

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE REPORT

First Quarter 2025

In our strategic planning retreat, we identified advocacy as a key element of our work going forward. After much discussion, we decided it would be more appropriate and effective, at least for the time being, for our advocacy work to be overseen by the Executive Director and the Executive Committee, rather than forming a separate committee.

We have some work to do to more clearly define “advocacy” in our situation and how we establish priorities. Since the retreat, my efforts in advocating for the organization have generally fallen into these categories:

- 1 Attempting to build relationships with key leaders and influencers, especially government officials, and to help ensure they understand our identity, purpose, and mission (and influence). Specifically, I have been working to build brand awareness and a positive relationship with the Mayors of Sewanee, Monteagle, Tracy City, and Grundy County, as well as state Rep. Rush Bricken and state Sen. Janice Bowling.
- 2 To be visibly present and engaged as a Friends representative in broader community-building activities. Examples include Monteagle’s Imagine Monteagle project, Sewanee Community Council meetings, and several SC Tourism Partnership Events, as well as conservation events such as public meetings and hearings about the Jumpoff sand plant.
- 3 To directly engage public officials on specific topics directly affecting the parks, such as the Beersheba Springs tower situation (at the request of the Parks) and the Marion County permitting of Woodland Preserve.
- 4 Raising the profile and awareness of Friends and our extensive work by establishing a public “voice” through media, speaking engagements, and participation in events such as the Lookout Wild Film Festival.

- Respectfully Submitted by Ned Murray