

**Old Fort Mountain Heritage Alliance  
Board Meeting Minutes  
July 16, 2008**

**Members Present:**

Dru Heldman, Chairperson, Pinwilz Co. TAAS Gallery  
Kim Lukasiak, OFMHA Vice President – Branch Manager BB & T  
Terrell Finley, Mountain Gateway Museum  
Deane Kanipe, McDowell Tech  
Rick Acrivos, Catawba Falls Campground; Old Fort Chamber of Commerce Manager  
Ken LaRoux, Real Estate  
Carol Price, McDowell TDA  
David Quinn, Handmade In America  
Linda Bunch, OFMHA Secretary

Dru called the meeting to order.

**Handmade in America Report – David Quinn**

David apprised the Board that Old Fort was selected as a Part of Handmade in America's Small Town Program on June 24, 2008. Mayor Garland Norton accepted a plaque at the NC Rural Economic Development Center. Old Fort was one of 12 towns selected this year.

The Rural Center's program is called STEP (Small Towns Economic Prosperity) and was created to help revitalize economically distressed communities of less than 10,000 across North Carolina. Old Fort was partnered with Crossnore, Bakersville and Todd in a cooperating cluster. Funding for Old Fort will include \$15,000 for planning and support and \$50,000 for implementation over a two year program cycle. These funds will be administered through Handmade's partnership with the Town of Old Fort and Old Fort Mountain Heritage Alliance. The funds may be used as matching funds with such organizations as the Blue Ridge Heritage Group grants.

David communicated that there are training and reporting requirements. STEP ends March 2009 but may be extended. The OFMHA Board will need to give input and budget recommendations. A Board Member indicated that the Old Fort Board of Alderman may authorize upfront funds from the town if it is requested. Quarterly **reporting will be through David and funds will be administered through Handmade In America.**

**The first training meeting sponsored by the Rural Center is scheduled for August 19, 2008 from 10-3 in Old Fort at the Depot. All Board Members are encouraged to attend. OFMHA is hosting this meeting.**

The primary liaison with the Rural Center is Art Jackson who is planning a site visit and it was suggested that his visit could be used as a promotional event during Oktoberfest.

It was suggested that a Banner be designed with the Rural Center logo along with the Town of Old Fort and OFMHA.

For additional information members of the Board are directed to the website [NCSTEP.org](http://NCSTEP.org)

## **.News and Updates from Community Organizations Represented**

Announcement from Kim Lukasiak – OFMHA Vice Chairperson announced that a new BB&T Branch is being built in East Asheville (O'Teen area) and she has been selected as the manager of this office. The new manager for Old Fort has not been named. Since the office will not be open until December Kim will continue to participate on the Board but at some time she will have to resign.

Kim mentioned that the Old Fort BB & T branch came in #1 in their quarterly contest out of 42 branches in meeting their goals.

Kim committed to completing the 5013C and Bylaws for OFMHA and to open the organizations account with the Bank prior to stepping down.

### **Chamber of Commerce – Rick Acrivos**

The new officers have been elected and the slate is as follows:

Jerry Wheeler, Sky Island Camp Ground – President

Jennie Miller, Vice President

Kim Lukasiak, BB & T - Treasurer

The Chamber hours will be Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 9-3. Rick reported that the Oktoberfest committee meets July 17<sup>th</sup> to plan for the event which is scheduled fro October 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>. Rick reported that he has visited with 19 Old Fort Merchants to revitalize the membership. Collins and Aikman are now out of bankruptcy. He is encouraged with the responsiveness he has received from the merchants.

### **TDA – Carol Price**

Carol reported that we still have a visitor's center information sign issue to direct visitors to the TDA office. Year to date 2,558 people have stopped by the center which is up from 2,043 from 2007. The concern is how many are we missing without proper signage.

Carol shared information about a Civil War Trails Pamphlet promoting Civil War sites in the Old Fort area which could include the Carson House and the Andrews Geyser .Ann Swan is researching the Redstring Society which was similar to an Underground Railroad organization during the Civil War. Carol asked for the Board members to identify other Civil War related sites within the Old Fort area. An add was placed in the **Civil War Traveler** and over 4,000 requests for Civil War information was received from this advertisement.

As further promotion to our area Carol reported that 2 Travel writers have contacted the TDA for information on local mountain music and things to do in the area related to Boating Life.

All Board Members were encouraged to visit [NCBlueridge.com](http://NCBlueridge.com) website.

Linda Bunch offered to place a weekly notice in community briefs about OFMHA to promote more interest in the organization's goals and activities.

## **Economic Development**

Deane Kanipe shared that the Small Business classes are continuing to be offered. The Best Business Plan submitted by an individual will result in a \$500 grant and two runner ups will be awarded \$250 grants each.

Friday July 18<sup>th</sup> from 10-3 McDowell Tech is offering a class on Non Profit Board Responsibilities.

## **OFMHA – Dru Heldman**

Dru indicated that the activity on the OFMHA website message board is not rendering much activity. He also has some concerns about missing minutes from the last two meetings.

## **Resource Committee Report – David Quinn**

David stated that the Resource Committee report should be complete by August.

There being no further business to address the meeting adjourned at 4:45.

### **Next Meeting**

The next Steering Committee meeting will be Wednesday August 13, 2008 at 3:00 p. m. at the Depot. Note: Due to knee scheduled knee surgery Linda Bunch will not be able to attend this meeting as asks for a volunteer to take minutes.

Respectfully Submitted by: Linda Bunch, OFMHA Secretary  
July 29, 2008