

Naturally Meramec Consortium Meeting
Oct. 18, 2016
Meeting Notes

Attendees: Brenda and Jimmy Story, The Blue Hill Company; Terri and Brian Willsey, Hummingbird Kitchen; Serena and Fred Stuart, Stuart Farm; Deb Kleinheider, St. James Marketplace Café; and Jim Sample, Meramec Bison Farm.

MRPC Staff: Connie Willman

Call to Order and Introductions: Chair Brenda Story opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed new members Serena and Fred Stuart of Stuart Farm. All participants introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes: Minutes from the Sept. 20, 2016 meeting were presented. Jim Sample made a motion, seconded by Terri Willsey, that the minutes be approved as presented. Motion passed.

Featured Member: Hummingbird Kitchen: Terri and Brian Willsey presented information about their business, Hummingbird Kitchen, Owensville. Hummingbird Kitchen produces artisan breads, stuffed breads, scones (savory & sweet), jams and jellies, along with free-range lambs. They started the business in 2006, catering to local tastes. They quickly outgrew their 12' x 18' community kitchen and built a new facility in 2015. They are located at 2177 Hwy. ZZ, outside of Owensville.

Grant Applications: Connie reported that neither the USDA Local Foods Promotion Program grant nor the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant was funded. She recently submitted a \$30,000 grant application to Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education for an Entrepreneurship Workshop Series. Announcements should be made by March, 2017.

Regional Trails: At the last meeting, some discussion was held regarding who should be represented on the website trails maps. Consensus of the consortium is that the maps must include all agriculture, tourism and culinary businesses for the following reasons:

- With a total of 50 members across an eight-county area, a map would not include enough businesses to draw visitors to the area. This might work if membership continues to grow, but will take some time.
- Grant funds that finance Naturally Meramec cover marketing activities for the entire region and the businesses in the region. Marketing cannot be exclusive to members only if funded by grant funds.
- Additional marketing and other benefits will be available to members to build value in the organization. This includes an additional layer of information for members on the website and reduced rates for training and collective marketing efforts.

Passport Program: At the last meeting, Rob Roach and Brandon Stotts, with Caledon Virtual, presented an outline of a Passport Program on which MRPC staff and Caledon have been working. Caledon surveyed members to determine possible participation and get pricing input. Due to a limited response to the survey, staff are tabling the idea for now. This idea will be revisited when NMC obtains more members.

Strategic Plan: Due to a lack of time, this agenda item was tabled for a future meeting.

Staff Report: Connie reported on the following:

- Specialty items, including pens, table cloths and canvas grocery bags have been received. Tee-shirts are on order. Each member received a grocery bag and pen.
- Brochure: Members would like a brochure to pass out for a membership drive. Connie will check on the status of the brochure and report at the next meeting. The plan is to have the brochure within three weeks.
- Bulletin Board: Staff have located a bulletin board in the hallway of MRPC on which special events of NMC members will be posted. Members are asked to email event information to Connie to include on the bulletin board and website.

- Connie distributed application forms and a results survey for members who have not yet completed one.

Networking: Attendees were invited to network.