

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 25, 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 B&B, Vice Chair
Paige Addison, CBBT
John Coker, Northampton County BOS

Guests Present

Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber
Ryan Webb, Magine Nation
Elizabeth Russel, Northampton Chamber
Clarice MacGarvey, Town of Exmore

Staff Present

1. Call to Order

- Potts called the meeting to order at 2:15 p.m.

2. Consent Agenda

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

3. Public Participation

- Webb made a presentation about his new apparel company Magine Nation.
- Shotwell hired a new staff member and a summer intern.
- Russel was preparing for the garden tour and spoke about several upcoming events.
- MacGarvey described upcoming events and new business openings in Exmore.

4. Welcome Center Report

- Consumer email sign ups were increasing due to a new procedure Mears implemented. Staffing and volunteer levels were still a challenge.
- Key takeaways from the visitors center seminar include a program to start partner demonstrations to draw in more visitors.

5. Industry Relations Report

- Ocean City and the Outer Banks have reciprocity agreements with ESVATC.
- Feedback from Barban was driving database clean up.
- Burns described the accounts receivable process. Allison said she and the finance committee would be meeting with KCI to discuss solutions. Russel suggested looking into an invoicing software called CC Assist. Shotwell said that in her office one person handles visitor guide ad sales so that only one person has their hands on it.

6. Operations Report

- Tourism Summit feedback was very positive. The agritourism panel was the most popular session of the day.
- Staff looked at potential office space at the Onancock School but it would have to be completely renovated, and the owners require pre-renovation commitment. Board comments were negative.

7. Content Producer Report

- A giveaway to Cape Charles with *Richmond Family Magazine* was produced with the help of Jen Lewis.
- Updating the partner database for the website was a bigger project than anticipated.
- TC published new blogs about dog friendly places and the concrete ships off Kiptopeke.
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8. Executive Director Report

- Unique visitors to the website have decreased year over year and guide print requests dropped 87 percent year over year. Industry partners across the state were experiencing the same thing, based on conversations at a recent VADMO conference.

9. Old Business

- Setting a Board Retreat Date: Evans suggested choosing a Wednesday in the first or second week of October. Staff will begin planning. Allison suggested holding the meeting from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

10. New Business

- Top Three Priorities: Top three priorities were the website, the budget and reorganization.

11. Matters by Commissioners

- Coker announced that Northampton County's tourism grant applications were due May 7. He had heard that the staffing at the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge was gone; Mears said a May 1 meeting would determine if it would be possible to open the visitors center but the refuge would be open regardless.
- Evans said two businesses, Mason Avenue Furniture Exchange and Cape Charles Candy Company, would be opening soon. Parking was always an issue and the town would be addressing it. A gravel area had been put in behind some of the shops and business owners were asked to park there. Main Street held committee meetings and a visioning session.
- Addison reported that the name Chessie had been chosen for the tunnel boring machine. All three of the contest winners were from the Eastern Shore. Addison asked if Mary Lena would be attending the visitor thank you at the Norfolk Airport; Mears said yes. Addison suggested getting gifts from Shore businesses for giveaways. Allison said that the Norfolk Airport had just gotten monitors that might be used to market Coastal Virginia tourism destinations.
- Potts said he was glad to see a lot of new people at the Tourism Summit. He said there would be a rocket launch on May 20 at 5:04 a.m.

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/ Steve Potts

May 23, 2018

Steve Potts, Chairman

Date