

Saluda Business Association Minutes

November 5th, 2024

Members Present:

Minutes taken via vice recording of meeting. No members list taken.

I. Call to Order

- Made by Stephanie Winterrowd.

II. Approval of Previous Minutes:

- Previous Meeting Minutes. Motion to approve. Motion Seconded. Motion passes.

III. Treasurer's Report: Rhonda Woodberry

- Rhonda Woodberry not present. No report given.

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

- Brochure will remain on hold until we know where "Adventure" is — as far as, what we'd like to list this next year.
 - Pretty much everything listed on the brochure is still open, or will be open.
 - Still need to reach out to Pearson Falls and see where they are.
 - We will need to make a decision in the next few months to decide how we'd like to proceed, though, it does look like it'll be possible to move forward with it.
- Google analytics for the Saluda website will be included in at the bottom of minutes email.
 - Working on trying to post as many positive things as possible.
 - If anyone would like to share any blogs with Emily Lamar, she will post them to the website. Please make sure the blog is relevant for all time, since it will stay on the website. So not necessarily up coming events, but events in general that your organization does or that represents the business.
 - Emily Lamar just did a blog for Mountain Page Theatre, which they submitted to her.
 - Lots of people flocking to the website after the storm.
- Emily Lamar is sending out a "Saluda Insider Bulletin." It's a monthly newsletter that has all of the month's events on it. Please send any events you'd like included to calendar, since that's where Emily will pull the events from for the newsletter.
 - The newsletter will also include a couple of relevant blogs and also places to stay.
 - Where *Saluda Life Styles* is more for Saludians and people here, the *Saluda Insider Bulletin* is for tourists and to promote foot traffic.
 - There's a link on saluda.com where people can sign up for the bulletin.

V. Membership: Amy Wood

- Amy Wood not present. No report given.

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

- Marc Blazar is our representative for the Saluda Downtown Foundation. Stephanie Winterrowd and Emily Lamar presented on Marc's behalf.
 - This last year, Lynn Casey spearheaded the Arts Fest, and that was meant to be her last time. We are really looking for someone to step in and fill this position and coordinate the Arts Fest. If we are unable to find someone, the festival will not happen.
 - There is a system of sorts in place already, from years past and also some volunteers.

- Basically, there are people willing to participate and help, but there needs to be someone to coordinate and head up everything.
- This will be the Arts Fest's 20th anniversary, so it is important to the town and businesses that we are able to make it happen this year.
- It is brought up that the Arts Fest will be important, particularly after the storm. Lynn has done such a great job — and she'll be hard to replace — but since there may not be as much money, as funds go to other areas and other things that are needed here, it is suggested that we be willing to attempt a smaller sized version of the festival. Especially, if it is the only way to have the festival. Basically, even if we are unable to find a replacement for Lynn, it is still worth it for the businesses to try some version of the Arts Fest.
 - It is offered that one main concern is going to businesses for funding when they've already been hit with the lack of tourism due to the storm.
 - A counter view is shared by a business that the Arts Fest is their second busiest day of the year, and that the investment in arts and the Festival, which is so important to Saluda, is worth it for the business. This view is seconded by multiple other businesses.
 - This point is furthered by mention of another meeting for women owned small businesses in the area. They'd just had a meeting in regards to this as well. The consensus was that this area needs businesses to be open in order to thrive, provide jobs and continue to support the local economy. Basically, show we are open. These towns are up and running. One of the best ways to achieve this, and to support those businesses that are hurting, is to bring people to this area.
 - A concern is raised in regards to the number of businesses on Main Street, arts related, that are closing. One of the biggest boons we have in Saluda is how great and supportive our community is. How involved this town is, in being there and helping each other out. It is concerning that we are trying to build this area up and there aren't a lot of arts and crafts related business any more to support that build up. We need reasons for people to come to our town. We depend on each other to make it through.
 - One idea was to welcome artists in Asheville to come here, since there is still so much rebuilding in Asheville. If we are building up our downtown, we can take this opportunity to change the dynamic really quick. What's the reason people come to visit? The festival could be a time to really show people that we not only have restaurants, but art, craftsman, services, etc. Not let the Festival be just a one off. Especially, as storefronts open up.
 - This means more advertising
 - Saluda isn't just a place to go zip-lining and then eat. No, we can be a place to come stay the weekend. Why not the week? Really get people here.
 - We can be an Arts destination.

VII. New Business

- Anything we can do to help build up and revitalize Saluda right now.
- Equestrian Center has opened up their building for a rent-free housing for Artists in the River Arts District.

- Stephanie Winterrowd is also working on a marketing booth/space in the Equestrian Center. A tête-à-tête, if you will, with them. Basically, this is a way to, hopefully, get people to come up and visit Saluda.
 - The Equestrian Center is also putting out a Christmas Guide on where to go to buy Christmas Gifts. And they are willing to let us put our businesses in that as well. Stephanie is working on this as well.
 - It is brought up that the Equestrian Center is too far for us to really see any difference. We didn't see much during the WEG. To this point, Stephanie counters that this is different, since the emphasis is on drawing in people who look for art, rather than horses, and that the Equestrian Center is trying to draw in a different crowd. Drawing in art loving people to come see them and their market place, which is not something they are typically known for. That's the pitch, because we are good at drawing in those art loving individuals.
 - It is furthered, that if the Equestrian Center is drawing people in anyway, it makes sense for us to try and market there as well. They have more space and resources. We wouldn't be giving them money. We're just trying to promote us as much as we can in our surrounding areas.
- Also trying to work with Tryon, in collaboration, for our area and the businesses.
- Emily Lamar has put out a map about what roads are open in the Polk County area, letting people know to how to reach us.
- It is brought up that Saluda seems to be in a precarious spot and as much effort as we can put into moving things forward is important right now. Focusing on the Arts seem like a good way to go about it.
 - Moving off of this point, we are poised to make this work and be even better off than before.
- Bringing up the Holiday Markets, we should consider what will bring those artists to our town. Are there places for them to show their work? Will they think it's worth it? Especially after the flood, artists aren't going to come somewhere they aren't certain will pan out with any of the work they were able to save/salvage. What do we have to get people to say, "Yes! You should come to Saluda, because there will be a lot of people here shopping?" It's not certain we could actually say that this year.
 - It is asked if we have any numbers to show any growth or upwards trends in number of shoppers. Attendance to festivals? It is responded that we don't currently, but that would be a great question for Lynn Casey.
- A main concern is that, while we are having lots of conversations, everything is moving at an incredibly slow pace.
 - Sales are down in everything, across the states.
 - Why are the galleries closing in town? It isn't because they are making lots of money. It is hard to make a living in crafts. It is brought up that the only reason one of the galleries is currently still open, is because the owner teaches, not from actual sales of the art.
 - The idea is brought up about having multiple types of crafts and disciplines available in workshop or class form. There aren't many places you can go and have a class on glass blowing. Why not add pottery, printing, etc.? This way people don't just come to look and walk out without purchasing. They come for the experience. We can tag in Air B&Bs. Make a craft week? A way to differentiate ourselves in a

whole different way. A way to make us unique, in this area, not just to Hendersonville.

- Stephanie Winterrowd inserts that this should definitely be discussed further and that there are some people that should be a part of that conversation not currently present at the meeting. She will find a meeting time and reach out to hold another meeting in regards to this.
 - It is caveated by another that, while this conversation will be continued at another time, there are some pressing, time-wise, events that we'll need to figure out quickly. Will we offer space to other artists for the upcoming Markets and holidays. Almost like donated space, or reduced rent for displaced artists?
 - Also, how will we reach out to those needing to be involved?
- The Holiday pop-up Market:
 - Having choices helps consumers make purchases. (Something in our brains and how we reach decisions. We are more likely to spend money when there's choice rather than only one option.)
 - This last year we had a reduction in vendors, due to space, and it was decided not to do with Winter Farmer's Market this year. However, we really wanted to still do something, so the Holiday Market is what we've come up with. There are posters and other advertising available.
 - The Market will be held at McCreery Park, Saturday, November 30th, 10 am - 2 pm.
 - We'll hopefully be able to fit 25 vendors in that space.
 - There aren't any ready to eat items vendors, so we'd like to encourage people to eat in town.
 - It is asked about whether is we were able to get more space, if more people could vend crafts. The answer seems to be yes. (Weather permitting.)
 - Businesses will be responsible themselves to soliciting vendors in their space. However, businesses will need to know who to reach out if there's any overflow, or otherwise. Basically, who will be coordinating vendors so people know where to go.
 - Stephanie Winterrowd volunteers and asks that any overflow vendors or available spaces be sent to her so she can communicate with parties about availability. She'll communicate to Dawn, Steve Orr, and Emily.
 - Dawn's office number is 828.894.2281 or email info@polkcountyfarms.org
 - The original reason for the Market being kept small was out of respect for the other business in town. Didn't want to have too many people come into town and overrun the other businesses. We are so glad the hear the businesses want to participate.
 - We want to make sure that this is well marketed and attended.
 - Share on social media.
 - Market the Market as a part of "Saluda Business District"
 - It is asked if there are any counters or concerns that anyone would like to be brought up. None were brought up, other than making sure businesses toes aren't stepped on. It was clarified that local vendors are being kept to a 25 mile radius.

- Mountain Page Theatre is going to be there handing out hot chocolate.
- We'd like to purchase coffee from Wakey Monkey and Wildflour to hand out samples.
- SBA will also have a table to have advertisement available for the businesses in town.
 - Have the map of town and vendors available.
- First Peak Visitor Center in Columbus, NC will print free weather proof banners for any business in the County, as long as you provide all of the graphics, etc.
- SBA has also joined American Express's Small Business Saturday, where they send out stuff to help advertise.
- Grant and Loan Resources and Business Resources:
 - Hurricane Relief Recovery Resources, specifically for businesses. A print out was handed out.
 - Appalachian Community Capital, which is a bank, has a WNC small business initiative. It's a grant that is available to businesses located in WNC, that sustained physical or economic damage due to Hurricane Helene, which was not covered by insurance or other resources. The grants are up to \$25 000. The application window is open until November 27th. The application is online.
 - SCETV sent a letter to Lynn Casey and Kathy Jackson stating that it is important to get the word out that businesses are open. SCETV is offering to help extend reach, via their network, for businesses to spread information to the public to bring up tourism after the storm. SCETV has come up with a new "Carolina to Carolina" marketing package where they have discounted their rates by 50%. This is for marketing through the SCETV radio and business network. A print out is handed around.
 - This may be something that is bigger and we'd like to talk to the TDA about it as well. We may want to do this as the SBA and go ahead and jump on it as well.
 - This would be marketing on radio all throughout South Carolina.
 - Emily Lamar sent out an email (incorrect title) about Shop Western NC that has a list of businesses which are open. There is a place on the website where businesses can submit their listing. It's a great resource to let tourists know you are open, especially for the holidays. The website is shopwnc.com
 - Foothills Workforce Development Board and Offices of Disaster Recovery is holding information session, on November 14th at Isothermal Community College. The US Small Business Association, US Dept. of Agriculture, and American Red Cross representatives will be there to help with business recovery, filling out forms, asking for grants, etc. A handout for this was passed around.

VIII. Old Business

- Thinking of a way to bring back the kids' craft day that we used to do after Hometown Christmas. It was a big event for kids to come craft Christmas gifts and it was a great experience for the kids, while bringing people into town.
- Land Trust Trails report (presented by Josh Huffstetler):
 - Have been bringing volunteers out, usually on Saturdays, but also on Tuesdays — there have been better turnouts.

- The Lazy Girl Trail is now clear.
- For now, that's really the only trail that is completely clear.
 - The Missing 40 should be cleared fairly soon, especially with Pearson's Falls Rd. now open.
 - Henry's is walkable and in fairly good state
- A lot of the Inns around town have mentioned guests looking for recreational things to do, so having the trails open is going to help that a lot.
 - Even offering people to just walk around Saluda downtown itself. There's the Historical Walking Tour pamphlet available. Perhaps pick some up and to share with visitors as they stay around town.
- The Gorg is reopening this weekend.
- Hometown Christmas is Friday, December 17th, from 6pm-8pm.
 - In the past there's been some hesitancy in regards to advertising, not wanting the stroll to get too big. It is argued that this is not the case this year. We want to advertise (we'll be featured in *Life in the Foothills* for sure for Hometown Christmas).
 - Generally, what happens is all of the business stay open and have some sort of treat for visitors (music, food, drink, etc.).
 - Looking to use the map the SBA already has from the Arts Fest.
 - Mountain Song will be doing Caroling. Hopefully, Santa will make an appearance.
 - It is brought up the the street used to be lined with luminaries. (White paper bags and with candles and sand, which helps people know where to walk.) Basically, thinking of a way to help direct people to places they typically wouldn't go. Draw people's attention to both ends of Saluda.
 - Open to another suggestion or if anyone wants to help set the lights out.
 - It is suggested that maybe Saluda School might help with the luminaries. It is countered that the School is already making ornaments for the tree.
 - Perhaps a Girl Scout Troop would be willing to help with the luminaries? (Reach out to Cassandra. Yes, they are interested in helping out.)
 - Maybe make it a community effort, where each business is responsible for setting out luminaries in their area and then we can ensure the whole town is light up and has direction for visitors?
 - It is brought up that the decorations started out focused on more natural, traditional makes, so the candles fit right into that.
 - One counter point made was about the clean up. A lot of times the bags might break and leave behind sand. So clean up would need to be coordinated. (Maybe using something besides sand in the base.)
 - Need to double check the lights on the bridge, especially after the storm.
 - It is asked whether we would be doing anything more or different this year, in terms of decorations, for the holidays. It was brought up last year as well. However, there is not a lot of room in the budget for the City, to add extra decorations. There will be banners on the poles that will be winter themed. The City will also do some things on the pavilion as well as some natural wreaths, deer decorations in the park, and a few other things.
 - It is asked whether the tree could be moved to Pace Park this year. In years past, the issue was having the tree closer to where people are walking around.

There is concern about how to keep an eye on the tree at Pace Park, since people like to mess with it. (There have still been issues with Pace Park bathrooms.)

- The plan is to decorate the town the week before Thanksgiving, since Thanksgiving is so late.
- The City is going to double-check the lights on buildings along the building. (Many of the lights are individual businesses' and the City doesn't have access to turning them on. Businesses will need to double check that connection themselves.) The City will have a lift truck and will go around check the light bulbs.
- It is brought up that, perhaps in the future, the SBA will be partially responsible for decorations. This will be a discussion at a future date.
- It is brought up to do some kind of stamp or passport to prompt people to visit businesses. May be too much on Hometown Christmas or Small Business Saturday, with how packed it'll be, but maybe for the pop-up market. Emily Lamar also had an idea about a little elf scavenger hunt that will encourage people to wander through town, but not necessarily require the businesses to do anything if they are busy.
- If anyone has anything else or ideas they'd like to add for Hometown Christmas, please feel free to email Stephanie Winterrowd.
- There is a survey out, that we are asking members to fill out, stating why they are a part of the SBA.
- SBA is looking for officers for next year. Definitely looking for a treasurer. We should vote on this during the December meeting.
- Volunteer of year. Normally we decide in October. However, we are pushing it back to January.
 - Last time we had mentioned doing the Hurricane Helene volunteers. No individual names, but honoring all of the volunteers. Some kind of nice big reception. Maybe we'd like to have the reception later in the year as well? Maybe March. Happy to hear thoughts on this.
 - Motion to name the Volunteer of the Year for Hurricane Helene volunteers. Motion seconded. All in favor. Motion passes.
 - Motion to wait until beginning of March for reception. Motion seconded. All in favor. Motion passes.

IX. Adjourn

- Meeting Adjourned.
- Next SBA meeting is set for December 3rd, 2024.