

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 24, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.
25-A Market Street, Onancock, Virginia 23417**

Kerry Allison, Executive Director
Laurie Chamberlain, Operations Specialist
Mary Lena Mears, Welcome Center Manager
Allan Burns, Industry Relations Manager

Commissioners in Attendance

Steve Potts, Bill's Restaurant, Chair
Laura Belle Gordy, Accomack Cty Board of Supervisors
Blake Johnson, The Island House
Ace Seybolt, Chincoteague Resort Realty
Monika Bridgforth, Barrier Islands Center
John Coker, Northampton Cty Board of Supervisors

Guests Present

Cherron Davis, New Church Welcome Center
Tammy Holloway, Cape Charles Business Association
Clarice MacGarvey, Town of Exmore
Elizabeth Russell, Northampton Chamber
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber
Susan Harris, Cheriton
Kathy Durmick, Franktown

Staff Present

1. Call to Order

- Potts called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

2. Consent Agenda

- Seybolt made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Johnson seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

- Davis reported that the 2018 VTC travel guide features the Eastern Shore; they expect a busy season. Coker inquired why the positive outlook and Davis replied that bad weather affected early vacation plans but VTC forecasts strong travel to VA this year. Holloway noted a definite uptick in reservations the last week at her B&B.
- Shotwell reported that Chincoteague received a VTC grant for Crush Friday.
- Russell reported Cape Charles has been named a top ten "Happiest Seaside Town" by *Coastal Living*, and voting will determine rankings. There are several new businesses in Northampton County. The mentoring program at high school slowed down due to school closings. They are hosting an intensive one-day program on safe food service. Sunset Beach is now KOA.
- MacGarvey reported that a new restaurant in Exmore, Rancho Relaxo, will open in March. Exmore will have Shakespeare in the Park again in September.
- Holloway reported that Festive Fridays was a huge success. They are beginning the grant process for Main Street and have hired a manager for the program.

4. Welcome Center Report

- The staffing problem at the Welcome Center is ongoing.
- The Wildlife Visitor Center may close, but the bike-hiking trail volunteers are trying to keep it open.

5. Industry Relations Report

- Ads and business listings for the 2018 visitor guide totaled \$74,000 compared to \$81,000 last year.
- AR totals \$28,000; much of it is recent invoicing for 2018 guide ads. >90-day accounts receivable total \$13,000 and are the focus of attention for the next month. New KCI employee, Jennifer (Jenn), will be gradually assuming responsibility for ESVATC accounting.
- Burns would like to reduce his working time and move in the direction of someone taking his place.

6. Operations Report

- Continue to look at nearby office space and hope to have three good choices for board consideration by next month's meeting.
- Sudden closure of the guide printer has complicated guide delivery.

- ESVATC was required to purchase a group health insurance plan in order to insure ED; Sarah Barban will utilize the group policy and self-pay her premium.
- Audit with Robinson, Farmer & Cox is Monday, February 12.

7. Executive Director Report

- Barban is absent and at a VTC media conference in Richmond.
- Submitted the VTC grant application for the website; met with Otto, new website partner in Norfolk; began development of new website via 2/monthly conference calls.
- 250 jute tote bags have been produced for WC merchandise.
- Have begun speaker and content lineup for April tourism summit.
- The ES continues to have very strong growth in year-over-year KPIs.

8. Old Business

- Rack Card Policy. The policy for free rack card space gives public sector attractions. Seybolt asked why we are carrying free material for OC and OBX and Johnson asked if we could form a reciprocal agreement. Burns said the only business we have a reciprocal agreement with is the Cape May-Lewes ferry. Potts and Mears offered that a bit of generosity helps promote the ES. Mears asked whether to promote offshore advertising. Potts suggested further discussion on this topic. Mears and Burns will look at reciprocity agreements. Gordy moved to table the discussion, Seybolt seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

9. New Business

- Budget. Allison said that the 2017 budget does not include costs for merchandising or a new website because those were new initiatives done after budget season. Seybolt moved that the ESVATC approve \$19,175 to Otto Design and Marketing based on the revised 11/27/17 estimate. Johnson seconded. Coker asked to add caveat that expenses not exceed budget. Johnson seconded. Motion carried unanimously. Coker suggested opening a second account for budget surplus.
- April Tourism Summit. Allison has lined up a Mainstreet and agritourism speaker. Potts suggested a summit task force and Potts and Johnson agreed to be on it.
- Top Three Priorities. New website. Preparation for FY 2017 audit on February 12. Summit. Burns asked if current weblinks will be continued to be billed since the new website will include weblinks at no charge. Revenue loss could be \$7,000 or so. Coker asked if that revenue would be replaced with different kind of revenue. Allison stated that merchandising and website monetization are potentials. Billing for weblinks will continue until phased out, and Holloway suggested that partners who pre-pay not be given a refund but offered another type of remuneration.

10. Matters by Commissioners

- Johnson reported on the chicken house issue in Wachapreague; Bridgforth reported that the BIC oyster roast is already sold out; a documentary film on food traditions will premiere in March; Coker said that he hopes to redo the Northampton County website; Potts reported on Death By Chocolate, which will be two days this year.

11. Adjournment

- Potts asked for a motion to adjourn. Gordy so moved, Seybolt seconded and the meeting ended at 3:55 pm.

These minutes have been approved by:

/s/ Steve Potts, Chairman

2/28/18

Steve Potts, Chairman

Date