Cochran	Mary Catherine	Y
	ex-officio	Guzzone	Guy	
		Harden	Al	Y
		Hasseltine	Terry	Y
	ex-officio	Wilson	Diane	
		Johnson	Kathy	
		Richardson	Donna	Y
		Besson	Karen	Y
2019	Executive	Libber	Mike	Y
2017	Executive	Mangione	Pete	Y
2017	Executive	Mangus	Becky	Y
2019	voting	Mattis	Julia	
2018	voting	Barnard	Valerie	
2017	voting	Kilby	Ellen	
2017	voting	Yetso	Brock	Y
2017	voting	Baker	Matt	Y
2020	voting	Nicklas	Barbara	Y
2017	Executive	Balderson	David	
2020	Executive	Chandler	Chuck	Y
2017	Executive	Clark	Martha	Y
2017	voting	Kelehan	Kevin	
2021	voting	Buscher	Tori	
2017	voting	Winer	Jay	Y
		Turner	Katie	Y
		Troglio	Aimee	Y

7 of 15 voting/Executive needed for quorum.

Minutes

May 30, 2017--Visit Howard County Board of Directors meeting, held at Howard County Welcome Center, 8:30am-- Chuck Chandler acting as presiding officer-Bridget Graham acting as secretary

- 8:37am-ED called meeting to order
- Quorum achieved
- Joe Barbera-Blossoms of Hope-presentation
 - BoH was born of HC Tourism 12 years ago
 - County Executive gave a grant of \$75,000 to plant cherry trees & support Claudia Meyer Resource Center
 - Originally intended to capture the DC cherry blossom audience
 - 5 or 6 years ago, the Tourism Board evaluated if BoH truly fit the Tourism mission
 - Decision was made to split off to support the community in a non-tourism fashion
 - They've had a year of a specialist guide their board meetings
 - Mission: Enhance the quality of life and beautification initiative. Beautify local communities & raise money for the Claudia Meyer and other qualified charities.
 - EC Flood gave an opportunity to give to the community in a broader sense
 - 30% of operating funds for the resource center come from BoH
 - BoH does:
 - 9th annual Pretty in Pink Fashion Show & sale--gives opportunity to show the community what they do, and bring in survivors and special guests
 - BoH trying to create a bridge between our cherry blossom influencers and others
 - They want to bring tax dollars to Howard County
 - Pink Greens Golf Tournament--community engagement
 - Power of the Purse--approx 400 guests to this event to sell purses to raise funds for Boh--raise awareness in the community--single biggest fundraiser
 - Partner support--partners with certain places for special events (Clark's Elioak Farm, Terrapin Adventures)
 - Hills of Milltown 5K-proceeds go to BoH
 - Letter of intent with Howard Hughes to plant hundreds of cherry trees @ Merriweather-to be a center in Howard County to rival the Tidal Basin
 - One part-time staffer who does admin for BoH, they're looking for a full time development position
 - BoH wants to develop events that happen regularly to benefit the community
 - Bottom line:
 - Grants from Howard County have come through Tourism-dictated by County Executives
 - Why continue supporting BoH?
 - So they can operate and be an organization
 - Marketing--print/media
 - Support an organization that is trying to stand on it's own
 - County Executive says that BoH must get funding from the VHC Board
 - Barbra: How much have you gotten in the past? What do those funds do?
 - Joe: \$50,000 last year, they want the input to go down over a 3 year period. Grants have been gotten from other organizations
 - They want to be a professional, development organization
 - \$200,000 operating budget this last year
 - Long term plans include an ED

- VHC has put in \$400,000 since the organization started
 - BoH wants to emphasize that dollars from VHC are not a donation, but true operating funds
 - If they are not self sustaining in a few years, they have plans in place to figure it out.
 - \$27,000 to Claudia Meyer last year
 - \$8,000 to ECP
 - Barbara: if Tourism had just given a donation to Claudia Meyer, would that have been better?
 - Joe: to donate to Claudia Meyer, you need to go through the Howard Hospital Foundation.
 - Becky: They do more at BoH than just giving money, fundraisers and other events help the economy. Mission is to beautify the County so that people will want to come visit.
- Chuck Chandler: Calls meeting to order @ 9:03am
- Housekeeping:
 - Some changes to previous board meetings, one member was incorrectly marked as voting. No quorum or voting changes needed to be made
 - Motion to pass, second, and passed
 - March meeting minutes:
 - Motion to pass, second and passed
 - Financials:
 - Barbara: Question-when it says FY17, actual as compared to budget, are these numbers YTD?
 - We have May and June left
 - Why is advertising way under budget?
 - We plan to spend it within the remainder of the FY
 - Total advertising budget is the actual number we're working with
 - Merchandise sales are so low, do you want to promote merchandise @ the mall? There is usually a charge, but as the manager, she can get us a good deal. We could have a satellite cart or something
 - We're working very hard to make sure that we're not competing too much with any of our neighbor businesses
 - Motion to approve financials, second, and passed
 - Committees:
 - 2 committees must exist according to the bylaws
 - Tony: Thank you to Executive Committee for their work and input
 - Chuck: Call for discussion of committees, ask for motion to accept Executive committee, finance and nominations
 - Motion, Seconded & passed
 - July will be the last meeting for many of our members, some will stay on longer:
 - Vote must pass to keep Pete on for an additional year as financial chair
 - Mary Catherine: Question: What are the terms? You're looking for a one year extension?
 - AC: We're asking for a 1 year extension according to the bylaws
 - Kevin Kelehan has volunteered to be nomination chair
 - Chuck: Asks for motion to approve all extensions
 - Motion, seconded and passed

- Proposed new board members- to be voted on by the partnership
 - Aimee Troglia-Historic Savage Mill
 - Katie Turner- HCC-Office of Publications and Marketing
 - Ian Kennedy-Downtown Columbia Arts and Culture Commission
 - Terry Hasseltine-Maryland Sports-transitioning from a non-voting member to a voting member
 - Potentially one more, we're trying to get confirmation-Robyn Holliday- Horse Spirit Arts Gallery
 - Mary Catherine: are there any holes in our representation? Can the Board be helpful in finding some members?
 - Tony: Yes, we're looking for a rep from Western Howard County
 - Mike L: What about law enforcement?
 - Tony: We've not looked into that yet. Bylaws say that no county employees are board members. The Board may have to vote to change the bylaws to allow that.
 - Becky: We could get the process going and vote next FY
 - Mary Catherine/Gail Bates: What about Virginia or John Frank?
 - Pete: how many voting members are there? And how many do we need to replace?
 - Tony: we have 15 now, and can have up to 25
 - No vote needed this year.
- Amanda Hof:
 - Membership highlights:
 - Dues brought down to \$50 to make partnership more approachable for new members
 - Free memberships were given to 69 Old Ellicott City businesses
 - These new partners have been educated about what benefits VHC can share with them
 - Streamlined benefits
 - Introduction of the Member Extranet
 - Member portal to our website
 - Tools and research are available
 - Cooperative opportunities
 - Restaurant Weeks
 - Social Media co op opportunities
 - Educational opportunities
 - PR, Sales, Social Media, Farms
 - 46% increase in membership
 - 22% increase in paid membership-this would have been higher if we hadn't given out free memberships
 - 91% renewal rate
 - Matt B: How did you offset the price drop for partnership?
 - Amanda: we've done some coops that have brought in revenue
 - Tony: We didn't make up the total number, and we'd planned for that
 - Barbara: What do you normally see in a year for new members?
 - Amanda: about 30 new members per year
 - Barbara: What is the renewal rate normally?
 - Amanda: 80%

- Pete: we've gone down by about \$30,000 in dues revenue per year
- Amanda: when we're at a lower cost, we can access more of our product to sell the County better
- Karen: How did you land on \$50?
 - Tony: we would have cut it to \$0 if we could, but the bylaws state that membership must be paid, so \$50 was seen as an easily approachable number that most businesses could pay
- FY18 Membership plans
 - Alliance Member: \$50
 - Higher investment levels
 - Strategic: \$500
 - More exposure
 - Stellar: \$1000
 - Tony: board must approve or change this structure. What do you think?
 - Becky: you all see what happens, and how to best structure things. It's been a discussion for years, and we haven't found the "best" policy yet. Staff will know best.
 - Chuck: What about Old Ellicott City?
 - Tony: we don't know. Some will probably come back on board, but we'll lose some.
 - Mary Catherine: Is there something in place for a business to "sponsor" a number of other businesses?
 - Amanda: great idea. We're looking at ways to expand
 - Mary Catherine: Can PHG fund a number of businesses to join without paying their own dues?
 - Matt: I like the direction and the philanthropy, but if a business cannot afford \$50 after this time, maybe they shouldn't be a part of the organization?
 - Gail Bates: Can we have a line in the bylaws for special circumstances?
 - Tony: currently not in the bylaws, but something that was voted on by the board
 - Chuck: So do we waive fees for OEC business again this year?
 - Karen: Can we promote specific businesses?
 - Tony: we need to remind everyone that we're here to help, but not the marketing firm for each business
 - Barbara: Agrees with Becky, and will trust the staff to make a call on this one. But wants the board to set some goals.
 - Tony: Goals can get tricky, we want to ensure that all our existing members are served well, not just having a high number.
 - Chuck: Is it possible to get to 400 members?
 - Tony: the Board needs to decide which way we drive, if we have to meet a sales goal, we'll work towards it.
 - Becky: Our bylaws say that we need membership, so what is important in how that looks? Is there a purpose of membership, or are we keeping it because they're

required. Is the amount of time that we're putting into membership worth it?

- Barbara: What could be a value of getting more members? People inputting information for us, and if we're getting more members who are participating.
- Matt: We need to look strategically, we need to promote the whole County, and we shouldn't spend too much time on membership, if people want to join in, we've made it easy to participate.
- Jay Winer: County supplies the majority of the money, growing the membership gives you a larger voice for getting funding and seeing the health of the organization.
- Tony: This sounds like a great topic for an upcoming meeting. We haven't discussed this with our strategic planning. Should we eventually move to a 501 c 4 instead?
- Brock Yetso: UCF takes memberships that are mostly paid/pay as you can
 - Chuck: Motion to vote on membership as stands:
 - Seconded & passed
- Budget-presentation by Anthony Cordo
 - Hotel Tax revenue: YTD up 2.59%
 - County is projecting 1.4% increase in tax-projected income is \$1,050,000, 5.5% decrease from FY17
 - Decrease is partially because we received an under disbursement check
 - Marketing will increase next year, all other portions will go down
 - We've worked hard to suppress overhead and general office expenses
 - Grant: This will be our July 2017 meeting--the Board will get to debate and choose how the grants we give out will work
 - We're sitting on our contingency fund, and the Board needs to choose how to spend that money--recommended by staff to spend on Grants
 - Revenue: we have been awarded a \$25,000 MD state grant to market Howard on Tap, the brew tour.
 - RWs, social media coops, advertising coops
 - Membership, we're budgeted to stay the same, but we intend to exceed that number
 - Merchandise sales
 - Advertising, increase to \$314,000
 - Not as much money is going to BoH this year, so we have more cash to use for advertising.
 - Barbara: What about the Old Ellicott City dollars from last year?
 - The support we were asked to give last year has come directly from County government this year.
 - Change in September: health care will likely go to a different carrier, and employees must contribute about 25%
 - Unemployment tax rate has increased from .9% to 4.5% because of the claims made against it this year

- Proposal: In lieu of typical raises this year, VHC will make a higher contribution to 401K starting on January 1. Is this something we want to discuss?
 - No discussion at this meeting
 - Second year in a row that we have decreased staff spending
 - Contingency fund: we're talking about no longer putting aside money, and drawing more from the contingency fund
 - Mary Catherine: what is the balance now?
 - About \$250,000
 - VHC wants to begin using this fund to grow the grant program
 - Chuck: Executive committee thinks that we need to spend money to make money
 - Matt: I'd like to have another event/festival that will generate tourism dollars
 - The grant program is designed to do exactly this.
 - Chuck: this is also the purpose of the compression calendar--to ensure that we're capitalizing on the events that come to town
 - Becky: Grants will bring more events/organizations, and help make them better
 - Karen: ECP does 16 events per year, so there's lots of opportunity
 - Matt: motion to approve Budget
 - Seconded & passed
- Welcome Center hours will expand.
 - Gail Bates: I've been asked to bring up that sometimes the WC isn't open. Will it be truly open?
- Kiosks on display will be going out as a test to get our names out there more.
- Jay: motion to adjourn
- Meeting closed: 10:14am