

**EDINBURG AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
**January 27, 2011**

**In attendance:** Cynthia Morris, Steve Wood, Donna Smith, Fran Romeo, Sue Horne, Justin Wightman, Michelle Heier and Mary Embrey. Visitors: Dan Harshman, David Crain and Rick Austin.

**Meeting called to order by:** Ms. Morris at 5:30 p.m.

**Minutes:** A motion was made by Ms. Smith and seconded by Ms. Horne to approve the November 18, 2010 minutes.

**Treasurer's Report:** The Chamber currently has a balance of \$1,888.52. A motion was made by Mr. Wood and seconded by Ms. Smith to approve the Treasurer's Report.

**County Chamber:** Ms. Romeo did not attend the last Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce Advisory Group meeting. Mr. Harshman reported that the new Shenandoah County Tourism Director is Natalie Wills. Mr. Harshman also reported that he gave Ms. Wills and County Administrator, Doug Walker a tour of the Mill.

**Summer Concert:** Ms. Smith reported that Committee Chairs are needed for the Summer Concert. Ms. Smith and Ms. Horne will help with the Concert, but cannot be co-chairs. Ms. Smith reported that she and Ms. Horne have many notes to help the new chairperson. Ms. Smith stated that some things for the Concert need to be started soon. The Concert will be on Saturday, July 30<sup>th</sup>. The band is booked and the park has been reserved. Ms. Morris stated that at the February meeting, the Board will work on finding a new chairperson for the Summer Concert.

**Route 11 Yard Crawl:** No report.

**Networking Social:** Ms. Romeo reported that the March Woodstock Chamber mixer at C.E. Thompson's will not be an all chamber event; however, guests are welcome.

**Christmas Parade:** Mr. Wood reported that as of now, the Christmas Parade will be on Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>. There was talk about changing the date to Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup> since the other local parades are all on Fridays or Saturdays. Ms. Smith stated that she liked the Thursday idea and she thought that the starting time should be changed from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Ms. Romeo suggested that the Band and the float participants be contacted first to make sure this works for them. Ms. Smith reported that she walked alongside the Chamber float in last year's parade and handed out candy canes, which went over very well.

**A Victorian Christmas in Edinburg:** Ms. Morris reported that the 2011 Parlor Tours will be on Friday, December 9<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup>. She also reported that the Chamber made \$1,175.00 on the 2010 Parlor Tours. Ms. Morris stated that starting the Tours at the Mill was a big hit and that everyone loved the Mill. She suggested that the Tours start at the Mill every year. Mr. Wood stated that he wanted to have more homes actually in the Town of Edinburg to be able to do a "walking tour". Ms. Morris stated that she tried to get more homes in the Town. Ms. Morris stated that hardly anyone showed up on the "preview Thursday night". She suggested that maybe the Chamber should quit doing the "preview night". Ms. Morris also stated that according to the surveys she has received back from the people on the Tour, the participants were delighted. Ms. Morris suggested that possibly Allon LeFevre of Hampton Inn in Woodstock would advertise the Parlor Tours on their electric sign. Ms. Romeo suggested that cards with the Parlor Tour information be handed out during the Ole' Time Festival. Ms. Morris reported that Mr. Harshman suggested that a generic Christmas poster could be created that advertises the Parlor Tours and that he would help out with this. Ms. Morris stated that the Chamber appreciates Mr. Harshman's offer and will gladly accept his help.

**Membership:** Ms. Morris stated that she thought that the membership information and applications should be mailed out this year instead of emailing them. Ms. Romeo asked Mr. Harshman if he would include membership information in the next Town Newsletter. Mr. Harshman stated that he would put the membership information in the next Newsletter that will come out on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Morris suggested that more about the membership be discussed at the February meeting. Ms. Heier

brought up the information packets that were handed out at the October 2010 meeting. Ms. Morris was the only one that returned any comments about the packet.

**Auditing Committee:** No report.

**Finance Committee:** No report.

**Website:** Ms. Romeo stated that she would send Ms. Heier some information on other web hosting sites.

**Shop Local Coupons:** No report.

**Edinburg Farmers Market:** Mr. Harshman reported that there has been some talk about having a regional Farmers Market at the County Travel Council meetings. A regional market at the County Fairground is being discussed that could attract local traffic as well as draw people off Interstate 81.

**Other Business:** Mayor Dan Harshman stated that he came to the meeting to hear from the Chamber. Mr. Harshman stated that Edinburg does a lot on a little budget and presented the annual budgets of the other towns to point out how small Edinburg's budget is. The Town has done a number of beautification projects such as installing stamped sidewalks, tree plantings and historic style streetlights. The Town has also committed itself to the Mill Project which will be of great benefit to the Town. The Mayor explained that the Mill started out with a budget of \$450,000; the budget has now grown to \$1.2 million. This has been paid mostly by Federal grant funds along with money raised by the Edinburg Heritage Foundation.

Ms. Morris asked Mr. Harshman if the State helps with projects in this area. Mr. Harshman stated the State's main focus on tourism is the Williamsburg/ Virginia Beach area. Mr. Harshman stated that with the Civil War Sesquicentennial coming up, the State will definitely be paying more attention to our area.

Mr. Harshman stated that "The Burning" DVD is becoming very well known and that approximately 450 DVDs have been sold. Mr. Harshman also stated that the Mill is pivotal to the Town and growing our retail businesses. Mr. Austin asked Mr. Harshman what the Mill is intended to do and how it will generate money. Mr. Harshman stated that the Mill will have a combination of uses. The building is 20,000 square feet with four stories. The lower level will be rented as a restaurant with a banquet room and seasonal dining areas. There will also be a minimum of two retail spaces for rent. The main floor will house a Visitor Center, Museum Displays and a Museum Shop run by the Foundation. Mr. Harshman reported that the Visitor Center will not be a "certified" visitor center because of funding limitations. The question was asked if being certified would make the center eligible for grants. The Mayor explained that the staffing requirements of a Certified Visitor Center would be cost prohibitive and that there really are not grants available for staffing. The Mill will be Stop #1 on the Edinburg Walking Tour, and will also be a lighted municipal parking lot for the entire downtown area. Tenants still need to be found for the restaurant and rental spaces in the Mill.

Mr. Harshman reported that the Mill received \$575,000 in funds from VDOT and part of the Museum will focus on area transportation. The Mayor also explained that the Mill has the Civil War history that so many people are attracted to as well as the great interest in mills in general. Local interest is also generated by the many local families that are somehow connected to the Edinburg Mill.

Mr. Harshman stated that the Mill is owned by the Town and as such, it receives reduced cost on things like insurance and electric. The largest expenses at the Mill will be the heat and the labor. Mr. Harshman reported that the Visitor Center and Museum should open this spring, and the search for tenants will begin soon.

Mr. Harshman asked Ms. Romeo what she thought the Town should do for the businesses. Ms. Romeo wanted to know if the Town was working with Virginia Tourism. Mr. Harshman stated that yes; the Town is working with Virginia Tourism along with the other towns and the County. Mr. Harshman provided the members with copies of the Shenandoah County Tourism 2010 Marketing Overview. Ms. Romeo stated that she thinks it seems like Edinburg has fallen off of the map. She also stated that no one is coming through Edinburg and wants to know what the Town is doing to advertise for shopping in Edinburg. Mr. Harshman stated that according to the Woodstock Enhancement Coordinator, Woodstock businesses are also

struggling. Mr. Harshman stated that Edinburg is included in all of the County and State advertising. Ms. Romeo stated that she does a lot of advertising for her shop. Mr. Harshman pointed out that the business owners can't expect the Town Government to be the promotional advertisers for their individual businesses.

Ms. Romeo stated that she thought the Mayor should have supported the last Networking Social. Mr. Harshman explained that he could not attend that night, but that the Vice Mayor did. Mr. Harshman also stated that he didn't know of any time that the Town Government did not support the Chamber. Ms. Morris requested that Ms. Romeo make a list of things that she would like the Town to do for the next meeting.

Mr. Wood stated that he thought finances were the main problem and that they were too much for small businesses. Ms. Romeo asked Mr. Harshman if he would put something about the local businesses in the Town Newsletter. He said that he would, however it only goes out to Edinburg residents. Ms. Heier reminded everyone that the Town Newsletter was also on the website and can be read by people everywhere that access the site. Mr. Austin asked Mr. Harshman what Edinburg wants to look like in ten years. Mr. Harshman stated that Historic Preservation would continue. Mr. Austin stated that small businesses were still fighting Wal-mart and asked Mr. Harshman if Wal-mart had contributed anything to Edinburg. Mr. Harshman stated that Wal-mart contributed \$1,000 to the Town. Mr. Austin reported that Lowe's in Woodstock is reducing most of the full-time jobs to part-time. Mr. Harshman stated that he also has noticed that Woodstock Lowe's is struggling.

Mr. Austin commented on how there is no traffic light in Edinburg and wondered how to get people to stop in Edinburg. Ms. Horne stated that when her Tea Room was open, she never had a problem attracting customers. Mr. Harshman commented again about the misconception that Woodstock is thriving; if it were, there would not be vacant retail spaces for rent. He pointed out that Edinburg does not currently have vacancies for new businesses. Mr. Wightman asked what other business or attraction fit in with what Edinburg wants other than the Mill. Mr. Harshman pointed that Our Garden of Eden and Sal's are doing a good job of attracting people to Town and that the food industry is always a good place to promote local business. Mr. Harshman also stated that permitted signage creates problems for letting visitors know what is in Town. He talked briefly about the Town working on some "Way Finding" signs that might help with this.

Ms. Romeo asked Mr. Harshman when the retail space will be available at the Mill and if there had been any advertising done yet. Mr. Harshman stated that the retail space should be available in the spring and that no advertising had been done yet. He explained that the actual "when" it would be available revolves around the County Building Department. Ms. Horne asked if there would be any retail restrictions. Mr. Harshman stated that yes, there probably will and that the retail areas will be required to be open seven days a week. Mr. Harshman reported that the restaurant could have only lunch and dinner and that it will need to appeal to tourists and locals. Ms. Romeo asked Mr. Harshman if he had any plan of contacting other Mills, namely Tuscarora Mill and the Magnolia, which are both Mills that were converted into restaurants. Mr. Harshman said that other Mill restaurants have not been talked to; however there has been some discussion with local mills about doing tours. A self-guided driving tour around the area has been discussed as well as the County's new planning for Agri-Tourism. The new County Tourism and Marketing Director feels that the Edinburg Mill would be a great starting point for such a tour. Mr. Harshman stated that the banquet room is directly connected to the restaurant and that the restaurant will be expected to accept tour bus groups. Ms. Romeo stated that she would like to see the next multi-chamber function at the Mill and that maybe the Mill Grand Opening could coincide with a Chamber Mixer. The Mayor was not sure about a "Grand Opening" event, but thought that a multi-chamber event could be coordinated. Mr. Harshman closed his comments by strongly suggesting that Edinburg business owners not talk negatively to customers visiting their shops.

The next meeting will be on Thursday, February 24, 2011 at 5:30 p.m.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted,  
Mary L. Embrey