



Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation Board of Trustees

Thursday, March 13, 2025 | 1:00 P.M.

Minutes

- **Call to Order and Welcome** – Delegate Will Morefield

- **Roll Call** – Kim Davis

Attending: Delegate Will Morefield, Senator Travis Hackworth, Delegate Amy Laufer (v), Sharon Buchanon, Mike Cochran, Dr. Adam Hutchison, David Matlock, Ellen Reynolds, Leah Ross, Ruby Rogers, Aaron Sizemore, Julie Walters Steele, and Scotty Wampler.

v = *Virtual*

Absent: Senator Todd Pillion, Delegate Sam Rasoul, Kevin Byrd, Saul Hernandez, Josh Hess, Bryan Horn, Deborah Milton, and Amanda Pillion.

Guests: Becky Nave and Tyler Hughes

Staff Attending: Kim Davis, Tina Murray, Jen Otey, and Paula Hurt

- **Public Comment** – No individuals registered to present public comment during this meeting.
- **Adoption of Agenda** – Presented by Delegate Will Morefield. Motion to accept the agenda by David Matlock. Second by Ellen Reynolds. Vote. Motion carried.
- **Approval of Minutes from December 2024** – Delegate Will Morefield - Motion to accept the minutes from the prior meeting as presented by Rita McClenny. Second by Senator Travis Hackworth. Vote. Motion carried.
- **Executive Director Report** – Kim Davis
 - **2024 Annual Report** - The 2024 Annual Reports are available. This was submitted to the General Assembly in January before the General Assembly session began.
 - **Legal Services** - Following an RFP process, Freddie Mullins was selected as legal counsel for Friends of Southwest Virginia. Kim is meeting with Freddie next month, and he will review the building and land use agreements.
 - **People Inc. Meeting Review**

Kim and Tina met with Valerie from People Inc. to review capital expenses managed and paid for by Friends of Southwest Virginia for the Cultural Center/Heartwood in recent years. The expenses include HVAC Replacement: \$10,335, Roof Repairs: \$44,598, Lighting Upgrades (Interior & Exterior): \$77,547, Paving: \$51,144, for a Total Investment: \$183,624. People Inc. is reviewing the request. The primary objective is to pay off the outstanding balance with People Inc and be compensated on the capital expenses paid by the organization.
 - **Staff Updates**



- As announced in December, two new employees were hired and started in January: Erin Simons as the Artisan Engagement Specialist and Jessica Reynolds Lawrence as an Outdoor Recreation Manager.
- **Grant Applications**
 - **ARC Ready to Grow** - The Letter of Intent was completed in December, and the full application was submitted in February. We requested \$400,000 to support regional training workshops (grant writing, project development, procurement, leadership skills, and workforce training in artisan trades, hospitality, and outdoor recreation management) and to fund two new positions: a Grants Coordinator and a Tourism Development Manager.
 - **VA ARC – Area Development 2025** - Funding request submitted for outdoor recreation projects in Buchanan and Dickenson counties. Friends is working to request funds from the Tobacco Commission and Thompson Charitable for match.
 - **For ‘Round the Mountain** - Several grant applications are currently pending. RTM has applied for a \$25,000 READY Nonprofit Grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, as well as a \$5,000 Impact Grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts.
- **Recent RFP’s**
 - **ARISE Strategic Plan:** The RFP process has been finalized, and Billie Roberts has been selected as the consultant.
 - **Downtown Planning and Development Consultant** (Virginia Main Street Project): The selection process is complete, and Place + Main has been chosen as the consultant.
 - **20th Anniversary RTM Marketing Campaign:** The RFP has been finalized, with Rippl Creative selected as the marketing firm.
- **Upcoming RFP’s**
 - **Southwest Virginia Regional Marketing & Digital Strategy Initiative:** This RFP will include the Marketing Digital Access Management System, the development of new websites for VisitSWVA.org, FriendsofSWVA.org, and RTM.org, and the 2025-2026 National Marketing & Public Relations Campaign.
 - **Southwest Virginia Creative Economy:** This RFP will focus on Creative Economy Asset Mapping, an Economic Impact Study, the development of a Regional Dashboard, and a Strategic Plan outlining the next decade of growth for the Creative Economy in Southwest Virginia.
- **Appalachian Regional Commission Audit Update** – All documentation has been provided to the auditors.



- **Financials – Paula Hurt**

- **'Round the Mountain Financial Review:**

- Reviewed the Profit & Loss statements and Balance Sheets as of December 31, 2024, which were distributed prior to the meeting.
 - Key Highlights:
 - 2nd Quarter Revenue: Additional funding was received for the Artisan Conference.
 - Expenses: All in line with budget.
 - Net Income YTD \$10,826
 - 3rd Quarter Outlook: Expenses are expected to increase as work on the strategic plan and Artisan Conference progress.
 - Cash Position: Currently at \$64,701, with Accounts Receivable in line and outstanding Accounts Payable were all to Friends of SW VA.

- **Friends of Southwest Virginia**

- Reviewed the Profit & Loss statements and Balance Sheets as of December 31, 2024, which were distributed prior to the meeting.
 - Key Highlights:
 - Operating Revenue: \$535,221 (Line 39).
 - Partnership Program revenue is at 64%, received \$11,700 in Jan and expecting approx. \$6,000 more. At this time three partners have advised that they are not participating so this line item will likely be short at year end. All requests for 2026 have been submitted.
 - Operating Expenses: \$500,836 and are generally in line with expectations (two areas of note are Admin Personnel which should level out with grant funding and marketing with FAM Tour expenses) with a current operating profit of \$34,000.
 - Development Revenue and Expenses: Reflect a \$30,000 loss for the 2nd quarter, with grant expense remittances pending submission. Still awaiting final payout on Power 16 non-construction grant – processing is in the works and Friends has provided everything needed.
 - Overall Profit: The organization posted a total profit of \$4,038 for the 2nd quarter.
 - Cash Position: \$162,000 in the operating account and \$402,000 in savings, of which \$162,000 is restricted. Accounts Receivable are at \$71K and Accounts Payable are at \$106K (\$38K is owed to People Inc) and all others have been dispersed.

- **Financial Reports**

The 2024 Friends Audit has been completed and uploaded to the appropriate entities. Bostic Tucker reported no findings or audit entries, issuing an Unqualified Opinion. A copy of the audit was provided via email. Additionally, the 2023 Friends Tax Return has been completed and submitted. A copy has been distributed via email for reference.



- **Deputy Director of Operations Update – Tina Murray**
 - **Facility Maintenance & Repairs**
 - **Hurricane Helene Water Damage:** The damage sustained during Hurricane Helene has been addressed in coordination with People Incorporated. Serve Pro has been selected for facility repairs, which will commence once final approval is received from the insurance agency.
 - **Roof Leaks:** The temporary caulking applied by Barker Construction has mitigated some leaks in the galleries; however, water intrusion persists in the Administration area and building entryway.
 - **Water Source Heat Pump (WSHP) Maintenance:** As part of our bi-annual system maintenance, the following units require additional repairs:
 - **WSHP002:** Replacement of the automatic high-pressure safety switch with a manual switch.
 - **WSHP016:** Leak check, vacuum pull, and refrigerant refill.
 - **Electrical Issues:** The wireless remote controlling the majority of the lighting functions in the gallery area is no longer working. The manufacturer of the remote control and receiver is no longer in operation. We have been working with several electricians to get these two components back in working order.
 - **Security:** The motion detector in the Gift Shop area began sending alarm signals throughout the day and night. Upon inspection, the detector was found to be malfunctioning due to faulty wiring in the casing and was replaced.
 - **Curtain Window Replacement:** The shattered front curtain window was replaced in February. People Incorporated is currently working with their insurance agent to determine coverage eligibility for this repair.
 - **Snow & Ice Removal:** Special thanks to Randy's Lawn Service for maintaining clear parking lots and sidewalks during a particularly harsh winter. Their dedication has ensured the safety and accessibility of the Center during snow and ice events.
 - **Cultural Center Hours**
 - Monday – Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
 - Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 - **Experience Outside (EO) Initiative**
 - Two of the three scheduled Experience Outside (EO) interactive labs have been installed:
 - *'Round the Mountain Artisan Lab*
 - *Tourism Lab*
 - The Crooked Road Lab is scheduled for installation in the coming weeks.
 - **Events & Programming**
 - **The Crooked Road:** The Crooked Road Jam Sessions continue to take place on the first Thursday of each month. In conjunction with The Crooked Road, the Highlands Appalachia Songwriters have introduced a monthly meeting on the first Thursday, with an accompanying free stage performance on the third Saturday of each month.
 - **Receptions & Formal Events**



- Emory & Henry Spring Formal: The third annual Spring Formal was hosted at the Cultural Center, providing a beautiful and memorable evening for students.
- Virginia Highlands Festival Champions Reception: An honor to celebrate those who bring the Virginia Highlands Festival to life each year.
- Virginia Highlands Community College Events: Hosted a Community College Board Reception, bringing together regional education leaders in a special evening. Welcomed Global Award-Winning Artist Haiqiong Deng for a collaborative performance with Jack Hinshelwood and Mary Munsey on the Main Stage.
- **Special Event: Father-Daughter Dance** - One of our most beloved annual traditions, this year's Father-Daughter Dance was truly exceptional. Fathers and daughters danced under the lights, creating lifelong memories. A highlight of the evening was a six-year-old guest exclaiming as she left, "I had so much fun tonight that I am coming back here every day!"
- **Marketing Update – Kim Davis**
 - **National Public Relations Campaign:**
 - FY25 Media Impact:
 - Total Impressions: 11,326,527,091
 - Earned Media Value: \$104,589,356
 - Upcoming Media Tour is scheduled for March 25- 29, 2025.
 - **Experience Southwest Virginia**
 - Friends is looking to publish an *Experience Southwest* Magazine that celebrates the region's rich culture, thriving tourism and resilient small-town spirit. Key components are writing from a visitor's perspective, long and short stories from magazine journalists.
 - Prints a minimum of 100,000 copies. Mailed to visitors requesting. Broad distribution channels, PDS – Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia and FPIS – North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Produce leads back out to the communities.
 - Marketing campaign will follow to launch the guide.
- **20th Anniversary Marketing Campaign – Kim**

The 20th Anniversary Marketing Campaign will highlight RTM's legacy and impact through various strategic initiatives:

 - **Capturing and Sharing Artisan Stories** through blogs, short-form videos, and social media to showcase RTM's history and artisans.
 - **Developing a Comprehensive Social Media Campaign** with custom branding, audience engagement strategies, and a structured content calendar.
 - **Producing High-Quality Video Content** featuring artisan stories to enhance digital engagement.
 - **Designing Engaging Marketing Materials**, including a special 20th Anniversary logo, rack cards, digital and print advertisements, and window decals for participating artisan galleries.



- **Executing a Targeted Public Relations Strategy** with press releases, media outreach, and a dedicated media section on RTM's website to maximize visibility.
- **Development Update** – Jen Otey and Kim Davis
 - **Big Stone Gap Pump Track & Skate Park:** Community Meetings (Jan 23) were held and were well attended (75-100 people). Meet with focus groups and visit the site. American Ramp continues to assess and plan the project. 200 people responded to an online survey. 111 community members and 93 students responded. People gave a lot of written feedback. Final plan by the end of April. Breaking ground late September or early October.
 - **Gateways to Southwest Virginia: Outdoor Recreation Economy Planning Project:** Focus on the Powell and Clinch Rivers and the Blue Ridge Region near West Piedmont area of state.
 - Site visits in Lee, Scott, Wise Counties & City of Norton for the Lenowisko project.
 - Site visits in Patrick and Henry Counties as well as the City of Martinsville for the West Piedmont project.
 - The Project Management Team was able to look at all the information and review what the plan will look like. Design review in April. The month of May will include meetings with communities.
 - This project is working toward an implementation grant.
 - **Appalachian Regional Commission Outdoor Recreation Recovery Grant:** Progress on this project has been slow. The initial focus on debris removal in blueways was paused at the request of the Governor's Office and VDEM due to ongoing state-led efforts. The project scope is being reassessed to address individual outdoor recreation concerns for localities. RFP is ready to go out.
 - **ARC POWER 24:** This project is set to launch in March 25, focusing on Creative Economy planning for the next decade. Key components include an asset inventory, an economic impact study, the development of a regional data dashboard, and a comprehensive strategy to shape the vision for the creative economy over the next 10 years.
 - **Virginia Main Street ARC ARISE Grant** – Following an RFP process, the Selection Committee selected Place + Main as the consultant. Virginia Main Street has identified 10 Main Street communities in the ARC region for downtown building assessments and recommendations to attract developers and businesses to vacant properties. The project is expected to conclude in fall 2025, with Jessica from the Friends team leading the initiative.
- **Old Business**
 - None.



- **New Business**
 - None.
- **Partner Update:** 'Round the Mountain, Ellen Reynolds, Kim Davis
 - **Membership** – Current membership stands at 205, including 161 juried members. A county-by-county breakdown was provided.
 - **Artisan Conference** – Scheduled for April 3–5. The full conference schedule is now available online. Erin Simons provided an overview of the planned sessions and events.
 - **20th Anniversary Reception** – A 20th Anniversary Reception will be held on April 3, 2025, from 5:30 to 7:00 pm. The event will serve as a networking opportunity and will feature heavy d'oeuvres and live music.
 - **Spring Jury** – Will take place Monday, April 21 through Monday, May 5, 2025. If you know anyone who would like to have their items carried in the Cultural Center, please encourage them to jury.
- **Partner Update:** Virginia Tourism Corporation, Rita McClenny
 - **Marketing Leverage Grants:** Due today at 5 pm. There is a grant webinar on the website that is evergreen and a good training tool.
 - **Micro Business Grants:** Opening in June.
 - **VA 250 History Mobile:** Finished and out in the community traveling to different locations to tell the story of the history of the American Revolution. If you would like History Mobile to travel to your event visit the website (<https://va250.org/>) fill out a form.
 - **The American Revolution:** A documentary by Ken Burns open in Williamsburg on March 24, 2025 but only open to the first 2,500 people. Premieres on PBS on November 16, 2025.
 - **Virtual VTC Orientation:** On March 26-27. Excellent for people who are new to VTC and a good training tool.
 - **Infrastructure Review:** From a fishing perspective, is in the pipeline. Have nine months to complete.
- **Partner Update:** The Crooked Road, Leah Ross
 - **Staff & Organizational Updates**
 - The Crooked Road welcomed a new administrative assistant, Danielle Babcock in January. She's been wonderful to work with and her presence has greatly improved capacity.
 - The website development has continued with new features going live this month and the final buildout is set to be finished by the end of spring.
 - TCR has begun the development phase of our phone application with Visit Widget. TCR is on track to launch the app by Memorial Day weekend.
 - The Crooked Road Youth Fiddler's Convention is set for May 17, 2025, at the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center.
 - TCR has scaled back programming considerably in 2025 but are partnering to present bands at Rhythm and Roots again this September.
 - TCR is also sponsoring an upcoming presentation on May 10 at the Museum of the Middle Appalachians to celebrate the legacy of banjo player, Hobart Smith.



- TCR is co-marketing the upcoming Medieval to Metal exhibition at the William King Museum of Art in Abingdon. This special traveling exhibit details the evolution and influence of the guitar. We will be co-presenting at the Virginia Association of Museums next week with Friends, Birthplace of Country Music, and the William King Museum in Blacksburg, Va.
- TCR is currently exploring options to produce a yearly travel guide for The Crooked Road beginning in 2026.
- TCR continues to host monthly jams at the Cultural Center.
- **Regional & State Announcements**
 - Sharon Buchanan is retiring from the State Park system.
- **Approval of next meeting date** – Senator Travis Hackworth proposed Thursday, June 13, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. as the next meeting date. A motion to approve the date was made by Senator Travis Hackworth, seconded by Ellen Reynolds, and unanimously carried.
- **Adjournment** – Delegate Will Morefield