

Old Fort Mountain Heritage Alliance
Board Meeting Minutes
October 15, 2008

Members Present:

Dru Heldman, Chairperson, Pinwiltz Co. TAAS Gallery
Linda Bunch, OFMHA Secretary
David Quinn, Handmade In America
Dean Kanipe, McDowell Tech
Nada Carroll, Old Fort Resident
Terry Wilson, Teacher-Old Fort Elementary
Linda Canterbury, Old Fort Resident
Ashley Wooten, Assistant McDowell County Manager
Susie Painter, Painter's Nursery

Dru called the meeting to order.

Town of Old Fort – Dru Heldman

Dru shared that we got excellent press coverage from his article that made the front page this week in *The News Bulletin*. The article officially announced the NC STEP (Small Towns Economic Prosperity) Program partnership with Handmade in America (HIA) and the NC Rural Center's Economic Infrastructure Fund. It is anticipated that Old Fort will receive approximately \$50,000 for project implementation and allocated \$15,000 for planning, training, travel and coaching funds that will be administered by HIA.

On Saturday October 4, 2008 at the Old Fort Oktoberfest festival the partnership with Art Jackson, Director of Small Towns Initiative officially announced Old Fort's participation in the STEP program. Goals of the program include supporting economic revitalization in small towns adversely affected by the economy, grant aid to in revitalization efforts and provide information to the development of public policies that support investment in NC's small towns. OFMHA will administer the NC STEP program in partnership with the Town of Old Fort.

OFMHA, the organization, its initial successes and future goals including a listing of current organizations represented and an open invitation to for individuals to become involved in progressing and developing Old Fort's local economy and preserving our heritage was included in the article.

Oktoberfest was a success with 5000 plus attendance. Members expressed that the event was family oriented with reasonable prices (exception the horse rides), good music, children's activities and quality handcrafters.

Terry Wilson shared that the Old Fort School Reunion event recently held also had excellent attendance and thoughts were being given to hold this event at least every other year and perhaps coordinate the event with the Oktoberfest dates.

Davidson Fort – Dru Heldman on behalf of Debbie Acrivos

A thermometer has been placed in Bradley Park to display fund raising for the Fort. The OFMHA website <http://downtownoldfort.org> now has a Pay Pal Button for individuals to sign up for purchasing Bricks – both family and corporate – towards fundraising. The front wall fence has been completed on the Fort and they are starting on the side fencing.

Economic Development – Dru Heldman

PRC continues repairing the old factory in Old Fort however; the cost of roofing is exceeding their estimates.

Point Lookout Trail is officially opening up on October 30, 2008 and shuttles will run from Ridgecrest to Pt Lookout for the ribbon cutting. It was expressed by members that a preference would be for the shuttles to begin in Old Fort. Speakers will be Alan Thornberg, DOT, Andy Webb and Bill Henley from the Trails Association. Ashley Wooten indicated that he would mail out event information to all OFMHA members. Dru is working with Bill Henley on organizing a Bicycle event from Old Fort to Pt Lookout and back. Plans are being made with DOT for various parking areas with bike racks and maps printed identifying the Depot, Gateway Museum, the Geyser and other scenic points of interest to draw attention to Old Fort.

McDowell Tech – Deane Kanipe

Fall seminars are coming up. The NC state Small Business network through local technical colleges is planning seminars to help small businesses get through the current touch economy. On October 30, 2008 McDowell Tech will have a Job Fair – Pathways to the Future at the Harold Smith building on campus.

Annual Hospice Fund Raiser – Dru Heldman

The TAAS Gallery has kicked off the annual Christmas Ornament fund raiser. This year the entry fee will be bringing in cans of food for Hospice families. Announcement of the winners will be at a ceremony at the Gallery on December 18th – entertainment planned includes a Harpist.

The Resource Report – David Quinn

This report is completed and will be forthcoming on PDF. OFMHA now needs to focus on strategic planning and what we want to accomplish. Priorities are to incorporate the organization and obtain 501C3 status, develop a work plan for long term planning to include banking, record keeping, functional committees and processes for design, promotion, economic restructuring and cultural preservation.

Critical at this juncture is to decide on the project for the Blue Ridge Heritage \$10,000 matching grant. The match can be obtained through the STEP funding. This project should relate to cultural heritage such as music, crafts, Cherokee heritage and/or natural resources. Our proposal needs to be submitted in November or early December. The project must be completed in 2009. David Quinn passed out to the attending members an outline for developing Small Town Revitalization Strategic Planning to guide OFMHA in an implementation work plan.

The next focus should be to develop a work plan for the \$50,000 STEP funding.

Another critical focus for our organization is to recruit more members who are interested and willing and able to help make things happen!

Cultural Heritage Committee Update

The committee met and ideas included story telling; Lynn Morris Moomaw was suggested who has written for Western NC magazines; a trailer/studio traveling around for local folks to come and tell stories that relate to the area; encouraging involvement of the local school children. Other ideas included bringing pictures of family and telling related stories, having kids bring in older adults and video tape interviews to put on DVD's for documentation. Finally, obtaining a National Historic District designation for Old Fort was suggested.

Next Steps

A planning meeting is scheduled for Friday October 24, 2008 from 3-5 at the Depot. This meeting will be to determine the project to be submitted to Blue Ridge Heritage. It is critical that OFMHA members attend this meeting for their input and buy in into the project.

Linda Bunch write up an overview of OFMHA to be placed weekly in the news and events section of *The News Bulletin* communicating who we are, our meeting dates and inviting local interested individuals to join the organization.

Timely reminder notices for meetings will now be sent to all members on Monday of the week of the scheduled meeting.

There being no further business to address the meeting adjourned at 5:00

Next Regular Meeting

The next regular OFMHA meeting will be Wednesday November 12, 2008 at 3:00 p. m. at the Depot

Respectfully Submitted by: Linda Bunch, OFMHA Secretary
October 17, 2008