

Potomac Highlands Creative Economy Team Meeting

June 23, 2022

10 am

Zoom

Meeting called by:	Phyllis Baxter	Type of meeting:	Informal Discussion
Facilitator:		Notetaker:	Maria
Timekeeper:			

Attendees: Phyllis Baxter, Megan Webb, Logan Smith, Robert Burnes, Samantha Peet, Amber Higgins, Anne Beardslee, Ashley Rotruck, Carissa Beard, Cheryl Wolfe, Cindy Martel, Curtis Hakala, Dixi Heavener, Emily Wilson-Hauger, Jonathan Bellingham, Katie Wolpert, Kimberly Byard, Patricia Halterman, Tina Ladd, Ben Duvall-Irwin, Maria Bray

Meeting notes

Discussion:

- Welcome! Phyllis Baxter, Executive Director of AFNHA opened the meeting.
- The Link to the tourism summit survey is <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZQM55CZ> Please take the time to complete this short survey if you haven't done it already.
- Greetings from the New Director of Ag Innovation & Upcoming Training, Carissa Beard

Carissa Beard is the newest employee at Eastern. She is the head of the Agricultural Innovation group as well as helping out with other Ag and College Programs. She started in April and is excited about growing the agricultural programs in the local communities. Formerly, she worked as a microbiologist at the WV Department of Agriculture poultry lab. She also served as an inspector in the pesticide division in the same department. The Ag showcase this fall is going to look a little bit different. Friday will be a Youth day and Saturday will be a day for adults. The event is free to the public. Her contact information is Carissa Beard, Director of Agriculture Innovation, Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College, 304-434-8000 x 9608, carissa.beard@easternwv.edu

- Free Drone Trainings - Megan Webb

Free FAA Drone Training Services and certification to be available - <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) to receive an FAA drone certification. 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

- Academic Pathways at Eastern - Curtis Hakala, Dean of Academic Services

There are a number of programs available <https://easternwv.edu/academics/programs/> including Wind Technology and Auto Technology. We are also working with local businesses so that high school students can get a head start on their two-year associate's degree. Curtis is leading the wind technology training program that is the only one in the state. They have partnered with Clearway which owns most of the wind farms in WVa. An apprenticeship program has been established and is available to second-year wind tech students. Students gain experience and complete a number of certification programs as part of their training. Last year, five students in the program obtained local employment with Clearway upon graduation. We also have an extensive auto tech program and a two-year nursing program that has grown quite a bit.

There are a number of business programs including 5 programs designed to be completed online. Business management, Accounting, Administrative Support technology. Early childhood development and elementary education (K-6) can also be done online with the residency portion (Formerly student teaching) can be done locally. This is helpful to students who struggle to overcome our unique geographic challenges. Thanks to a partnership with WVUP, students can go on to a four-year degree program online as well. For more information please contact Curtis at curtis.hakala@easternwv.edu

- Robert Burns

We are planning to grow scholarship programs for each of the programs. Blackrock has generously supported the wind tech program with an endowment that will provide a \$1000 scholarship on an annual basis for students going through the program. This fund is available for donations. We also have one for medical education. We also have a short-term support fund for urgent or emergency situations to help students overcome issues that may prevent them from attending school.

Student Scholarship & Farm to Table Event, on June 29 at 4 pm <https://bit.ly/EasternF2T>. We are bringing in a gourmet chef, Todd Seligman, to cook a four-course meal with appetizers during that evening as well as having fundraising events and other activities such as a farm fellows reception starting at 5:00, a silent auction, and other raffles inside. Please take a look at the link. It is a fundraiser for the college. We use these funds for operations as well as scholarships. Please share

the information with people who like eating good food and having a good time. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out. Don't miss the "grazing Bar" to sample items that are locally grown and produced.

- AFNHA Management Plan - Phyllis Baxter

Last month we shared updates to the Management Plan that has been a work in progress for the last three years we have completed public meetings, and fieldwork, and have had three task groups active. We have developed a list of assets and held an in-person community exchange (last summer), the rest have been virtual. We have been working on drafting the plan. A first draft went out at the end of March and we are now ready to post the plan for formal public review.

<https://www.appalachianforestnha.org/>

We will also be hosting public meetings for comment. AFNHA Public Meeting for Management Plan Draft Review, along with the Annual Membership Meeting, will be held at Adaland Mansion in Barbour County from 10 am to 3 pm, June 28, 2022. Please invite others who may be interested in learning more.

The morning session will present highlights of the Management Plan and AFNHA projects, with an opportunity for comments and plan feedback before submission to the National Park Service.

Lunch will be provided. Please email us in advance if you have alternative dietary needs. The afternoon will offer breakout groups to discuss how we may partner together under the new National Heritage Area banner and move forward with the work of the NHA. Please sign up on our website.

For those who cannot attend the in-person meeting, a second virtual meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 29th at 2:00 pm. The virtual meeting will present more details of the management plan, as well as a chance to comment. If interested in attending, pre-register on our website. <https://www.appalachianforestnha.org/afnha-public-meeting>

Over the next 30 days, anyone who has not yet sent a support letter for the management plan, we urge you to do so. The link below also contains documents that will help draft the support letter or you can email Phyllis.

AFNHA Management Plan PRELIM DRAFT

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1XIFZ5EgXgrtw1fYKZfLidCeWldwqxgHd?usp=sharing>

Thank you for sending support letters and helping with submitting the EDA grant application last winter. We were not awarded that grant but we are still moving forward with the Creative Economy activities thanks to funding through the Benedum grant. The support letters that we are now requesting are for the management plan. It is a different letter.

If you have any comments on the plan, If you notice that we missed something or got details and/or information incorrect, organization or assets that need correction or changes, or even if you just want to make general comments, please let us know over the next 30 days. At the end of July, we will be sending it off to the National Park Service. Once they approve it, we will be able to move forward.

Tourism Summit - Samantha

- Upcoming Tourism Summit Planning - Thanks to everyone who responded to the survey. So far we have had 14 responses. The goal of the survey was to determine the location, programming, and date for the Summit. So far, it looks like Tucker County & Randolph County are the top two locations. Just as likely to attend indoor or outdoor venues. Dates Tuesday, August 23rd, Wednesday, August 24th, and Thursday, August 25th are the top dates. Programming: Trail Development, networking and sharing, thematic trail planning, tourism marketing, and industry information, and agrotourism information. It would be great to get more than 14 responses before we lock in the results. Samantha announced that we will be leaving AFNHA for the opportunity of a lifetime - she will be joining Randolph County Tourism CVB as their new marketing director at the end of July. This means we are re-opening the search for an AFNHA Communications manager. Please forward the information to anyone who may be interested.
- Attendee Discussion (Open Forum, County Updates, etc.)

Randolph County - Anne wanted to mention support for the in-person meeting. The last in-person meeting was beneficial to all who attended and she believes that this would be worthwhile for all involved. Last week the local community theater presented Mama Mia in our town square and was attended by over 1200 people over three days. Outdoor summer activities are really growing. Tonight we have a concert and this weekend is the classic car show. We usually average between 400 and 500 classic cars. Fireworks in Elkins will take place Saturday night. The Tygart Hotel is being renovated starting this month to create a boutique hotel. Should reopen in about 18 months and they are already working with us as partners with marketing. The Governor's conference for tourism will be taking place the second week in September. There is information on the Department of Tourism website. It is a great informational and networking opportunity and will be taking place in Huntington.

Barbour County - The Blue and Gray reunion had a great turnout. The summer concert series started last Thursday. We will have food/craft vendors and it takes place at the gazebo on the courthouse lawn. The 2nd Annual Lurch Festival is being planned for the first Saturday in August from dawn to dark.

Hampshire County - The Southern Bluegrass Festival on June 25th 11 to 9:30 with fireworks.

Dixie Heavener, Title III Project Director & Career Counselor, EWVCTC, Room 111
304.434.4000 ext. 9239 dixie.heavener@easternwv.edu - new to Eastern. She will be hosting career development workshops throughout the year. Please share open positions with her and let her know if your organization has specific needs for interns.

Lunch and Learn - Megan - Please let her know if there is any interest in Lunch and Learn events on hospitality training programs. To share ideas on Hospitality Training Needs for "free" Lunch & Learn Sessions, please email megan.webb@easternwv.edu

Next meeting – 7/28/22 at 10 am on zoom