

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.
25-A Market Street, Onancock, Virginia 23417**

Commissioners in Attendance

Larry LeMond, Northampton Cty Board of Supervisors,
Chairman
Steve Potts, Bill's Restaurant, Vice-Chairman
Paige Addison, CBBT
Carol Evans, Cape Charles House B&B
Blake Johnson, Island House
Laura Belle Gordy, Accomack Cty Board of Supervisors

Staff Present

Kerry Allison, Executive Director
Mary L. Mears, Welcome Center Manager
Laura Davis, Content Producer
Laurie Chamberlain, Operations Specialist

Guests Present

Elizabeth Dodd, Northampton Chamber of Commerce
Joanne Moore, Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce
Jessie West, Chincoteague Center
Pennie Rew, VA Welcome Center, New Church
Staci Martin, VTC

1. Call to Order

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

2. Consent Agenda

- LeMond asked that the consent agenda and financials be approved. Gordy so moved, Evans seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Burns commented on Industrial Relations expenses and income.

3. Public Participation

- Dodd: Working on a high school mentoring program where students can practice for possible careers as auto mechanics.
- Moore: 2017 travel guides are ready. Annual general membership meeting February 15. In March will have a blitz at the New Church Welcome Center to promote upcoming festivals. They have started strategic planning with Staci Martin. The state awarded \$11,000 to Black Narrows Brewing in Chincoteague.
- West: New director of Chincoteague Center introduced herself.
- Rew: State travel guides are ready.

4. Welcome Center Report

- Visitor counts: 12.3% behind for December. WC was closed January 7 and 8 due to blizzard.
- Facility: Newer snack vending machine with credit card capacity replaced older which lost visitor money frequently. Heat issues improved since latest December repairs. Continue to keep a heat/air log for CBBT maintenance department. Working on a strategic Welcome Center plan to identify short and long term changes. This plan will be informed by information gleaned from the upcoming VTC Welcome Center conference.
- Consumer Email: Working on a means to mount the new tablet for dbase signups to the front counter.
- Office Activity: Have now updated to a new US weather radar real time map. Have implemented a new visitor emergency policy.

5. Operations Report

- Fisherman's Island sign: Eastern Shore Signs expects to begin this project in April or May.
- 2017 Activity Guide: Initial drop shipments of the guide will go to 21 new places. Local and out-of-state AAA travel centers will be contacted asking if they would like guides.
- 501©(6) status: Has been approved by IRS. Xenith CD account will be closed and reopened with new EIN, signers and address.
- Office equipment: Inventory and estimates of Onancock office equipment are proceeding to replace printers and ED computer which are at least five years old.
- Staples return: Unused toner from the Welcome Center and equipment has been returned to Staples for a credit of at least \$500.

6. Industry Relations Report

- 2017 Activity Guide Ad Sales Final Summary
 - More than 200 contracts were sent out and 96 were returned (48 ads, 48 paid business listings); 33%(>1/3) of ads are new this year; more than \$81,000 was received or committed; 5 premium positions were sold, accounting for \$25,000; 2017 sales equaled or exceeded 2016 sales in all but 1/2 page ads
- End of Year Comments
 - Time budgeted is half time; to date, worked is running at 63%.
 - Industry Relations Manager brought in more than \$95,000 in 2016.

7. Content Producer Report

- 2017 Guide: Managed ad contracts thru to copy ready creative. Worked with guide designer to provide images.
- Addison inquired if there was an online version; Allison replied yes.
- Social Media: Managing Facebook and Instagram visual channels.

8. Executive Director Report

Analytics Summary

November 2016 compared to November 2015

Guide Requests: +8%

Website Unique Visitors: +101%

Website New Visitors: 72%

Website Top Five Cities: VA Beach, DC, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cape Charles

Website Top Five Pages: Do, Suitcase, Get Outside, Calendar, Eat

Wordpress: +759%

Facebook: N/A

December 2016 compared to December 2016

Guide Requests: +7%

Website Unique Visitors: +92%

Website New Visitors: 72%

Website Top Five Cities: DC, VA Beach, Suffolk, Chesapeake, Cape Charles

Website Top Five Pages: Do, Suitcase, Get Outside, Calendar, Eat

Wordpress: -20%

Facebook: 21,575 likes to date, +5% .

- There was general discussion about the 2018 budget, including funding partners' revenue. LeMond expressed his appreciation for the funding requests going out earlier in the quarter. Allison mentioned the new 501© (6) status and the changes that implies, such as sales tax. Allison reported that she had spoken with the Northampton IDA, and would participate in a future meeting.

9. Old Business

- The 2017 guide sales and delivery were discussed; Burns will start selling the ads earlier this year, by the 4th of July. 2016 guides produced by VistaGraphics were larger than allowed so the 2017 guide is in compliance with the VTC guidelines. Allison and the Board thanked Burns, Davis and Mona Cossitt for the look and size of the new guide. Burns added that several of the new business listings such as the Community College will have a budget for ads in the next guide.

10. New Business

- There was general discussion about the two books written by John Amrhein on 18th century Spanish shipwrecks, one of which the author believes is underneath Assateague Island. U.S. Fish and Wildlife has opposed any archeological dig because of the fragile nature of the barrier islands.
- LeMond mentioned the special meeting at the ES Chamber of Commerce to hear author August Wallmeyer discuss his book, *The Extremes of Virginia*.
- LeMond introduced a motion to close the Xenith Bank CD account pursuant to the requirements of the 501 (C)(6). Evans so moved, Potts seconded and the motion passed unanimously. LeMond then asked for a motion to reopen it under the new EIN, with new signers on the account to be the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Executive Director. Evans moved, Potts seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
- Allison stated her top three priorities for February. The Tourism Summit date was clarified to be April 11, 2017. Allison discussed bringing in motivational speakers who will work with businesses to reinvent them; Martin said Dodd's April job fair could include a booth informing people about grants and entrepreneurship opportunities
- Allison reported that spring marketing opportunities need to be evaluated and suggested another workshop for the February 22 board meeting.

11. Matters by Commissioners

- Potts reported that Chincoteague is planning its Death by Chocolate event for February 17-18. Christmas by the Sea was a great success, so was the polar plunge, with 200 participants and thousands of Facebook views.
- Evans reported that Cape Charles had good attendance at Festive Fridays through December. The B&B association's cookie trail was very popular. She stated that Eventacular, the umbrella organization for the birding festival and the tall ships, had dissolved, with the remaining funds returned to Northampton County's infrastructure grant funding. An old gas station is being turned into a coffee shop.
- Johnson reported that Wachapreague has a new town council, and new website and ad at the Welcome Center, with a grant from VTC. The Island House is closed for renovations until February.
- Addison reported that the new tunnel construction on the CBBT will begin in October 2017.
- LeMond reported that Exmore will become a funding partner of the ESVATC. The ESVATC draft bylaws and joint resolution have been reviewed by Accomack County and are set to be reviewed by Northampton County. Regent University is looking for funding partners to produce another film like "Inlawfully Yours" in Cape Charles. Allison says she has alerted the VTC film office and Experimental Film VA.

12. Adjournment

LeMond stated the next meeting will be Wednesday, February 22 at 2:00 p.m. with a workshop meeting on marketing at 12:00 p.m., and asked for a motion to adjourn. Addison so moved, Johnson seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

These minutes have been approved by:

/s/ Larry LeMond

February 22, 2017

Larry LeMond, Chairman

Date