

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.
25-A Market Street, Onancock, Virginia 23417**

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

Commissioners in Attendance

Steve Potts, Bill's Restaurant, Chair
Carol Evans, Cape Charles House, Vice Chair
John Coker, Northampton County Supervisor
Monika Bridgforth, BIC
Blake Johnson, The Island House
Ace Seybolt, Chincoteague Resort Realty
Paige Addison, CBBT

Guests Present

Robie Marsh, Eastern Shore Chamber
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber
Elizabeth Dodd, Northampton Chamber
Shelly Gorman, Cape Charles Community Enhancement
Mills Wehner, Virginia Tourism Corporation Board
Cherron Davis, New Church Welcome Center
Clarice MacGarvey, Exmore

Staff Present

1. Call to Order

Potts called the meeting to order at 2:13 p.m.

2. Consent Agenda

Coker made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Bridgforth seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

Gorman – Interested to meet people and better understand what the ESVATC does.

Wehner – Attending to become better informed about what was going on across the Shore since she had been appointed to the Virginia Tourism Corporation board.

Marsh - Work had begun on the 2018 edition of *Essentials*; described upcoming events.

Shotwell - The Chincoteague chamber launched a new website and received a VTC Crush Friday grant.

Davis – VTC is holding its annual center seminar soon; blitz promotions at New Church WC are very successful.

MacGarvey - Mentioned several upcoming events and a new restaurant opening in Exmore; Exmore received a Marketing Leverage Grant from VTC.

4. Welcome Center Report

Staffing and volunteer numbers were still a challenge. The birding books the commission put in the gift shop at the welcome center had been a hit. The Eastern Shore Wildlife Refuge monitors are all working for the first time in a long time.

5. Industry Relations Report

The camping portion of Sunset Beach had been rebranded as Chesapeake Bay KOA. Over 70 invoices were sent in February and 11 percent of them had errors. Visitor guides are being distributed across the region. Reduction in hours to ten a week is imminent as soon as the ESVATC finds new staff.

6. Operations Report

The guides arrived at HQ; HIM reduced its storage by 20,000 so the storage shed is packed. Still waiting on the guide flip book. The audit went smoothly. A spreadsheet about possible office spaces compared square footage, price and other details.

7. Content Producer Report

VTC media day in Richmond was productive -- ESVA will do a giveaway with Richmond Family magazine. Work has begun on creating new listings on the new website and several new blog posts have launched.

8. Executive Director Report

There were no material audit findings. The auditors are concerned about bookkeeping errors and recommended the commission start a finance committee and have a meeting with Karen Crockett. The ESVATC received grant payback from fall oyster marketing from Chatham Vineyards. VTC awarded the ESVATC 50 percent of the requested website marketing grant for the website. The project scope will be reduced by eliminating search engine marketing and video production.

9. Old Business

- Update on Free Rack Card Policy - Mears reported that the ESVATC now has a reciprocal agreement with Ocean City to carry each other's rack cards. St. Michael's and the Outer Banks are still not confirmed.
- Allison reported that Summit taskforce decided to give away prizes directly from the ESVATC, like a free ad, a cap or a rack card space, instead of soliciting prizes from partners. Potts said that Johnson recommended making the prizes about showing people what the tourism commission can do for them. Allison discussed the advertising she had done for the summit. Seybolt suggested personally inviting the boards of supervisors and Allison agreed that they would.

10. New Business

- DVD Inventory - Chamberlain reported that there were 700 DVDs in the storage shed. Addison said they should be put in every media packet. Shotwell said she would take them to hand out in her media packets. Mears said she could take some and hand them out at the Welcome Center. Davis suggested that some be used at the visitors center seminar.
- Establishment of a Finance Committee - The finance committee will be Seybolt and Coker. Johnson made a motion to establish a finance committee and Addison seconded. The motion passed unanimously.
- Top Three Priorities- Allison said one of her top priorities was arranging a board retreat to talk about challenges and policies. Her other priorities were the website, the summit and staffing challenges.

11. Matters by Commissioners

- Evans reported that Cape Charles would soon have a distillery tasting room.
- Coker announced that Northampton County was in the process of creating a new website.
- Johnson announced the dates for Trident Tackle's annual flounder tournament. A production company called and wanted to do a segment on the tournament.
- Bridgforth announced that the BIC's fifth documentary film would be premiering soon. The Richmond idea station is looking for someone who had 10 pounds of frozen figs, ideally Hog Island figs.
- Seybolt reported that a young lady who worked for a local Long and Foster office was the number one sales person in southern Virginia. She did \$18 million in roughly 100 transactions so Seybolt said something must be going on in Chincoteague.
- Addison said a contest to name the boring machine that would dig the new tunnel is underway.
- Potts said he was getting ready for the new season and he'd closed Sugarbakers after 25 years in business. Potts said Death By Chocolate went well.

12. Adjournment

- Addison made a motion to adjourn, Evans seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

These minutes have been approved by:

/s/ Carol Evans

3/28/18

Carol Evans, Vice-Chair

Date