

Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 23, 2016 at 2:00 p.m.
25-A Market Street, Onancock, Virginia 23417

Commissioners in Attendance

Larry LeMond, Northampton County Board of Supervisors, Chairman
Steve Potts, Bill's Restaurant, Vice-Chairman
Carol Evans, Cape Charles House B&B
Laura Belle Gordy, Accomack County Board of Supervisors

Staff Present

Kerry Allison, ESVATC Executive Director
Allan Burns, ESVATC Welcome Center Manager
Laurie Chamberlain, ESVATC Operations Specialist

Guests Present

Karyn Belknap, ESVATC Artisan Trail
Cherron Davis, Tourism Relations Manager, Virginia Tourism Corp Welcome Center, New Church
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce

1. Call to Order

LeMond called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

2. Consent Agenda and P/L Statement financials

- Burns reported that budget performance shows the WC income lower than it normally is at this time of year due to delays in billing by the bookkeeper.
- LeMond questioned an item on WC income statement; Allison will investigate.
- Evans moved that the consent agenda be approved. Gordy seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

- Shotwell reported on upcoming events: decoy show will be March 25-26; Seafood Festival May 7; and lunch and learn following the ESVATC Tourism Summit.
- Davis reported on the Visitor Center seminar held in Roanoke the previous week, which Burns attended.

4. Welcome Center Report

- Burns reported that visitor counts are currently running 4-5% ahead of 2015.
- Staff has phoned all lodging facilities on the Eastern Shore to update the ESVATC Housing Report.

○ Pet friendly	60	▪ Motels	5370
○ Waterfront	38	▪ Vac. Rentals	3525
○ Accommodations		▪ B & B's	361
▪ Units	868	Further breakouts are available by request	
▪ Rooms	2012	○ by county	
▪ Camp sites	1990	○ by lower, middle, upper Shore	
○ Persons	<u>17052</u>		
▪ Camping	7796		
- The Welcome Center hosted a Business After Hours on March 22, with an attendance of 20-25 business people.

- Learning at the recent VTC Welcome Center seminar: the ESVA Welcome Center will need to expand services in the future to remain relevant to business and funding partners, such as charging stations for devices, EZ Pass sales, items for sale, especially artisan items, or an online store, coffee service, staying open later in the summer.
- Welcome Center FAM tours are scheduled for May.

5. Executive Director Report

- Two travel writers are visiting the Eastern Shore, one in April, one in June.
- **Analytics Summary – Feb 2016 compared to Feb 2015**
 Guide Requests = +74%
 Virtual Guide Views = 149 in Feb 2016 (new stat, prior year totals: 2014=304; 2015=1519)
 Website Unique Visitors = +20%
 Website New Visitors: 76%
 Website Top Five Cities: VA Beach, Washington DC, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cape Charles
 Website Top Five Pages: Home, Calendar, Eat, Map, Stay
 Facebook, 17,213 Likes to Date: +104%

6. Old Business

- LeMond noted the Federal government had withdrawn plans to explore oil drilling in the mid-Atlantic, with both Eastern Shore counties and the Tourism Commission having sent letters against.
- Allison reported on the Tourism Summit to be held at ESCC on Tuesday April 5, with speakers from the Artisan Trail and VTC. Steve Potts generously donated boxed lunches.
- LeMond had corrections to the by-laws draft, which will be resubmitted for approval April 27. Once agreed upon by the Commissioners, both county attorneys will review it.

7. New Business

- Gordy reported Accomack County has appointed Blake Johnson to the ESVAT Board of Commissioners. He is full of ideas, has a business in Accomack County and advertises at the Welcome Center.
- Allison reported on meetings to pursue a large, regional VTC grant to promote the Oyster Trail, with the ESVATC partnering.
- A second grant will promote the Artisan Trail, with ESVATC partnering.
- A third grant will fund website development for a new ESVATC marketing platform.
- Evans commented on a video that has disappeared from the website; Allison will investigate.
- The Nature Conservancy office is concerned about the ESVATC website promoting for-profit tours of the barrier islands. Shotwell said Rick Kellam must know restrictions. Evans said matters had been resolved with the conservancy several years ago and that guides who were certified through the community college were permitted to do so.

Allison stated her top 3 priorities for the coming month: Tourism Summit on April 5. Grant writing. Spring consumer email.

8. Matters by Commissioners

- Potts reported planning a “Chinco de Mayo”.
- Evans said there was no news on the birding festival reorganization: it needs professional guidance by birding experts as well as integrity and involvement by both counties. She would love to see it continue because it is a worthy event and emblematic of the Shore; with the proper organization it could build up to a 3-4 day event.

9. Adjournment

Le Mond stated the next meeting will be Wednesday, April 27, beginning with a budget workshop and lunch at 12:00. LeMond asked for a motion to adjourn, Gordy so moved, Evans seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:17 pm.

Larry LeMond, Chairman

Date