

# Potomac Highlands Creative Economy Team Meeting

July 28, 2022

10 am

Zoom

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Meeting called by:	<a href="#">Phyllis Baxter</a>	Type of meeting:	Informal Discussion
Facilitator:		Notetaker:	Maria
Timekeeper:			

**Attendees:** Phyllis Baxter, Robert Burnes, Samantha Peet, Amber Higgins, Anne Beardslee, Cheryl Wolfe, Jonathan Bellingham, Greg, Melissa Shockey, Mike Stover, Lindsay Kazarick, Ben Duvall-Irwin, Maria Bray

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## Meeting notes

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### Discussion:

- Welcome! Phyllis Baxter, Executive Director of AFNHA opened the meeting.
- Eastern updates - Rober Burns - Thank you for supporting the Farm to Table Event. It went well. They are planning for a few projects in the fall that will be announced after the Tourism Summit. We are looking at a non-profit CPA course as well as some hospitality training. Livi Miller has another part of her series coming up - "Free and Paid resources to streamline your business marketing and communications. Introducing Melissa Shockey of Eastern Workforce who has some updates as well...
- Melissa Shockey - Grant Writing Proposal training starts September 6. Grant for Done training targeted to specific agencies and groups (ie. first responders and the tourism industry). This class is preparation for the certification exam. <https://easternwv.edu/workforce-education/drone-training/> Over the next year and a half we can offer over 60 certifications for free (traditionally \$1000 each). We are looking for groups of ten students at a time. We work with first responders, and EMT groups to receive specialty training to focus on first responder needs but this can be customized for those in tourism or agriculture. For Interest in Drone Training for Tourism Industry Support, visit Melissa Shockey, Director of Workforce Education (Melissa.Shockey@easternwv.edu); 304-434-8000 ext. 9253
- Planning out our fall classes - If you have a business training or marketing for Olivia to cover, please reach out to Rob [Robert.burns@easternwv.edu](mailto:Robert.burns@easternwv.edu)

- AFNHA updates - Samantha recently accepted a position with Elkins-Randolph Tourism. We have selected Ben Duvall-Irwin to fill the communications position. He is currently the marketing manager at Beverly Heritage Center. (BHC will be hiring if you know anyone who may be interested). Ben will start in September.

The Management Plan review period ended Sunday, July 24th. We are working to incorporate the comments. We had some comments from the public and more extensive comments from the park Service and other partners. In the meantime, we are still accepting support letters for another week or so.

We are actively recruiting for AmeriCorps. We have a number of sites that are looking for people including some of our CVBs and tourist attractions. If you know of anyone who may be interested in doing AmeriCorps service (current volunteers, people considering a career change who want some experience, people who are retiring, etc). There is a new educational award for graduate school in West Virginia as part of this program. If a service member is over 55 years of age, the education award can be passed on to children.

The Hiking Challenge is now live on our website.

<https://www.appalachianforestnha.org/hiking-challenge> The original concept for the hiking challenge came out of this group some time ago. Stephen DeVita has worked on it and included some guided story map tours. There is a patch for those who have completed a certain number of hikes anywhere in our 18 counties.

- Taste of the Tourism Summit - This will be an outdoor event at the Canaan Valley resort pavilion. HIGHLANDS CREATIVE ECONOMY TOURISM SUMMIT - Sponsored by Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area and Eastern WV Community and Technical College, August 25, 2022, 9:30am~5pm, at Canaan Valley Resort pavilion. For more information and a link to register <https://www.appalachianforestnha.org/> Registration is open. We are planning multiple sessions: Marketing, workforce, outdoor recreation and trails, heritage trails and extensive networking and discussion of priorities which was requested by this group in the survey. If you wish to present or participate in a panel please reach out to Rob, Phyllis, Logan, or Maria. We will send out the agenda once it is confirmed. Please plan to be there to share what we are doing.
- Extended Networking/sharing County News – This is the height of the travel season. Please share what is going on in each of our 18 counties.
  - What events are planned?
  - What are some of the challenges and successes?

Randolph County seems to be doing better this year than expected. Trains are a little bit more crowded. Gandy Dancer Theater is getting more bus visits. The Forest Festival will be back this fall. The summer concerts have gotten bigger crowds. It appears that people are more comfortable with outdoor activities. We are putting together a program on hospitality. We believe that this is an area where we could be improving as we go along.

Barbour County has a similar experience of the current trends. The summer concert series has had a fantastic response especially since they added activities for children through collaboration with Edge

sports. The Annual Blue and Gray had a really great turnout. The second annual Lurchfest is coming up. <https://www.facebook.com/events/barbour-county-historical-museum/lurch-fest-2022/657797592120598/> and we are collaborating with a local brewery for a “You Rang” craft beer. We are maintaining a community calendar of events at our small business networking meetings in an effort to include our business community members. Still working on the logistics for maintaining, building, and sharing the calendar. <https://www.facebook.com/PhilippiWV> Some issues that they are working on include hiring and training new employees. We may be looking for future training opportunities in online marketing.

Adaland Mansion Quilt Show and bed turning coming up with a great response so far. This may become an annual event going forward.

Hampshire County - Compared to previous years, we are doing better and the hotel-motel tax revenues have increased. We have added some new events; a farm crawl, fling Golf Day (going to be on ESPN), and Potomac Eagle is actively running. They are attempting to offer a specialty beer for the Anniversary but are running into several roadblocks because of an out-of-state brewery. Demand is up but Staffing continues to be an issue.

Lindsay - The bounce back experience is similar to other reports. Maple Days have been scheduled for February 18 and March 18 in 2023. If anyone is interested in getting “Save the Dates” to hand out, please email [syrup@Future.edu](mailto:syrup@Future.edu) to request.

Greg - Lack of staffing and affordable housing continues to be a substantial issue.

- What do you wish to see presented at these meetings that will support the work you are doing?

Types of Heritage sites and projects. Outdoor Rec and tourism related to conservation. Collective attractions and events where we can partner together by area and businesses/sites/museums can offer something different. Regional fam tours for us so that we can become familiar with what is in our region. Find ways to include complementary businesses with our events. Hospitality training to know what’s within a day’s drive. Support involving local people with a passport program. Create a Welcome to \_\_\_\_ for the incoming students. Look for ways to include children too.

**Next meeting** – Tourism Summit August 25th at Canaan