



Saluda Business Association Minutes

March 5th, 2024

Members Present: Emily Lamar, Alexis Cunningham, Angela Nicholas, Jim Carson, Mike Reeves, Debi Thomas, Rhonda Woodberry, Lynn Casey, Steve Orr, Denise Kennedy, Kristen Mode, Lilyanne Phillips, Hannah Hall, Kirk Hall, Scott Varn, Gail Slaughter, Gerard Prendergast, Risa König

I. Call to Order

- Called to Order by Gail Slaughter, filling in for Stephanie Winterrowd.

II. Approval of Previous Minutes:

- Previous Meeting Minutes. Motion to approve made by Emily Lamar. Debi Thomas seconds motion. All approve. Motion passes.

III. Treasurer's Report: Rhonda Woodberry

- Rhonda is unable to access and see what the funds are for SBA until she is signed over as a signatory on the bank account. She is able to deposit funds and see that checks are deposited, however she does not know the current balance.
- Lynn Casey brings up that a second signatory should be signed in so that another has access to the SBA accounts, should there be a need, such as Rhonda is on vacation. Marc Blazar said that his partner Maryanne mentioned Shelly Dekay is willing to be a second signatory on for SBA banking needs, should another not be found. Lynn Casey counters it should probably be an officer as the second signatory.
 - Gail Slaughter said she would be fine with being a second signatory.
- There is a question about the Quickbooks subscription and where the SBA stands with its Quickbooks and access thereof for Rhonda Woodberry.

- Lynn Casey said there is not currently a Quickbooks account owned by the SBA and that previously she had utilized her own Quickbooks desktop version for SBA use.
- Lynn Casey makes a motion that the SBA purchases an online version of Quickbooks, stating the online version will give Rhonda Woodberry and another officers access, without needing a desktop designated for the purpose.
 - Gail Slaughter approves motion and Emily Lamar seconds, pending the next motion, that the subscription does not go over \$600/yr.
- Lynn makes a motion that the accounting software shouldn't be more than \$600/year. Gail Slaughter approves and Emily Lamar seconds. Motion passes.
 - Emily Lamar said that the bottom tier for online Quickbooks is about \$25/mo.
- Rhonda Woodberry has not paid the Tailgate Market (named for the Tail Gate poster displayed in Visitor's center,) but she is paying that now.
- Rhonda Woodberry is following through on the invoices and procedures based off of the binder from previous Treasurer, but she is cleaning it up, so let her know if there is anything not correct.
- Gail Slaughter entertains a motion to accept the Treasurer's report. Lynn Casey approves and Marc Blazar seconds. Motion passes.

IV. Marketing: Emily Lamar (reach her via promotions@saluda.com)

- Emily Lamar saw unusual traffic from out of country sources on the Saluda website. She has found them to be mostly spam, so she is filtering them out and the report, included below, should be more accurate than last month's due to this. Google Analytics **Google Analytic Report LINK**
- Emily Lamar says the SBA search engine optimization is at about 80%; she'll work to get it to 90%.
- Emily Lamar states that it would be great if businesses could come up with about a 500 word blurb to help pull in visits to the sight — SCO friendly.
- Friendly reminder for businesses to please add events to the Saluda website calendar was made by Emily Lamar. **https://saluda.com/events/community/add**
- Emily Lamar brings up that the Non-profit page is up and still a work in progress, but looking good.
- Emily Lamar is asked by Angela Nicholas, "If you are a new business and have paid your dues, how do you get your business on the page?" To which, Emily responds, "There is a link under the 'Join the SBA' on the Saluda website."

V. Membership

Presented by Alexis Cunningham on Amy Wood's behalf.

- No new members to report.
- Looking Glass Realty is celebrating its one year anniversary and having a party at the realty building, March 15th, 5 pm -8 pm, food and drinks provided.

VI. SDF, Visitor's Center, & Art's Fest

- Art's Fest is May 18th.
 - Lynn Casey presented a preliminary map. Anyone can look through the map over the next few weeks and please let her know if you've got any feedback.
 - Lynn Casey states knows there's a new business "Spring Creek Interior" that she needs to put on the map.
 - DOT and property owners have given permission to close Erving Street during the festival. This will allow vendors and foot traffic use of that space and hopefully bring more people to the other side of the bridge.
 - There will be two 24-passenger shuttles looping around to bring people to town.
 - Lynn Casey asks that is there are Restaurants or other business in town with special menus for the Art's Fest that they would like the Information Desk to hand out during the festival, to have those menus printed and given to Visitor Center the week of the Festival – Friday the latest.
- Gail Slaughter brings up that the TDA has offered to take over the payments for the Visitor's Center rent and utilities. She says that originally the responsibility of the Visitor Center upkeep was split evenly between TDA, SBA, and SDF. The TDA is now in a position that they have offered to pay 100% of the Visitor's Center's fees. Gail Slaughter continues to mention that this will mean they will have significant input. Their caveat for this is to have a quarterly meeting with board members to make sure things are running as needed and wanted by everyone.
 - TDA is taking over the recipient of payment for posters and for maintenance of the Visitor center.
 - Emily Lamar asks when is the transition taking place. Lynn Casey answers there is funding left over from previous fiscal year that will run through June. Since the funding was already set aside as an allotted amount for the Visitor Center, Rhonda does need to worry about making any payments. Once that funding runs through, in June, the TDA will take over.
 - Lynn Casey makes a motion that the SBA supports the TDA taking over all financial responsibilities of the Visitor Center and that the board members will meet quarterly and the SDF is still responsible for community communication. Gail Slaughter approves the motion and Emily Lamar seconds. Motion passes
 - Debi Thomas asks if the SBA still be able to use this space. Gail Slaughter confirms yes.

VII. New Business

- Gerard Prendergast and Steve Orr present information about the proposed Saluda Grade Trail.
 - Gerard Prendergast talks of steering community for the Saluda Grade Trail, going out in groups to get community and business feedback on the proposed Rails to Trail project and what people would like to see accomplished and what concerns existed.
 - 2 years ago, the Saluda Grade Trail organization went on a 2 day retreat that went over the impact of rails to trails have on local communities and their surrounding areas.
 - Gerard Prendergast mentions no realizing to extent to which the positive impact on financial, health, historical, and revitalization of other communities other Rails to Trails projects have had. He mentions restoring a sense of pride to the surrounding areas of the Rails to Trails.
 - Steve Orr states that The Trail is coming.
 - Gerard Prendergast mentions an article on the Ecusta Trail talking about businesses that have already come in planning on the Trail and the projected influx of economic benefits.

- Steve Orr adds on, “Today is the time to plan and make sure we are building around the community, the future we’d like to have... We’d like any input from you, the business, and the community. The trail is coming... There’s been a huge investment from NC and SC.”
- Gerard Prendergast brings out a handout that is a paper copy of the power point they have available to show communities, panels, and individuals.
 - Longterm vision is to connect the Saluda Grade Trail to other existing Trails around the area.
 - Talks of History and the local stories surrounding the railroad.
 - Talks of growing local economy.
 - Increase property values, which, in turn, will also increase property taxes.
 - Inviting to younger people, as well. It’s outdoors, it’s hip, it’s new.
 - Talks of other trails and the economic boost they’ve seen.
 - Saluda Community Land trust — the Saluda Grade Trail organization supports it and feel there’s a balance that can be found. Looking to incorporate previously segregated areas, such as Reclamation Park, bring back those voices. Already seeking out grants for this.
 - Steve Orr then took over:
 - Questions that were raised from the very beginning: Issues with parking and how to actually get people into businesses.
 - Feasibly can have 150 parking spaces added as a part of the Trail. Using the extra Rail, that isn’t going to be used as a trail, set as a parking area.
 - Steve Orr states, “We can either sit and wait and see how someone else is going to design it. Or, we can do it ourselves and go ahead and have our input. Commissioners have decided to go the second route, hiring engineers and otherwise that worked on Ecusta trail who already have experience. We’ve been having meetings and public forums, but we’ve already been working on this and are moving forward. We’d like to make sure our input is taken into consideration as much as possible.”
 - The town of Saluda has already committed \$350 000 to McCreery Park
 - Jim Carson asked how long out is this? Steve Orr responds that the goal is to have our section, Saluda’s section, of the Trail paved within 5 years. This does mean we need to raise money and pay for it somehow. We will not be able to prioritize parking during this part. We’ll focus on getting Saluda’s portion of the trail paved first. We’ll need to be ready for some concessions, since we’ll be working with State and Federal funding.
 - Emily Lamar asked how long or how many miles is our portion of the Trail? Steve Orr answered that our portion of the Trail would be around 1 mile.
 - Rhonda Woodberry asked if anyone has any questions or concerns they’d like to follow up on later, how may they get in contact with someone. Gerard Prendergast answers, saying that the Conserving Carolina website has a link to the Saluda Grade Trail, and there is a form that allows questions. He also mentions that the Saluda Grade Trail website, itself, has a lot of information and a FAQs section. <https://www.saludagraderail.org>
- Steve Orr said, “Seriously, if there is something that we don’t like, you’ve got to let me know now. The push is going to be happening soon, within the next year. We don’t have much opportunity for this and we don’t want to miss out on this.”

- Kirk Hall then gives an update on the SUP appeal for the Fort Creek Community.
 - Kirk Hall mentions this will be the 29th Season of Orchard Lake. Kirk Hall continues to say lots of children coming all summer long and something they have worked to cultivate is a safe space and allowing parents to let their children have “long leashes.”
 - Kirk explains that in the Fall of 2022, First Contact Rehabilitation began the process of purchasing a property adjacent to the Orchard Lake property, to make an unlicensed and unsecured men’s rehab facility.
 - Kirk Hall sent out an inquiry to see how the Fort Creek community feels about this development and most responded back with concern for their community and for their businesses. Kirk clarifies that they do not have any issue with these facilities, only that this is an appropriate space for such a facility.
 - Kirk provided campers a google form to provide anonymous feedback and printed out the responses represented via pie charts to show that their customers are concerned for their safety.
 - Kirk continues to say that The facility is not allowed to have convicted felons or sexual offenders/murders. There are stipulations on the misdemeanor and felonies allowed for participants to have, but there doesn’t seem to be any follow through on how they can regulate that.
 - In January of 2023, the Henderson County decided to approve the zoning permit for this facility.
 - Orchard Lake appealed the decision. They went to court this week. The Superior Court Judge did rule that this facility should’ve been billed as a mental treatment facility and NOT an assisted living facility. The judge sent the original zoning back to be looked at and to have the permit reassessed.
 - Emily Lamar asked if they are currently using that facility. Kirk Hall said it is hard to get all of that information. Kirk did state that he found out that the facility got 2 million in state funding and that as of December 2023, they’ve had 4 participants.
 - The questions was posed by Scott Varn, “How can the facility be ‘unlicensed?’” To which, Kirk Hall answers, “North Carolina allows exemption for 12 step Religious organizations and they are not required to have licensing.”
 - Lynn Casey suggested using Constant Contact for Kirk Hall to let SBA know of the dates of proceedings as Henderson County reevaluates the permitting.
 - Kirk and Hannah Hall said please let anyone you can know about this; any commissioners, anyone in Henderson County.
 - This property adjoins the Greenville watershed and has trails that lead to Lake Sheila, as well.
 - Hannah Hall brought up the point that they are far away from medical facilities — e.g. hospitals — and so far it looks like there isn’t any staff that can provide medical assistance.
 - Debi Thomas asked how to contact the Henderson County commissioners board. Hannah Hall responded that they have contact information on the Henderson County website for the offices.

- Marc Blazar said that he’d send the letter to TDA in regards to the Visitor Center.

VIII. Old Business

- Angela Nicholas announces that the Polk County Recycling has been moved to the Saluda tailgate parking lot.
- Debi Thomas brought up that there are no signs to help direct people.

IX. Adjourn

- Lynn Casey motions to adjourn. Gail Slaughter seconds.
- Next SBA meeting is set for April 2nd, 2024.

NOTES:

Taken and prepared by Risa König, Secretary

Google Analytics for [Saluda.Com](#)

[LINK](#)