

Saluda Downtown Foundation Minutes

The Saluda Downtown Foundation held its quarterly meeting December 5th at 6:30 at the Visitors Center. Those board members present included Marc Blazer, Board Chairman, George Sweet, Vic Chairman, Glenn Franklin, Secretary, Jay Burris, Emily Lamar, Lynn Cass, Treasurer and Lynn Casey, Executive Director. Others present were Debi Thomas, past SDF Board member, Mark Powers from Mountain Song, Mark Oxtoby, Saluda Board of Commissioners and Judy Thompson from Sister City.

The meeting was called to order by chairman, Marc Blazar. A motion was made by George Sweet and seconded by Debi Thomas to accept the September board minutes as written. The vote was unanimous to accept.

Reports:

Lynn Cass presented the Treasurer's report. See the attached report. George Sweet made a motion to accept the report. It was seconded by Mark Oxtoby and was carried by a unanimous vote.

A report on Sister City activities was given by Judy Thompson. The committee has been very active and the report is attached to the minutes.

Mark Powers, Mountain Song report on the activity since the September meeting. The choir is based in Saluda but has a membership of 75 people who come from upper South Carolina, Polk, Henderson and Rutherford Counties. They had two successful concerts this past Fall. He outlined the future schedules that will encompass six concerts, three of which will be held in Saluda, while they branch out to other communities for the rest.

Mark said finances were a problem as they have little structured organization other than officers. They want to make sure their finances are very much aboard board and transparent. A discussion ensued with Lynn Casey Executive Director of SDF explaining a relatively simple way she can help them. She already works closely with their treasurer and can easily put together a monthly report for them.

Lynn Casey reported on several groups under her administration:

Top of the Grade Concerts for 2024: The concerts dates will be the second Friday of each of the following months: June 14th, July 12th, and August 9th. Polk County Community Foundation has approved a grant of \$6,150 to finance the concerts. See the attached report.

Arts Festival: The 2024 Arts Festival will be held May 18th. The Polk County Community Foundation has awarded a \$5000 grant to fund the children's activity tent.' There will be a rearrangement of the festival stalls, considering the construction may still be underway for the McCreery Park amphitheater, and there may not be the normal amount of space available in the parking lot. She announced that the stall space can be picked up down Ervin Street if the City will allow it to be closed. Parking, which is always a problem, will be located in the open land owned by Clark Thompson across from the Saluda Cemetery. All permits will be submitted to the Board of Commissioners in a timely manner and the call for artists will go out in January. Asked if Cathy Jackson would help this coming year, Lynn stated that if she doesn't fully participate, she will be available to act in an advisory capacity. See the attached report.

Visitors Center: The Center continues to be a great marketing tool for the City of Saluda. In the past 11 month period we period we have hosted almost 10,000 people. See the attached report.

Many of the downtown businesses will be closed the first two weeks in January 2024. It was discussed and decided that the Visitors Center would also close. Starting in January, the Visitors Center will be open Thursday through Monday and the new hours will be in 2 shifts, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 1 pm to 3 pm. These hours will last until April 1st when the 11 a.m to 4 p.m. will be resumed.

Old Business:

Lease Renewal for Visitors Center: George Sweet reported that the 3 groups involved, Saluda Business Assn., the Tourism Development Board and the Saluda Downtown Foundation, have agreed with Clark Thompson, owner of the Visitors Center Property, to a five year lease with an annual rent increase of 2 %. A discussion continued on the future possibilities surrounding operation of the Visitors Center.

Top of the Grade Studio Tour: Susan Cannon is spearheading the committee whereby artists' workshops/retail would be open during a festival day similar to the Weaverville Safari and the Tryon Artists' Trek. Whether it will be under SDF or become a stand-alone entity is yet to be decided. The proposed date of their first tour will be Sept 24, 2024. Susan Casey has already pulled together a great trifold map of Saluda artisan locations. It is available at the Visitors Center.

Main Street Retail: This very active group is headed by Melanie Talbot: Saluda is losing its retail stores and in order to continue as a tourist destination, retail shopping needs to increase. At present, stores are sitting empty or being rented by service oriented businesses. The question was asked whether the city, by means of an ordinance, could assist in the capturing of more retail for the CH district downtown. Glenn stated that the main control over business location was through the Permitted Use section of each Zoning District. The question of where residential in the CH District is allowed was raised. Apparently at one time, residential was restricted to upper floors of structures. Presently, that is not the case.

George Sweet made the motion to adjourn; it was seconded by Lynn Cass and was carried by a unanimous vote.

Glenn W. Franklin
Secretary

ATTACHMENTS

Saluda Downtown Foundation, Inc.

Board Meeting December 5, 2023

Treasurer's Report

For the 11 months ended November 30, 2023, SDF total revenue for all program funds totaled \$67,341 and total expenses were \$53,844. Since the last board meeting in September, \$300 for insurance and accounting has been charged to each fund and credited to the General Fund, and Mountain Song had their fall concert incurring expense of \$3,658 and revenues of \$6,150.

A breakdown by program funds for the 11 months ended November 30, 2023, follows:

	Arts Festival	General Fund	Mountain Song	Sister City	TOTG Concerts	Visitor Center	TOTAL
Income							
Program Income							
Fees							
PayPal Charge	-258.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-258.15
Fees - Other	10,238.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,200.00	14,438.00
Total Fees	9,979.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,200.00	14,179.85
Total Program Income	9,979.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,200.00	14,179.85
Revenue - Direct Contributions							
Corporate Contributions	5,045.00	0.00	0.00	5,042.37	3,900.00	10,493.75	24,481.12
Individ, Business Contributions	3,699.50	0.00	9,975.00	13,770.00	600.00	635.60	28,680.10
Total Revenue - Direct Contributions	8,744.50	0.00	9,975.00	18,812.37	4,500.00	11,129.35	53,161.22
Total Income	18,724.35	0.00	9,975.00	18,812.37	4,500.00	15,329.35	67,341.07
Expense							
Fundraising expenses							
Other Costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,602.66	0.00	0.00	7,602.66
Total Fundraising expenses	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,602.66	0.00	0.00	7,602.66
Management and Administration							
Accounting	150.00	-714.23	150.00	150.00	150.00	150.00	35.77
Consulting and Professional Fee	2,000.00	0.00	5,450.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,450.00
Dues, Subscriptions	270.00	0.00	0.00	190.00	0.00	0.00	460.00
Electricity	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	740.60	740.60
Gifts and awards	400.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	400.00
Insurance - Liability, D and O	150.00	134.00	150.00	150.00	150.00	150.00	884.00
Marketing Materials	3,436.77	0.00	143.88	0.00	264.74	0.00	3,845.39
Postage, Mailing Service	0.00	70.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	70.00
Printing and Copying	552.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	552.00
Rent	933.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,500.00	9,433.75
Repairs and Maintenance	0.00	0.00	250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	250.00
Software Expenses	104.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	104.50
Supplies	2,220.27	0.00	2,362.46	0.00	112.06	684.75	5,379.54
Telephone and Internet	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,455.52	1,455.52
Total Management and Administration	10,217.29	-510.23	8,506.34	490.00	676.80	11,680.87	31,061.07
Program Expenses	5,350.00	0.00	0.00	5,930.67	3,900.00	0.00	15,180.67
Total Expense	15,567.29	-510.23	8,506.34	14,023.33	4,576.80	11,680.87	53,844.40
Net Income	3,157.06	510.23	1,468.66	4,789.04	-76.80	3,648.48	13,496.67

The cash balance at November 30, 2023 was \$45,391.76, an increase of \$13,902.92 from the cash balance of \$31,489 at December 31, 2022. Changes in the cash balance by program fund follows:

	Arts Festival	General Fund	Mountain Song	Sister City	TOTG Concerts	Visitor Center	Amphitheater	TOTAL
Cash Flow								
Beginning Cash Balance 12/31/2022	4,915.20	5,686.15	4,487.10	9,475.63	410.51	6,334.25	180.00	31,488.84
Net Income	3,157.06	510.23	1,468.66	4,789.04	-76.80	3,648.48	0.00	13,496.67
Change in Accounts Receivable						706.25		706.25
Visitor Center insurance/accounting		-300.00						-300.00
Ending Cash Balance 11/30/2023	8,072.26	6,196.38	5,955.76	14,264.67	333.71	10,688.98	180.00	45,391.76

The balance sheets as of November 30, 2023 and December 31, 2022 follow:

	Nov 30, 23	Dec 30, 22
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Checking/Savings		
Bank Account		
Amphitheater Fund	180.00	180.00
Arts Festival Fund	8,072.26	4,915.20
General Fund	5,896.38	5,686.15
Mountain Song Fund	5,955.76	4,487.10
Sister City Fund	14,264.67	9,475.63
TOTG Concerts Fund	333.71	410.51
Visitor Center Fund	10,688.98	6,334.25
Total Bank Account	45,391.76	31,488.84
Total Checking/Savings	45,391.76	31,488.84
Accounts Receivable		
Accounts Receivable	0.00	406.25
Total Accounts Receivable	0.00	406.25
Total Current Assets	45,391.76	31,895.09
Fixed Assets		
Furniture and Fixtures	4,440.01	4,440.01
Total Fixed Assets	4,440.01	4,440.01
Other Assets		
Deposits	6.00	6.00
Total Other Assets	6.00	6.00
TOTAL ASSETS	49,837.77	36,341.10
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Equity		
Opening Fund Balance	4,294.14	4,294.14
Unrestricted Net Assets	32,046.96	25,903.72
Net Income	13,496.67	6,143.24
Total Equity	49,837.77	36,341.10
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	49,837.77	36,341.10

Sister City Report to SDF. December 5, 2023

Follow up to Teachers' Visit to Carunchio

Our two teachers who went to Carunchio in April have come back and made the most of what they learned. A **new website** has been created at Saluda Elementary, which has an enormous amount of material on a variety

of cultural topics, which teachers in various grades can use in the classroom. There are various lesson plans and projects that they can lift right off the website. There are also interactive materials for the children. There has also been a good deal of connection between the two schools in terms of exchanging letters and drawings in an effort to keep the children connected. Saluda is sending over a lot of materials, explaining how we in the United States celebrate the Christmas holidays. We received similar materials from Carunchio a few years ago.

A major project that has come out of the visit is the plan for an **English Immersion Workshop** to be held in the summer of 2025 in Carunchio for the local children. We are working on it now and a curriculum has been obtained, which is being updated for use in Carunchio. We are in discussions with Massimo about how long it will be, how many teachers will be involved and how the teachers will be housed. We will pay the expenses of the teachers to go over and Massimo will arrange for housing once they are there, probably staying with families. We may send one teacher over at the end of this school year to work on arrangements.

A third development from the teacher visit is a **grant** from Rutherford EMC that Stephanie Fletcher applied for to initiate an Italian language program at Saluda Elementary. The grant came through in late November and will provide Italian language training to 70 students. They need money for 21 additional students (about \$300) and Sister City will provide those funds as well as related materials needed to incentivize the students. Studies show that learning a second language early in life provides incredible benefits to the developing brain.

Follow up on Claire's Visit to Carunchio

Claire Thompson gave a fabulous, enthusiastic presentation to 36 Saludians at the Saluda Center on November 21. She was well prepared and provided a lot of detail about her trip and what an impact it has had on her. Her parents were there and also spoke. There were several families in attendance who said they had students who were interested in being our delegate for the summer of 2025.

Frances Fairy is heading up a team to develop a more in-depth process for identifying interested students and using more objective criteria to pick our next delegate for the summer of 2025. We lucked out with Claire...she was the only one who applied last time! We plan a publicity campaign to get the word out in the first quarter of 2024.

Christmas Stroll

Sister City will have a table at the Christmas Stroll in the parking lot of Looking Glass Realty. We will have written materials about our program, sign-up sheets for lasagna competitors, a taste of Italian Christmas bread, Panettone, and more.

Sister Cities International 2024 Young Artists and Authors Showcase

We are forwarding information about the Sister City International art contest to the students at Polk high school. Students from Saluda are eligible to submit their artistic work. The medium may be artwork, literature, photography or music. Submissions are judged around an annual theme and judged based on creativity, composition and theme interpretation. This year's theme is "Climatescape: Resilient Cities for Tomorrow's Climate."

Lasagna Competition and Dinner

Our first Lasagna Competition and Dinner will be Saturday, February 3 at the Saluda Center. We are looking for 20 cooks to each bring a tray of lasagna. They will be judged by a distinguished panel which includes Debi Thomas, Susan Casey, Marc Blazar and Chris Williams. Diners will enjoy all the lasagna they can eat, salad, an

included glass of wine, bread and dessert. There will be a performance of Italian music and prizes for the “best lasagna” and the “people’s choice lasagna.” Susan Canon is the team leader. The ticket will be only \$25 for adults, and less for teenagers and free for the little ones. We hope to get some sponsors so that we make a little money to go toward the cost of sending our teachers over to the summer immersion program, but this is mainly an event to offer some Sister City Italian goodness to the community. Elizabeth Taylor is planning events related to the Lasagna Dinner for the after-school program at Saluda Elementary. We will have copies of letters from the children on the tables to show everyone how the children of the two school are connecting across the two cultures.

Italian Dinner at Orchard Inn

Marc and Marianne Blazer have again agreed to put on an Italian Gala Dinner in March with a portion of the profits coming to Sister City. We hope to have an Italian musical performance by The Mountain Page Players. Date will be March 14. Sister City will work to advertise it and help with logistics.

Trips to Italy

Due to a cancellation, we have one room open for the **June 1, 2024, Flower Festival** in Carunchio.

We have secured the **week of September 8, 2024**, for another trip if there is enough interest. We will fill as many rooms as we can and then turn the rest back to Massimo. This trip will catch the grape harvest and Massimo is trying to arrange an excursion to see the processing of the grapes. Price is still 2,400 euros if paid in cash.

Summer Visitors

Plans are under way for our two student visitors who will be here this summer for about four weeks. In March we will announce details and request families to volunteer to entertain the girls with various outings and family events.

New Sister City Website

Ashley Sandahl is a member of our board and an accomplished computer guru. She has created a new website for Saluda Sister City. We are right now editing the content and should have it in good shape by the first of the year. It will include a way to purchase products and event tickets, a calendar of upcoming events, notices about trips, sharing of information about the school connections, etc. We will have our own newsletter to send out to people interested in supporting our mission.

Signage Re Sister City for Saluda

Our design has been submitted to the City Manager and approved. Next, we need DOT approval and then City Commission approval. Hopefully we will get through this process during the first quarter of 2024. The design is below.

Letters to Carunchio Students

A big batch of letters written by Saluda students is on its way to the Carunchio children. The letters explain what the Christmas traditions are here in Saluda and the US.

Executive Directors Report

Top of the Grade Concerts Report to SDF Board

SDF was awarded a PCCF grant for \$6,150 for three concerts for the 2024 Top of the Grade Concert Series. The concerts will be held June 14, July 12, and August 9. These will not conflict with Summer Tracks in Tryon or Train Tales at the Depot. I will put the special permit request before the city commissioners in January.

Arts Festival Report to the SDF Board

The Arts Festival received a PCCF grant for \$5,000 to fund the children's activity tent. The proposed map for the Arts Festival is attached. We are proposing closing Ervin Street. We have already discussed the matter with the Vincents and Brannon who have given their okay. We will make the request of the city commissioners on Dec. 11 and if we get their approval we will ask the NC DOT. We will also be using Clark Thompson's pasture for additional parking and renting two 15-passenger vans to help take people back and forth. We have approval from the churches and school for use of their parking lots. The call for artists will begin at the end of this month.

Visitor Center

The Visitor Center had 9,378 visitors from January through the end of November as compared to 9,642 for the same 11-month period in 2022.

Saluda Grade Arts Trail

Susan Cannon organized a committee to oversee an artist studio tour. Committee members include Kristen Mode, Allison Hull, Jim Carson, Sam Varn, Susan Cannon and myself. The Committee met in October and set a tentative date for Sept 14, 2024, for the artist studio tour and is planning for a one-day event but will keep the option open for a two-day event if needed. Allison agreed to reach out to artists to access interest and availability of artists for a Sept 14 date.