

Saluda Downtown Foundation Minutes

June 2024

The Saluda Downtown Foundation held its quarterly meeting June 4, 2024 at 6:30 at the Visitors Center. Those board members present included Marc Blazar, Board Chairman, George Sweet, Vice Chairman, Glenn Franklin, Secretary, Lynn Cass, Treasurer, Lynn Casey, Executive Director and Jay Burriss.

The meeting was called to order by President Marc Blazar. George Sweet made a motion to accept the minutes as written, with a second by Lynn Cass. It was passed by a unanimous vote.

Reports:

Treasurer's report was given by Lynn Cass.

- The Arts Festival was a success. Total income was \$25,935.33. As of June, the Festival made a profit of \$10,376.37 but approximately \$1500 in expenses is still outstanding.
- Mountain Song concerts are free. Their income is basically derived from their membership. As a fundraiser, they held a restaurant raffle and raised an additional \$2,000.
- Sister City had an income boost of \$6,000+ as a result of the Lasagna dinner.
- Top of the Grade Concerts start June 14th. The \$6,150 cost is being funded by the Polk County Community Foundation. At this point, these funds are not shown in the current financial statement.
- The Visitors Center showed a loss, but funds were available to cover it. With the TDA taking over operations of the Visitors Center, the account of the books were closed out June 1, 2024.

For a detailed report see the attached Treasurer's report. A motion was made by George Sweet and seconded by Jay Burriss to accept the Treasurer's report. The motion carried.

Mountain Song has now been in existence for two years and has held concerts in Saluda, Hendersonville and Tryon. Their singing at the Arts Festival was enjoyed by a lively crowd. The Tryon Concert was attended by a crowd of 125 people. They are considering doing a Karaoke night at the Moon Glass Studio later in the summer. They are an extremely well organized group with a paid director. In the fall, they will launch a campaign to increase their membership.

Sister City members are currently in Carunchio, Italy for the Flower Festival. They have put in a grant request to pay for an Italian bluegrass band to play at the Tryon Fine Arts Center in the fall. They have also applied for a grant to pay for the cost of signs advertising the Sister City program in Saluda.

The first Top Of The Grade Concert will be held June 14th in the new amphitheater. The band is David Childers and the Serpents. On July 12, Bob Sinclair and the Big Deals will play, and August 9th will see Queen Bee and the Honey Lovers on stage. Filing time with Polk County Community Foundation for 2025 concerts is before June 30, 2024 so decisions need to be made now. The city manager would like to see the concerts continued into September and October. Discussion followed, and it was agreed that October cold weather was unpredictable, therefore, it was decided that the concerts would only be extended into September. New lighting has been installed on the stage but lighting is very poor in adjacent areas. It was agreed that SDF request the city to add additional light in the surrounding areas as it is dark when concerts end, and the band as well as concert goers have difficulty seeing as they leave the event. Lynn estimates that each concert costs around \$2,200 so she will add that amount to the 2025 grant request to cover the added concert.

The Arts Festival held May 18th was quite successful, with parking solutions featuring in its success. As always, the Children's Tent was extremely busy. It's one of the more expensive parts of the Festival but all agreed it should be continued. A discussion revolved around whether we should pay for it ourselves next year or again put a grant request in to the Polk County Community Foundation. Polk County Community Foundation holds an investment whose funds can only be used for Saluda grants. For several years, for unknown reasons, the foundation withheld all monies from Saluda grant requests. It was agreed that we should definitely put in a grant request for the Children's Tent since the foundation is now releasing money for Saluda projects.

As of June 1st, the Visitors Center is no longer under the management of the Saluda Downtown Foundation. Because it is a marketing tool, all agreed it should be operated by the Tourism Development Board. Misty Davis has taken over as director, replacing Lynn Casey. The Visitors Center has been so successful it was highlighted by the World Atlas as the leading component in Saluda's becoming a Western North Carolina destination. Hats off to all the volunteers that made it work.

Newly Proposed: The Great Train Trek would be an educational and exploratory adventure, especially for tourists visiting the area. Brought to the board by Emily Lamar and Faith Finnegan, its possible implementation would be a natural fit with other activities under the SDF umbrella. With president, Marc Blazar's approval, a grant application was filed with the Polk County Community Foundation for \$5,000 to fund the installation, as well as creation of a website and brochure. The foundation likes to fund projects that will benefit the community, instead of tourists so grant approval is questionable. The board should know if the grant has been approved by early July.

For a detailed report, refer to the attached document.

President Marc Blazar asked if there was any additional old or new business. It was noted that Glenn Franklin leaves the board, and a new member will be brought on with the September meeting. The motion was made by George Sweet and seconded by Jay Burris to adjourn. The motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

Glenn Franklin
Secretary, SDF