

Old Fort Mountain Heritage Alliance

February 17, 2010, 3:00 p.m.

Old Fort Depot

Minutes

Attending:

Susie Painter, Debbie Smith, Dru Heldman, Scott Swickle, Dean Kanipe, Andy Bunch, Ashley Wooten, Brigitte Walters, Carol Price, Terry Wilson,

Guests: Rebecca Johnson, Sybil Argintar, Anne Swann,

- I. **Call To Order:** 3:05 pm
- II. **Approve Minutes**
- III. **Financial Report – Treasurer:** none

IV. Old Business

Carol Price will send the signed copies of Articles of Incorporation, By-Laws and non-profit application to a CPA for review before forwarding to a local attorney requesting assistance with the state application for incorporation.

Railroad Day plans are underway for Saturday, May 1. The Gold Festival will be held April 9-10 at Tom Johnson's Rally Park. Carol reported her suggestion to the group to consider the 2011 event be held on the Rodeo Grounds on Catawba River Road. Depot visitation increased approximately 1,000 in 2009 over prior year while occupancy tax revenue continues to show an approximate 10-13% decrease over prior year.

Ashley Wooten reports that the Point Lookout Trail is seeking assistance in trail maintenance. There is a plan to add additional benches. In the past, Boy Scouts have been involved in the project and volunteers are sought.

Terry Wilson explained that with all the missed days due to snow or ice the school will have some Saturday classes.

Scott Swickle is hoping to have his new shop, "All About Outdoors" open by the end of March. He also emphasizes that the Alliance needs to support other community minded organizations as well.

Terrell Finley announced that the Mauney House renovations have been completed and he has moved his offices back into the building. Pioneer Day will be on April 24. The Highway 70 Cruisers will also have a show, hoping to have over 100 vintage automobiles on display. He does not yet have the funding for the Summer Music program that has been held in past years and will need financial assistance again this year.

Dean Kanipe announced that in April there will be a meeting of representatives from all organizations in McDowell County. This will allow groups to share their progress, successes, failures, and future plans.

V. Committee Reports

- A. Economic Development

Dean Kanipe attended the NC Main Street Conference in New Bern in January. He attended many different sessions that reflected the same things the Town of Old Fort is doing and is planning to do.

B. Heritage and Preservation

Rebecca Johnson, Preservation Specialist, State Historic Preservation Office for Western North Carolina and Sybil Argintar, National Register Consultant were invited to talk to the Alliance to explain what needs to be done to apply for Old Fort to be recognized as an Historical District.

Having this designation would bring some tax incentives to the town and individual owners. The goal is to be placed on the study list by early May in order to be presented to the National Advisory Committee (NAC) in Raleigh at the June meeting.

Sybil explained what the process entailed and the areas she would be responsible for if contracted to submit this application to the NAC. Sybil's charges are within the amount already budgeted for this process. A motion was made, seconded and the attending members voted to hire her for this process.

Anne Swann brought information that she has collected to date and presented the files to Sybil. Anne is an excellent resource and an asset to our community.

C. Promotion

Shopping incentives, "\$50 in Old Fort Bucks" will be sent this week to survey participants that were randomly selected. Renee' Grindstaff will issue checks to the vendors who honor the coupons through April 15.

D. Design and Beautification

(1) Town Welcome Signs:

Proposals were received from two local firms to construct a town entrance sign on Main Street at the intersection of US 70 and Old US 70. This is across the street from the existing sign. A motion was made and seconded and all approved to award the contract to the lowest bidder, Graphics Warehouse. Hopefully the sign will be constructed within the next several weeks. Mayor Norton has graciously provided the space for this sign. The committee will meet with Mayor Norton to identify the exact location of the sign and to make arrangements for a formal agreement between the town and Mayor Norton for perpetual use.

(2) Mill Creek Greenway:

Proposals were received from three firms to create a plan for building a creek walk path for Mill Creek. All vendors submitted bids that were close in price. The directors selected Withers & Ravenel because they included benefits above and beyond what the other firms offered and at a slightly lower price. This group has also been involved with county greenway trails and already had much of the information needed to begin the architecture of the greenway.

VI. New Business

A. Resignation of Chairman – Dru Heldman

Due to business and family obligations, Dru submitted his resignation. The Directors reluctantly voted to accept his resignation with the understanding that he retain his status as a director. Dru has a vast understanding of the functions of the Alliance and he is a valuable asset. He will be available for advice and will attend meetings and functions as he is able. The committee thanks him for his service and dedication to the creation of this organization.

Terry Wilson was nominated to for the Chairman position. A motion was made and seconded. All present were in favor. Congratulations Terry. Thank you for being willing to serve. Ashley Wooten was elected to replace Terry as Assistant Treasurer. Thank you, Ashley.

B. Vote – Website Invoices

The original contract for the Website creation and maintenance was given to Dru. The maintenance fees are billed after services are rendered. The Alliance voted to pay for those services since the contract had been originally approved. Carol will speak with Renee regarding the budget balance of \$2,000 for the website project with any invoice balances to be paid from the Alliance's past fundraiser.

C. Proposal for New Website and Management

Dru explained that the maintenance to the web site is more complicated than other free site management options. Adding Blog capability should be easy and access to that portion can be easily done. Discussion concerning the site management and blog capabilities ended with more discussion and research needed. Brigitte agreed to create new content for the site, if needed, in the future. Additional discussion involved creating modules allowing the committee to make entries independent of a webmaster. For the interim, the site will remain "as is."

D. Meeting place / time discussion

The Directors will discuss a change in meeting day, time and location during the March meeting. Moving the meeting to the Town Hall would allow the town Finance Officer, Renee' Grindstaff, to attend the meetings. Also having a later time may allow other people to attend meetings.

E. Money making projects need to be planned. The Alliance will need to generate funds for basic operations once we receive our Incorporation status. Each person is asked to bring an idea to the next meeting. Having an information booth advertising our organization at the upcoming events like Pioneer Day, Railroad Day and so on is needed to keep the public aware of our organization and the things we have done or plan to do for our community.

F. We need to come up with a town slogan. Previously used is "Gateway To the Smokies". Talk with friends, family and colleagues and brainstorm for some suggestions and bring your ideas to our next meeting

Previously submitted ideas are: Gateway to the mountains, Small town feel, home town appeal; Greatest place on earth; Looking for adventure; Bike, hike and fish; History comes alive; Your outdoor destination; Destination Old Fort; Adventure, culture, heritage; Spirit of 1776, Naturally inspiring; Blue Ridge traditions; Old Fort, Somewhere between before and after;

VII. Adjourn 5:10

Respectfully submitted by
Debbie Smith, Secretary OFMHA