

Potomac Highlands Creative Economy Team Meeting

September 30, 2021

10 am

Zoom

Meeting called by:	Phyllis Baxter/Lukas Ray	Type of meeting:	Informal Discussion
Facilitator:		Note taker:	Maria
Timekeeper:			

Attendees: Phyllis Baxter, Lukas, Ray, Tina Ladd, Michele Moure-Reeves, Carla Rose, Marti Neustadt, Ciara Lambert, Greg Greenwalt, Robert Burns, Debi Layton, Joe McGee, Laura Brown, Maya Paul, Kimberly Byard, Eileen Johnson, Patricia Halterman, Megan Webb, Anne Beardslee, Cynthia Martel, Jim Linsenmeyer, Morgan Glup, Emily Wilson-Hauger, Marlene England, Kelly Williams, Maria Bray

Meeting notes

Discussion:

Announcement from Phyllis: The (AFNHA) has been awarded a grant from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation to expand regional activities promoting the creative economy in the Appalachian Forest region. Growing the Highlands Regional Creative Economy project will work in partnership with Eastern WV Community and Technical College (Eastern) on a 2-year project to expand the Potomac Highlands Creative Economy initiative to grow tourism and community development. AFNHA will coordinate partner networking and support tourism attraction development and recovery from COVID impacts, while Eastern will take lead on providing trainings and technical assistance focusing on business development and the growth of agriculture in the Potomac Highlands region. (Full press release will follow later today. The grant is also providing for a mini grant program. Additional details and an application for the program will follow mid winter.

Megan Webb – Eastern will continue to enhance businesses with educational opportunities, small business support will include community gathering events, marketing support, lodging and hospitality training, Agricultural summit, and Agro tourism.

Robert Burns announced the upcoming book signing and reading from the Night Frights series at Eastern WVCT College, October 13th from 5 to 7 pm. There will be opportunity to purchase book for signing. Both Joe McGee and his wife Jess Rinker will be on hand to share excerpts from their books and answer questions.

Maker Space: Presentation on new Grant Program (Marti Neustadt and Rob Burns) - We are working closely with the national youth science foundation to create makerspaces in schools and libraries located in the six counties that Eastern serves. Our goal is to provide these underserved areas with technology, equipment, and training that will be beneficial to both the education systems and communities they are located in for years to come. We intend to create spaces that are as educational and accessible as possible so that they are widely used by the public. This initiative will greatly strengthen STEAM-related learning as well as provide a variety of opportunities for local entrepreneurs in eastern West Virginia.

(Maker spaces are designed to challenge students to create and learn through hands-on, personalized experiences throughout elementary, middle and high school. Every school's maker space is different, but you might find a woodshop, 3D printing, audio-visual equipment, and even drones.) Maya shared that the students create products using technology and they are planning a spring competition. The students will pitch an entrepreneurial concept to encourage bigger ideas for future business.

AFNHA is reviving the Hiking challenge.

Michele – Hardy County just packed up travelling exhibition and is sending it on to Weston. They have an AmeriCorps working on promoting the Heritage Trails. Most events have been cancelled except for the Wardensville fall festival.

Lukas announced the Inaugural WV Trail Conference November 16-18th. Registration will open October 11.

Lost River Trails Coalition received a DNR grant for a beginners trail.

Anne – Randolph County & Pocahontas County were listed in the top 10 list of trail for Blue Ridge.

Tygart hotel is beginning restoration/renovations and should open as a boutique hotel next year. The scarecrow festival is in process with about 100 scarecrows and there is a new mural on the bank wall as part of the ongoing public art program.

Cara – WV Trails Collaborative has earned bronze then silver designation. They are working towards gold, which involves creating at least two more ride centers. Hiking is still #1 activity underscoring the need for all types of trail development and maintenance.

Cynthia (Future generations) – Maple days is being planned for 2022. They have been awarded the National Aspen grant to help build infrastructure to market non-timber products. They are developing an Agro tourism course. In addition, working on a Value added producer grant and are looking for more partners.

Next meeting dates: Virtual meeting tentative for October 28, 2021. We will have one in November but will likely skip the December meeting.

Lukas will be sending a survey. He would like your feedback especially regarding guest speakers.