

Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
June 27, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.
25-A Market Street, Onancock, Virginia 23417

Commissioners in Attendance

Steve Potts, Bill's Restaurant, Chair
Blake Johnson, The Island House
Ace Seybolt, Chincoteague Resort Realty
Paige Addison, CBBT
Monika Bridgforth, BIC

Staff Present

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

Guests Present

Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber
Karyn Belknap, Ten Good Sheep
Cherron Davis, VTC
Clarice MacGarvey, Exmore

1. Call to Order

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

2. Public Participation

Davis said visitation at welcome centers across the state was up 30 percent year-over-year. Visitation was also up at the New Church welcome center. Belknap reported that for the second time the Eastern Shore Artisan Trail brochure had been removed from VTC welcome centers because ACV hadn't paid the bill. Shotwell said that Chincoteague and Assateague were in the July issue of *Southern Living*. She also spoke about several TV crews that would be on the islands. MacGarvey said the Exmore hotels reported that they'd been pretty full since May.

3. Consent Agenda

Seybolt made a motion that the consent agenda be approved. Bridgforth seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

4. Welcome Center Report

- Five new rack cards had been placed in the welcome center.
- Allison and Mears were working together to fine tune a new Demo Days allowing exhibitors in the welcome center.
- No other state welcome centers use kiosks like the TC. Allison said with the advent of the smart phone the kiosk may have run its course. Johnson proposed the idea of using a sign at each end of the Eastern Shore to drive people to the website for information. Addison proposed using some type of monitor in place of the kiosk to show off aspects of the Shore. Mears proposed the idea of breaking up the spotlight display and using it to promote the towns of the Eastern Shore, rather than one business.

5. Industry Relations Report

- Enterprise closed their Cool Ford location and was now only operating out of Belle Haven.
- Several new businesses had opened.
- Square was now being used as the invoicing platform. Invoices that were over 90 days past due were down 25 percent. Overall accounts receivable was down as well.
- Burns had been working to find advertisers for the spotlight display. Burns said Sunset Beach had expressed an interest in purchasing one of the light boxes and he asked for a clarification on policy. It was decided that the light boxes should first be offered to other towns. The idea was also proposed that several towns could share the last remaining light box and Allison asked Burns to inquire with Parksley, Exmore, Saxis and Tangier about whether they'd like to split the cost of a light box.

6. Content Producer Report

Allison reported that Barban was showing a group of VTC staffers around Cape Charles and would be attending a press

conference with the secretary of commerce.

7. Executive Director Report

- The finance committee advised that it should be policy that staff must use all vacation time by the end of each calendar year.
- Moving the visitor guide advertising contract to Square from Adobe could save money, further investigation needed.
- Investigating setting up non-profit foundation to be eligible for free Google AdWords.
- Requested \$70 to cover the cost of keeping the artisan trail brochure in New Church Welcome Center due to the Artisan Center of Virginia no longer paying the bill. Belknap is working to get the remaining artisan trail brochures back on the Eastern Shore. Belknap said the ESVA Creative Collective, a new organization that was in the works to promote artisans and tourism businesses, could fund future distribution costs. Johnson made a motion that the tourism commission pay \$70 to finish out the contract for artisan trail brochures at the New Church Welcome Center. Seybolt seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Belknap asked the board if they'd be willing to revisit the matter if there were still brochures left in 2019 and the consensus was that they would be.

8. Old Business

- Free Town Welcome Center Advertising: Allison reminded the board that Chincoteague, Onancock, Wachapreague and Cape Charles had light boxes in the Welcome Center. Cape Charles was the only town not currently paying for their light box. Bridgforth made a motion that all light box space in the welcome center must be paid for and there will be no complimentary light box spaces effective August 1. Seybolt seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
- FY19 Budget: Seybolt said that there had been a decline in advertising revenue from the visitors guide and a reduction in welcome center revenue because combo rates would no longer be offered. Seybolt said that the finance committee recommended not buying a VTC guide ad because it consumes one third of the advertising budget. Reducing the print run on the visitor guide will save further budget. The budget included a raise for all staff and had a net income of \$15,622. There was more discussion about advertising in the VTC guide and Addison made a motion that the commission spend an amount their budget could withstand to advertise in the VTC guide. Bridgforth seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Addison said the commission needed to keep an open dialogue with VTC about the guide because leads were no longer being generated from the travel guide that they were asking partners to support. There was some discussion about how to fund social media advertising and Google AdWords for the new website. It was decided that \$2,000 would be moved from the Facebook line item to the Google AdWords lines item and \$5,000 would be taken out of surplus for Google AdWords. Giving the commission a \$20,000 advertising budget. Bridgforth made a motion to approve the budget as amended. Seybolt seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
- Hiring for New Positions: Allison said she had advertised the new executive assistant position with VTC, Indeed, LinkedIn and several industry sites. She had also interviewed three people.

9. New Business

- Chamberlain Departure: Allison announced that Chamberlain had gotten a new job with the Eastern Shore Library Foundation. Chamberlain would continue helping in the office and would cross train Allison and Barban to fill in for her.
- Top Three Priorities: Allison said her top three priorities were hiring, the new website and going to Ireland.

10. Matters by Commissioners

- Addison announced that on August 3 the CBBT would be holding a behind the scenes bus tour of the construction area.
- Johnson said the Wachapreague Carnival was going on and The Island House was going to begin hosting dinner cruises out of Wachapreague.
- Bridgforth said DVDs would be available at the end of the month for the BIC film Welcome to the Table. She also said that they would begin work on a new exhibit in the kitchen building in the fall.

- Seybolt said they finally had all local products in their check in amenity bags.
- Allison reminded the board that they would be having a meeting in July. Potts said business was good and there were only 68 days left of summer.

11. Adjournment

Addison made a motion to adjourn and Seybolt seconded. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

These minutes have been approved by:

/s/ Carol Evans

7/25/18

Carol Evans, Co-Chairman

Date