



Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation Board of Trustees

Thursday, June 12, 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), Ruby Rogers, Maggie Beal, Josh Hess, Scotty Wampler. Deborah Milton, Amanda Pillion, Leo Priddy (v, proxy for Kevin Byrd), Ellen Reynolds (v), Aaron Sizemore, Julie Walters Steele(v)

v = *Virtual*

Absent: Senator Todd Pillion, Delegate Sam Rasoul, Sharon Buchanon, Mike Cochran, Saul Hernandez, David Matlock, Leah Ross, and Dr. Adam Hutchison

Guests: Matt Weaver and Danni Babcock

Staff Attending: Kim Davis, Catherine Fox, Jessica Lawrence, Auna Louthian, Tina Murray, Jen Otey, Ryan Vaughan 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 Rita McClenny. Second by Senator Travis Hackworth. Vote. Motion carried.
- **Approval of Minutes from March 2025** – Delegate Will Morefield - Motion to accept the minutes from the prior meeting as presented by Senator Travis Hackworth. Second by Rita McClenny. Vote. Motion carried.
- **Executive Director Report** – Kim Davis
Ms. Davis welcomed Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade Maggie Beal and introduced new staff member Auna Louthian. She highlighted Friends' leadership role in the \$5.1 million ARC ARISE Grant in partnership with the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, which will support tourism infrastructure, workforce training, and economic development across 22 counties in Virginia and North Carolina. Friends serve as the lead partner in Virginia. She also noted the successful launch of the Outdoor Recreation Helene Recovery project, including a high-definition stream study on the New River and a trail assessment in the Mount Rogers region. Updates were provided on active and upcoming grant applications totaling nearly \$1 million, including submissions to ARC, the Thompson Charitable Foundation, and GO Virginia, with another proposal planned for the Tobacco Commission later this year. Ms. Davis previewed the upcoming Southwest Virginia Tourism Summit and Awards set for August, reported ongoing work on the ARC Power 16 audit, and shared a positive development with People Inc., which has agreed to reimburse past capital expenditures.



- **Financials** – Paula Hurt and Kim Davis
Mrs. Hurt provided a financial update covering both 'Round the Mountain and Friends of Southwest Virginia. As of the third quarter, 'Round the Mountain reported strong cash flow and a net income of nearly \$12,000, with additional grant revenue expected before the fiscal year-end. Friends closed the second quarter with a modest surplus, stable reserves, and ongoing development efforts, despite some timing-related shortfalls. Overall, both organizations remain in a stable financial position. The FY 25/26 budgets for both entities were also reviewed, reflecting a conservative income approach, strategic expense planning, and new investments in staff benefits and operational support.
- **Deputy Director of Operations Update** – Tina Murray
Ms. Murray provided an update on operations and recent activities at the Cultural Center. She highlighted the successful celebration of National Travel & Tourism Week and a series of well-attended events hosted at the Center, including college performances, artisan conferences, and community showcases. Operational improvements are also underway, including upgrades to the electrical system, projection system, roof, and HVAC units. These enhancements aim to improve visitor experience and facility efficiency. Overall, the Center continues to serve as a vital hub for arts, culture, and tourism in Southwest Virginia.
- **Marketing Update** – Kim Davis
Mr. Vaughn shared recent marketing efforts, emphasizing the success of the 20th Anniversary campaign. Initiatives included the production of artisan-focused blogs, videos, and social media content, along with a comprehensive marketing package featuring branded materials and public relations outreach. He noted strong engagement across platforms and a significant increase in impressions and user activity. Mr. Vaughn also reported on a successful media tour in March, which hosted national journalists, and previewed an upcoming tour in July focusing on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Overall, the marketing strategy continues to elevate regional visibility and promote the legacy of Southwest Virginia's cultural and artisan communities.
- **Development Update** –
 - **Big Stone Gap Pump Track & Skate Park and Gateways to Southwest VA** - Jen Otey
Mrs. Otey provided an overview of current development projects and initiatives. She reported that construction documents have been finalized for the Big Stone Gap Pump Track, with construction set to begin in June and a groundbreaking scheduled for September 2025. The Gateways to Southwest Virginia Outdoor Recreation Economy Plan is progressing, with recent public input meetings held in Norton and Critz; the plan is expected to be completed by the end of June.
 - **Virginia Main Street ARC ARISE Grant** – Jessica Lawerence
Mrs. Lawrance reported that downtown assessments are currently underway in 10 designated Main Street communities. Site visits have already been completed in Wytheville, Galax, and Pulaski. She shared that community walking tours have been well attended and feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, reflecting strong local engagement in the planning process.



- **Power 23 and Power 24** – Catherine Fox

Ms. Fox shared that both POWER 23 and POWER 24 initiatives are actively moving forward. The team is currently developing the Request for Proposals (RFP) for POWER 23, which focuses on creative economy and tourism workforce development. POWER 24 is scheduled to officially launch in summer 2025, continuing efforts to support regional economic growth through cultural and creative sector investments.

- **Old Business**

- None.

- **New Business**

- None.

- **Partner Update:** 'Round the Mountain, Kim Davis

Mrs. Davis provided updates on recent and upcoming activities for 'Round the Mountain. She shared that current membership stands at 216 artisans, with 165 of those being juried members. A special 20th Anniversary Reception is scheduled for August 21, 2025, to celebrate the organization's milestone and its artisan community. The Spring 2025 jury process has concluded, welcoming new artisan members. Additionally, the Community Mural Project has received submissions from nine localities, with five finalist communities selected; official announcements are expected in the coming weeks. These efforts continue to strengthen engagement and visibility for artisans across the region.

- **Partner Update:** Virginia Tourism Corporation, Rita McClenny

Ms. McClenny provided an update on behalf of Virginia Tourism, noting that grant funds are currently available to support disaster recovery efforts, and the agency is actively working with regional partners to allocate and utilize these resources effectively. She also highlighted the upcoming VA-1 Governor's Tourism Summit, which will be held in Danville, emphasizing its importance as a statewide gathering focused on advancing tourism initiatives and collaboration across the Commonwealth.

- **Partner Update:** The Crooked Road, Danni Babcock

Ms. Babcock shared recent highlights from The Crooked Road, including the success of the Youth Fiddler's Convention in May, which led to a new partnership with the Library of Congress Folklife program. The event's winner will perform at the National Folklife Festival in July. She also announced the launch of The Crooked Road mobile app, supported by Virginia Tourism, with a press conference held in Fries. Marketing efforts are ramping up to promote the app and ongoing regional programming. The popular Crooked Road Jams continue to attract visitors, with new enhancements planned for the summer. Festival season is underway, with active sponsorship of several key events. Ms. Babcock also reported new grant awards and the successful closure of longstanding grants, including upcoming installation of updated Wayside exhibits.

- **Regional & State Announcements**

- None.



- **Approval of next meeting date –**
Thursday, September 11, 2025
Thursday, December 11, 2025
Thursday, March 12, 2026
Thursday, June 11, 2026
- A motion to approve the date was made by Rita McClenny, seconded by Maggie Beal and unanimously carried.
- **Adjournment –** Delegate Will Morefield