

## **OTBA Meeting June 8, 2016 at City Tavern Grill**

The meeting was called to order at 8:56 am by President, Joanne Wunderly. There were 23 members present. City council members present were Mark Wolfe, Ian Lovejoy and Mayor Hal Parish.

May minutes were approved by Ann Hempen and seconded by Debbie Haight.

Before the meeting began in earnest, Mayor Parish had a few brief remarks to the group. He expressed thanks to the members for all they do for the city and stated that Manassas is in good shape. He also mentioned that there are a number of volunteer positions open for new appointments by City Council, specifically the City's representation on the board of NVCC (Northern Virginia Community College) and those interested should apply.

**Treasurers' Report** - Nury Mena was out of town and Joanne reported that at present we have \$8,409.22 in our treasury. Joanne mentioned that we have been paying the City in installments for the Christmas lights and that there are still some businesses who have not paid their share. The lights downtown at top the buildings add so much to the holiday look and feel of Old Town.

**Brief Announcements** - Joanne mentioned in her opening remarks a big Thank You to Elizabeth Bailey for her presentation of "Navigating Social Media" at last month's meeting. If there is enough interest, perhaps another workshop in August would help to continue our education of this way of communicating with our customers. We do not have a regularly scheduled meetings in August and December.

Our speakers for our July meeting will be City Manager, Pat Pate and Economic Development Director, Patrick Small. Our next meeting is July 13.

**Historic Manassas (HMI)** - Brittany Bowman from HMI announced that an estimated 35,000 people attended the recently held Railroad Festival. Several people added that it was the best Railroad Festival to date. The 611 train ride to and from Front Royal was filled with people who were not from Manassas but from such far flung places as Europe, Ohio, North Carolina and Louisiana.

Anne Hempen mentioned that some of the railroad people stayed at her B & B and gushed over the reception they had in Manassas - that the city was so welcoming and enthused about having the 611 at our railroad festival.

Other upcoming events:

1. HMI has sent out a survey to determine what might be of interest at the Bridal Show to be held inside at the Center for the Arts at the Candy Factory in March.
2. On the 19th of June, the annual Wine and Jazz Festival will be held on the Museum lawn.
3. For the first time, the rooftop of the parking garage will be the scene for a catered dinner and a spectacular view of the fireworks display. Manassas has the largest display of fireworks in Northern Virginia. For years, an anonymous donor has generously given the City a substantial donation (since 2002!!!!) to help defray the cost of this event. It costs between \$50 - 60 thousand dollars to put on the amazing show.
4. The Tuesday evening Farmers' Market at the Harris Pavilion has begun.

**Manassas Museum** - Doug Horhorta had to leave early to conduct a tour so Beverly Hess gave his report. Beverly pointed out the event cards on each table and highlighted a few items, in particular, the Civil War Summer Camp (June 28 - July 10 and the Archeology & Swim Camp (August 9 - 12). There are also new exhibits at the Museum - John Singleton Mosby: Lawyer, Soldier, Statesman and a temporary exhibit, "The quest for Light and Liberty", both through August 28.

**Center for the Arts at the Candy Factory** - Beverly Hess announced that the CFA's summer camps for children interested in all aspects of theater and art. The CFA also begins the new season for the Summer Sounds Concerts at the Harris pavilion on June 25 with QuinTango - Tango Love! Throughout the summer, the summer sounds concerts bring a lively and varied musical entertainment to enjoy outdoors at the pavilion for free., art

**Harris Pavilion** - Anna Marie Morgan reported that the pavilion is solidly booked for the season.

**Welcome Center on 66** - Phyllis Harrison briefly discussed the Virginia tourism Marketing Leverage Program whereby three Virginia partners can apply for funding. The purpose is to drive tourism dollars to Manassas The deadline for applications are due June 28th. Applicants must incorporate aspects of the "Virginia is for Lovers" campaign initiatives.i

**Hylton Performing Arts Center** - Marit Majeske stated that the season is over but that during the summer, the Hylton will have a Technical Theater 'Boot Camp' for teens 16 and older and/or interested adults, Camp will teach backstage skills such as lighting, carpentry, rigging and fly system operation in addition to the essential skills needed for the technical production to include safe efficient stage crew operation and sound equipment operation for reinforcement and effect.scene building.

Also this summer, three performances for young audiences, :Junk Music with the Junkman (June 28), Barefoot Puppets (July 20) and Rootstone Jug Band (August 4). The Prince William Little theater will also perform "Cabaret" for three weekends this summer.

**Discover Prince William** - no report

**Restaurant Alliance** - no report, but Brian Hollenbach of El Cactus was present and his generosity and community involvement was acknowledged.

**Police Department** - no report

**Fire and Rescue** - Brett Bowman, Fire Chief, is retiring at the end of this month. A well deserved round of applause acknowledged the many years of Brett's leadership and commitment to the safety and well being of Manassas City residents. Chief Bowman said that a new fire chief has been selected from over 50 applicants in a nationwide search.

**Manassas City Government** -Patrick Small, Economic Development Director, announced the re-location of an existing business from Herndon to Manassas with 15 employees, stressing that it is better to have many small to medium sized businesses rather than totally depend on one large employer.

Also announced that the City Manager proposed a new budget that has two new grants available to businesses within the city - a facade improvement and a landscaping grant to encourage businesses to fix up and beautify property.

The City also partnered with OTBA and HMI to promote Manassas in a 13 month marketing blitz at the Route 66 Welcome Center beginning in December. Businesses will be able to promote their business (and the city) at the center every day. A discussion followed as to which days and times might be the most impactful. A banner will also be on Route 195 at the Dale City Visitors Center.

**Other Bits and Pieces** - Joanne discussed the results of a survey that OTBA sent to members five to six months ago. Responses revealed that members were willing to have paid speakers at our meetings on a variety of topics that would be of interest such as: social media , marketing, how to craft press releases, customer retention and curb appeal.

It was generally agreed that print advertising is least effective, social media, direct mail and Facebook garnered the best results.

Events were a topic that generated responses. Events that were kid friendly, held during the week, and adult themed were suggested.

First Friday suggestions included: acoustical music in several places, no loud music, a sign at the street barricades that indicated something special was happening, entertainment not to be provided by the merchants.

Follow up discussion after each event to include participants as well as planners to see how the events affected business.

Ian Lovejoy said that an online site, "What's UP' has become very popular and a way to direct attention to local happenings.

Chip Rohr stated that the 2nd floor of the parking deck is open for parking and that when exiting that level, one is on street level. Chip also mentioned that he has attended After Hours Events in Haymarket that foster business to business relationships.

The 50/50 drawing netted \$42 collected and the winning ticket worth \$22 was won by Phyllis Harrison of the Welcome Center on 66.

The meeting adjourned at 9:54 am.