

## OTBA Minutes – APRIL 9, 2014

Our Meeting began at 8:39 a.m.

Attendance was 26 members.

After introductions were made, Joanne Wunderly asked if there were any changes or corrections to the minutes from our February meeting. Kathleen Reilly and Ann Hempen, as a second, approved the minutes. Our minutes along with the Treasurer's report are always posted on line at the OTBA website.

Nury Mena, OTBA treasurer was not in attendance so there was no official treasurer's report. Joanne stated that a recent influx of late joiners boosted our balance to around \$9,000.

Joanne also announced that Ann Marie Maher of the Discover Prince William/Manassas will be our speaker next month and discuss the many ways in which increased tourism to the area will help our businesses.

The merchants' Sidewalk Sale will be on April 26<sup>th</sup>. Flyers advertising the event were distributed. It was also suggested that each business have a presence on the sidewalk that day in addition to posting on our respective social media sites.

Joanne mentioned that Becky Verner of the Manassas Chorale had approached OTBA to ask for assistance in making the First Friday in June (June 6<sup>th</sup>) an event at which funds could be raised for a plaque to honor former Mayor, Marvin Gillum. OTBA and HMI discussed ideas about closing Center Street, the Manassas Chorale would perform, perhaps tables & chairs could be set out on the street for those present to sit down and maybe enjoy a bite from the restaurants while being entertained. OTBA volunteered to pay for the extra Police for the event.

Joanne also touched on an idea presented by Chip Rohr to consider having Associate memberships for businesses who generally do not benefit from being listed in the Guides to Shops & Services. Associate members would be supporters of the efforts of OTBA and would be non-voting. Our By-Laws will be checked to see if an amendment is necessary or if this proposal is up to the Board of Directors.

Joanne mentioned that complaints continue from customers about the lack of and/or ease of parking in Old Town. It is an issue that continues – especially with the closure of the Depot Parking Lot and the re-configuration of Main Street.

Our next meeting will be May 14<sup>th</sup>.

**HMI** – Debbie Haight announced the upcoming events for April. The Farmers' Market will officially open on Thursday, April 10<sup>th</sup>. There will be a ribbon cutting at 10 a.m. and all are encouraged to attend to welcome the market for another season. A Tuesday evening (5 to 8 p.m.) Farmers' Market to coincide with the Take Out Tuesday

is scheduled to begin in June. Both the Tuesday Farmers' Market and Take Out Tuesday are targeting the commuters to stay, eat and shop for fresh produce before heading home.

The Spring Cleaning day has morphed into a healthy living and living 'green' event. There will be the usual re-cycle offerings in addition to a mammography screening, a blood drive, and exercise instruction. The Farmers' Market returns to the Harris Pavilion and the water tower parking lot in April. Spring Cleaning Day will be April 19<sup>th</sup> (the Saturday before Easter Sunday).

The Passport Program has received much positive feedback. So far, only one completed passport has been turned in. Debbie encouraged all to take advantage of the \$20. Old Town Gift card given for each passport completed.

Debbie also asked that if there is any negative feedback that those comments go to HMI so the issue may be addressed directly.

The program to welcome new residents is underway. Kristina Skoham at HMI is coordinating the program. Any information or donations to be included for the Welcome Bags is due by April 18<sup>th</sup>.

The Spring Gallery Walk is slated for the First Friday in May. All are encouraged to do posting on your social media sites. The Manassas Museum saw 90 visitors at the most recent First Friday evening...a record!

More than a 1,000 Hop Around Old Town eggs are being filled for that promotion which begins Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup> through April 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Manassas Museum** – Mary Helen Dellinger spoke about the temporary exhibit – Reflections – which is art work from Osbourn High School students and exhibited through April 21.

The museum also plans to have a presence at the Saturday Farmers' Market to answer questions and familiarize patrons of the market with all that the museum has to offer.

On Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup> at the Manassas train station, there will be a celebration of its 100<sup>th</sup> year of operation. City workers are refurbishing the outside and inside of the station for this occasion. A new exhibit in the gallery will be a highlight.

**Center for the Arts** – Sally Lay spoke about the Rooftop Theater's upcoming production, "Don't Dress for Dinner", the next performance is this weekend at 8 pm on Friday and Saturday nights the Pied Piper Theater production of "Peter Pan" which will be held May 10 & 11 and 17 & 18 at Garfield High School. Summer camp/class brochure is going out for distribution.

**Harris Pavilion** – no report. Anna Marie did send word that ice skating has ended and that the schedule for warmer months is packed with events.

**Manassas Art Guild** –no report

**Welcome Center** – Kathleen Reilly spoke grants that are can be applied for to help with marketing and gave out information to that effect.

**Hylton Performing Arts Center** – Katy Campbell announced that this weekend will end the current season at the Hylton. Katy handed out the new schedule for the 2014–2015 season.

**Discover Prince William & Manassas (formally known as the CVB)** – Kerry Lynch thanked all who advertised in the latest issue of 2014–2015 Visitors Guide. Nominations forms for the 2014 Tourism Industry Awards are due April 15<sup>th</sup>. There will be a tourism luncheon on Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at the Old Prince William Courthouse (upstairs).

In 2015, Prince William is hosting a PGA Tour at the Robert Trent Jones Course in Gainesville. The tournament will run for 6 days and should bring a lot of tourists to the area for this prestigious golfing event.

**Restaurant Alliance** – Debbie Haight announced that the next Taste of Manassas will be the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in June. There is an opportunity for OTBA members to have a table at the event to showcase their businesses. There is no charge for this opportunity.

**Manassas Fire and Rescue** – Brett Bowman announced at the end of June and into July, Fairfax County would be hosting the World Police & Fire Games. This event was last held in Belfast, Ireland. More athletes compete in these games than do in the summer Olympics. There was a suggestion that the event be called “Guns & Hoses”.

Brett acknowledged the donation by OTBA in Rick Ratcliffe’s name and stated that the donation was used in the Smoke Detector Give Away program. Rick’s widow, Judy, wrote a note expressing her appreciation of the donation and the program to which it went.

The Fire Department is creating a new program to alert city residents by house to house visits of the need for smoke detectors or to assist in battery replacement of existing smoke detectors. The program is called SAM – Safety Around Manassas.

Brett asked business owners for help in alerting customers to not put cigarettes into containers containing mulch. It is a serious fire hazard.

**Manassas City Police** – no report.

**Featured Speaker** City Manager, Pat Pate and Mayor Hal Parish spoke optimistically about prospects for the city to include a recent bond rating upgrade by Standard & Poor and increased interest in development in Manassas.

Parking issues – the need for consistent wording and less confusing wording on signs at the parking garage was discussed at length. Unfortunately, there is little hope that the first floor of the garage can ever be used for visitors and shoppers and the upper floors for commuters.

In discussion, it was learned that: Floors 1 through 3 are for commuters until 11 a.m. After 11 a.m., anyone can park in available spaces for 4 hours for free.

The top two floors can be used by visitors and shoppers. The numbered spaces are \$4.50 for all day parking, and can be paid for by credit card at the pay stations next to the stairwells on floors four and five. The un-numbered spaces are four hour spots and are free.

After hours and on weekends, the entire garage is free.

Mayor Parish did acknowledge that obviously, based on comments, there is much work that needs to be done on this issue.

### **Business announcements: What's New?**

Fulton Bank has personal CDs at 2.25% for holders of a checking account and a minimum CD purchase of \$1000.

Manassas Cinema offers discount movie admission on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday nights. They also have a cocktail lounge in theater 4. Last year, Manassas Cinema saw more than 100,000 movie goers in the cinema. There are advertising opportunities for the ten minute pre-view time before the movie actually begins. There was discussion about taking advantage of this opportunity which is far less costly than other forms of advertising.

R & R Records & Rarities is scheduled to open on Main Street on Saturday, April 19<sup>th</sup> with a ribbon cutting at 1 p.m.

Chip Rohr expounded on his suggestion of Associate members for OTBA and stated that lower membership dues would be an enticement for a business that doesn't really benefit from a listing in the guide. Chip also said that the city council needs to hear from citizens and business owners about the negative impact of losing that parking at the train depot.

Mary Reilly brought up the touchy subject of businesses having to pay a yearly fee to park in one of the designated lots when city employees, employees of HMI and the Center for the Arts had free designated spaces.

The 50/50 drawing netted \$42. Chip Rohr was the winner and donated his winnings to OTBA to be used for marketing.

The meeting ended at 10:03.

