



Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation Board of Trustees

Thursday, September 11, 2025 | 1:00 P.M.

Minutes

- **Call to Order and Welcome** – Senator T. Travis Hackworth

- **Roll Call** – Kim Davis

Attending: Senator Travis Hackworth, Delegate Amy Laufer(v), Ruby Rogers, Maggie Beal (v), Josh Hess, Scotty Wampler. Deborah Milton, Becky Nave, Leo Priddy (v, proxy for Kevin Byrd), Julie Walters Steele, Sharon Buchanon, Mike Cochran, Dr. Adam Hutchison

v = *Virtual*

Absent: Senator Todd Pillion, Delegate Sam Rasoul, Saul Hernandez, David Matlock, Leah Ross, and Delegate Will Morefield, Aaron Sizemore, Hayley Allison & Rita McClenny

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 Senator T. Travis Hackworth. Motion to accept the agenda by Scotty Wampler. Second by Michael Cochran. Vote. Motion carried.
- **Approval of Minutes from June 2025** – Senator T. Travis Hackworth- Motion to accept the minutes from the prior meeting as presented by Michael Cochran Second by Ruby Rogers. Vote. Motion carried.
- **Executive Director Report** – Kim Davis
Ms. Davis welcomed new Board members Becky Nave. Mrs. Davis thanked the Board for their ongoing support, noting how much their commitment makes the Foundation's work possible. She shared that the Foundation co-hosted the Blue Ridge Rising Summit with staff, strengthening partnerships and advancing regional initiatives. She highlighted community outreach efforts in Dante following recent flooding, where the Foundation delivered more than 100 meals to residents in need. Friends presented the Southwest Virginia Tourism Awards during the Southwest Virginia Tourism Summit, recognizing more than 40 award recipients, and also celebrated the 20th Anniversary Reception for 'Round the Mountain.' Mrs. Davis noted that the Town of Big Stone Gap will hold a groundbreaking for the new Bike and Skate Park on September 22 at 11:00 a.m., and provided updates on ongoing work with the Southwest Virginia Mural Project, including a press event scheduled in Damascus on September 16 at 1:00 p.m. She also provided an update on the Clinch River Valley Initiative, including the Foundation's staffing support for a dedicated program manager. Mrs. Davis explained that she will continue to provide oversight, and that the opportunity aligns strongly with the Foundation's mission in outdoor recreation, regional development, and community engagement, while increasing regional influence and visibility. She noted that the position is multi-year funded, with a long-term sustainability plan needed, and that governance and reporting structures require clarification. The Foundation has the infrastructure to support the role with minor adjustments, and the opportunity can be successfully integrated if a clear structure is established.



Additionally, Mrs. Davis shared updates on the Three Rivers Destination Center project, with her role serving as project manager through DHCD. This work, along with the Mural Project, further exemplifies the Foundation's leadership in regional development, tourism, and community-focused initiatives

- **Financials** – Paula Hurt and Kim Davis

Mrs. Hurt reviewed the FY24/25 budgets for both 'Round the Mountain' and Friends. 'Round the Mountain' reported an overall profit of \$23,000, with revenue slightly down \$18,000 but expenses well under budget, and the \$25,000 cash reserve was not needed. The organization maintains a cash position of \$77,000, with Accounts Receivable of \$48,000, primarily from pending grant payouts, and Accounts Payable of \$51,000, most of which has been settled. Friends reported an overall profit of \$142,000. Revenue was down \$67,000 due to lower consignment sales, café food, partnership participation, and marketing grants; however, expenses came in \$209,000 under budget, with savings in maintenance, personnel, and other key areas. Development activities generated a \$12,000 profit. Friends maintains a cash position of \$397,000, with Accounts Receivable totaling \$184,000, primarily from ARC and West Piedmont grants, and Accounts Payable of \$202,000, mostly related to pending grant payouts and People Inc. obligations.

- **Deputy Director of Operations Update** – Tina Murray

Ms. Murray provided updates on recent Cultural Center activities, events, and facility improvements. She reported that the 'Made in SWVA: Summer Showcase,' held July 31–August 2, had an excellent turnout, and the Round the Mountain 20th Anniversary Reception was executed flawlessly. She also provided updates on upcoming and ongoing events, in addition to facility improvements, including the completion of the electrical Douglas system upgrade at a fraction of the projected cost, the repair of a main water line break, and the restoration of the walk-in cooler, which had temporarily ceased functioning.

- **Marketing Update** – Ryan Vaughn & Catherine Fox

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 July focusing on the Blue Ridge Parkway, which hosted national journalists. Overall, the marketing strategy continues to elevate regional visibility and promote the legacy of Southwest Virginia's cultural and artisan communities. Following this, Ms. Fox provided an update on two RFPs currently under review: one for qualified firms to conduct market research and the other for photography and videography services.



- **Development Update –**

- **Gateways to Southwest VA & Hurricane Helene Outdoor Recreation Assessments - Jen Otey**

Mrs. Otey provided updates on regional outdoor recreation initiatives. She reported that the ‘Gateways to Southwest Virginia Outdoor Recreation Economy Plan,’ including the Foothills of the Blue Ridge and Powell and Clinch Outdoor Recreation Plans, were released publicly on September 9. She also noted that post-Hurricane Helene recovery trail assessments are currently underway in the Mount Rogers Recreation Area by the Mount Rogers PDC. Additionally, Trutta Environmental Solutions recently completed a high-definition stream survey on the New River.

- **Virginia Main Street ARC ARISE Grant – Jessica Lawrance**

Mrs. Lawrance provided an update on the Virginia Main Street Downtown Assessments across 10 communities. Nine of the ten selected VMS community site visits have been completed—Wytheville, Galax, Pulaski, Martinsville, Marion, Covington, Buena Vista, St. Paul, and Bristol—while Tazewell is scheduled for September 18–19. Final reports for all downtowns will be available in September. Mrs. Lawrance noted that while each community is unique in character, they share similar challenges and opportunities shaping their revitalization strategies, including: the need for second-floor housing, activating underutilized or neglected building spaces, and connecting trails to downtown districts. She highlighted the importance of community leadership, often driven by individuals serving in multiple roles—such as public officials, city/town employees, small business owners, and volunteers—whose dedication has been instrumental to redevelopment efforts. Regarding outdoor recreation and natural asset development, Mrs. Lawrance emphasized the need for a shared strategy to leverage natural surroundings for tourism and economic development. Rivers, trails, and parks provide opportunities to drive visitation, attract outdoor-oriented businesses, and enhance quality of life for residents. She also noted that existing thriving storefronts rely on strong local support systems, including chambers of commerce, municipal leaders, and regional planning groups, to foster small business growth.

- **Old Business**

- None.

- **New Business**

- None.

- **Partner Update: ‘Round the Mountain, Kim Davis & Erin Simons**

Mrs. Davis provided updates on recent and upcoming activities for ‘Round the Mountain. She shared that current membership stands at 235 artisans, with 172 of those being juried members. The feasibility study and strategic plan for the organization have now been completed. Mrs. Simons spoke about the upcoming Fall 2025 jury process, which will accept art submissions from September 22 through October 6, with new artisan members to be announced at the end of October. These efforts continue to support the growth and engagement of the artisan community across the region.



- **Partner Update:** Virginia Tourism Corporation, Becky Nave
Mrs. Nave 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, Tyler Hughes
Mr. Hughes shared that The Crooked Road had a busy summer. The organization rolled out an expansive marketing campaign to promote its new mobile app, with support from Virginia Tourism, and will launch a series of billboards in Chattanooga next week highlighting the Crooked Road region as a top destination for IBMA fans. In late June, a strategic planning session was held for the Gathering in the Gap event in Big Stone Gap, and planning resources have been developed for festivals and venues in the region to strengthen events. Additionally, staff worked with the Cultural Center and 'Round the Mountain' on First Thursday JAMS, which now feature a cake walk, local artist demonstrations, and food trucks.
- **Regional & State Announcements**
 - None.
- **Approval of next meeting date –**
Thursday, December 11, 2025
- **Adjournment –** Senator T. Travis Hackworth