

## OTBA Meeting October, 14, 2015 at City Tavern Grill

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 am by President, Joanne Wunderly. There were 31 members & guests in attendance.

Minutes from our last meeting were approved by Roy Cunningham (CutRate Barbershop) and seconded by Patrick Langdon (Ameriprise).

Treasurer, Nury Mena (Fulton Bank) was unable to attend and her report was presented. We currently have \$ 6,645.88 in our account in Fulton Bank.

Joanne opened the meeting with mention of the annual lighting atop the buildings in the city for the Christmas season. In the past, Lou Balboni headed up this effort by contacting businesses/building owners to participate, the city workers would check the lights and replace any defective ones and OTBA would pay the bill to the city and bill participants for the pro-rated reimbursement for the cost of each building. A decision has to be made as to : (1) Is this a program that should continue ? (2) Will the city take on the responsibility for the billing ? In the past OTBA has sent bills for reimbursement with mixed results. As an all volunteer organization, we do not have the resources to continue doing so.

Doug Waldron, Commissioner of the Revenue, presented a revised second quarter report. Doug stated that he had been following the previous commissioner's format which included only a small sampling of businesses in the city. At present 42 accounts are being tracked whereas the old report only tracked fewer than 20 accounts. The revised report is more inclusive and will continue to be the formula for this information.

The revised report did present a brighter picture than the previous one; however, Retail in Old Town still shows a decrease of 17% comparing 2014 and 2015 for the same period of time and posted a 10.5% reduction in sales year to date when compared to 2014.

Restaurant and Lodging posted gains for both time frames. Overall, Old Town posted a 19.5% gain YTD over 2014.

Joanne and Patrick Langdon, addressed briefly a survey designed to gain input from OTBA members about services, needs, and ideas to continue to improve on what we have here in Old Town. Surveys were available to take at the end of the meeting or can be filled out on line. It is requested that surveys be completed and turn in either to Ameriprise, The Things I Love (during regular business hours) or at the next meeting to be held November 11th.

Joanne also mentioned that perhaps OTBA money could be used to promote events or to secure professional speakers at each meeting to address needs and concerns revealed in the surveys. OTBA will no longer be printing a **Guide to Shops and Services** since doing so would only duplicate what is now being done by HMI and the City.

**HMI** - Christina Smith mentioned that the postponed Fall Jubilee will take place on October 24 from 10 - 4 and additionally, the Haunted Happening Event for children will be on the same day from 10 - 12. Business are encouraged to give out candy to the costumed children who will be in town for the event. Vendors at Fall Jubilee have also been asked to give out candy. The Pumpkin Patch event will be held in the parking lot for

the Center for the Arts and 300 pumpkins will be available for decorating. This event is free. OTBA contributes to the Haunted Happening by paying for all the bags and prizes for best costumes.

The Fall Gallery Walk is scheduled for Friday, November 6th, which also happens to be First Friday, from 6 - 9 pm.

**Manassas Museum** – Doug Horhota stated that the Museum has a very full schedule for the rest of October and includes: 10/24 - the last Bike Tour of the season from 9 - 11 am, 10/24 Spirits of Manassas Tours from 6:30 - 8 pm, 10/30 Cemetery Tour at 8 pm and 10/25 author Gary Ecelbarger's book, Three Days in the Shenandoah, will be presented.

Doug also mentioned that the Veterans' Day Parade will be held on November 11. It is always a very moving tribute to the men and women who have served our country.

**Center for the Arts Report** – no report

**Harris Pavilion** – no report

**Welcome Center on I 66** – Phyllis Harrison reminded us that October is Virginia Wine Month and had available new 2015 Winery Guide Maps. Phyllis also had a flyer for those interested in the fall foliage. Peak viewing is expected sometime next week.

**Hylton Performing Arts Center** - Carol DeVany noted that she had placed numerous pieces of Hylton literature for their many up-coming events on each table for taking. Of particular note, on November 11, Hylton is hosting a free event - Veterans Day 2015 Celebrating Veterans and the Arts from 11 am - 4 pm. It is an interactive day of celebration and art experiences for veterans, service members and their families.

**Fire and Rescue Services** - Brett Bowman reminded everyone that October is **Fire Prevention Month** and that a proclamation of such was made at a recent City Council Meeting. The theme for this year is "*Hear the Beep where you Sleep*" - a reminder that every house should have a smoke detector near or in their bedrooms. Brett noted that two tragic fires in our metro region resulted in two deaths and one very critical injury. These fires occurred in Reston and Charles County, Maryland.

The Fire Department is knocking on doors, checking smoke detectors and replacing them if defective or non-existent. There is no tax money spent on this service, smoke detectors are obtained through donations. El Cactus Restaurant donated a bag full of detectors at our meeting.

**Police** - Officer Sneeley reported that in response to our concerns, signage has been placed at crosswalks.

**City Government** - In attendance today were: Hal Parish, Patrick Small, Patty Prince and council members, Sheryl Bass and Ian Lovejoy. Sheryl thanked the Fire and Police Departments for all they do to keep us safe and stated that she was really "jazzed" about Old Town and the efforts of HMI and OTBA.

Chip Rohr thanked the OTBA members who generously supported the 40th Annual Edgar Rohr Memorial Car Show. There were 165 vehicles on display and it was the most

successful show to date. Chip also stated that the Food Truck Night at the Harris Pavilion was an event no to have been missed.

**Guest Speaker** - Charles Grymes of the Prince William Conservation Alliance gave a thorough, thoughtful presentation on what is good about Manassas and what challenges it faces and will continue to face. To no one's surprise, the biggest challenge we face as a community is traffic congestion. Our city is not pedestrian friendly! It will only worsen as more residential development to the south and north of Manassas (in Prince William County) is planned and there are no plans (at present) to alleviate the already crowded Route 28 traffic through our Old town area. Mr. Grymes presented the challenges faced by the city in an optimistic manner if the city and county cooperate with each other on several issues. He also presented creative ideas involving the MARC train system and the VRE commuter train system to travel into each others states to serve the populous in a more efficient and effective manner.

General Discussion -

Chip Rohr (Ducks Unlimited and Chip Rohr Soccer Camps) announced that he had been a member of the Prince William Conservation Alliance for years and that the good works by that organization enhanced everyones lives by keeping land available for public access. Chip also thanked Brian Hollanbach (El Cactus) for the smoke detectors donated today and noted that El Cactus is very community minded and is always quick to help when a need arises.

Hal Parish thanked Mr. Grimes for a fantastic presentation.

Sheryl Bass urged everyone to come to support a fundraiser for Osbourn High School to be held in the Metz Middle School parking lot on Friday, October16th. It will be held from 4 - 7 pm. A special appearance by former Osbourn High School alum, Lucky Whitehead, who will be signing autographs. Lucky was recently signed by the Dallas Cowboys as a rookie (sorry 'bout that Redskin fans). There will also be a number of food trucks with a variety of enticing goodies to eat and drink. It is also Osbourn High School's Homecoming.

Darlene Runaldue (Scatter Seeds) urged other businesses to be open on Federal Holidays. She reported that her shop has done well by being open on those occasions and that customers have expressed frustration that more shops aren't open on those days.

50/50 drawing netted \$32 collected and the winning ticket was won by our speaker for today, Mr. Grymes, who graciously donated the money back to OTBA.

The meeting adjourned at 9:43 am.