

Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission

Meeting Minutes

July 27, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.

25-A Market Street, Onancock, Virginia 23417

Commissioners in Attendance

John Coker, Northampton Supervisors
Laura Belle Gordy, Accomack Supervisors
Carol Evans, Cape Charles House, Vice Chair
Paige Addison, CBBT
Blake Johnson, The Island House
Monika Bridgforth, BIC

Staff Present

Kerry Allison, Executive Director
Sarah Barban, Content Producer
Allan Burns, Industry Relations Manager
Sarah Head, Executive Assistant

Guests Present

Deborah Christie, Scott Taylor's Office

1. Call to Order

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

2. Consent Agenda

- Bridgforth made a motion to approve the consent agenda, Addison seconded and the motion passed with three yeas; Coker, Evans and Gordy abstained because they weren't at the previous meeting.

3. Content Producer Report

- A group of staffers from VTC visited the Eastern Shore in late July to tour Cape Charles and Onancock. We used this opportunity to travel along with them to collect guide photo assets and launch Facebook Live videos. Preliminary work has begun on the 2019 visitors guide. A content distribution system, Roots Rated, pushes our content out on VTC and builds traffic to our blog posts.

4. Industry Relations Report

- Accounts receivable are continuously improving. In total roughly \$17,000 is outstanding and just one business is responsible for \$5,000 of that total. The new Square invoicing platform is working out very well. Saxis has bought the fourth WC light box and split the space between four businesses.

5. Executive Director Report

- The Virginia Oyster Trail has begun to show signs of activity again and the president of The Artisan Center of Virginia is proposing an oyster summit and developing a revenue stream via a new oyster tax to support the Oyster Trail. Coker warned that adding any kind of tax to oysters would have to be approved by the general assembly.
- The Governor's visit to the ESVA Friday includes several other meetings that have popped up around his visit. Work on fall creative for oyster marketing has begun.
- The bookkeeping cut over to Shannon Wessels as of July 1.
- Cape Charles agreed to give the Tourism Commission \$5,000 in funding, but Evans had a conversation with the town manager who asked that the town earmark a portion of that amount to pay for WC advertising. Evans informed him that there was not a way to earmark funds for the welcome center. The town manager requested to speak to Kerry. Evans encouraged him to do so and mentioned that Cape Charles was currently getting a free light box at the welcome center. The invoice for Cape Charles' light box had not yet been sent and Allison had held off on sending the quarterly request for funding, but Allison said she'd spoken with the interim town manager several times. Coker said he wasn't sure how the Cape Charles Town Council or the new mayor would react to the request to pay for their light box. Evans said it had been suggested that Allison and Evans meet with the interim town manager and the Main Street director.

6. Public Participation

- Christie said a new manager had been appointed at both the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and the Eastern Shore Wildlife Refuge and Christie was hopeful that the refuge would be fully staffed soon. Within six months, there would be a final plan regarding three beach access relocation in the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. There is a dream in the works to build a new CBBT welcome center on Fisherman's Island to replace the restaurant/gift shop/visitor center closed to make way for the second tunnel. It would be low foot print and have an ecological education center. Taylor is concerned about the anchorage off Cape Charles and would be requesting that it be declared a no discharge zone. The possibility of moving it a little bit south was also being explored. Taylor has come out against off shore drilling.

7. Old Business

- \$5,000 owed by Sunset Beach: Sunset Beach has owed the tourism commission \$5,000 since October 2017 and Burns had been trying to collect it. Allison asked the board whether they thought it was time to send a demand letter. Allison said there had been one instance before this where the commission had sent a demand letter. A lawyer charged \$150 to do so and needed a history of the matter, which Burns had. Coker suggested giving them a bit more time to pay, but Addison said they'd been stringing the commission along. She suggested contacting Todd Burbage of Blue Water Development directly. Allison said she would take the next step when she returned from vacation and call the CFO of Blue Water. Burns said he would continue pressing from his end.

8. New Business

- Election of FY19 Executive Officers: Evans opened the floor to nominations but suggested that positions could stay as they were. Gordy made a motion that officers remain as they were for another year. Coker seconded. Evans proposed that Addison's combined position of secretary and treasurer be split into two positions. Addison made a motion that the position be divided and that Seybolt be elected as treasurer. Johnson seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
- End of Year Financial Report: There were some unexpected expenses that weren't budgeted for in the previous fiscal year, which threw the budget off, Allison said. Those expenses included the cost of the new website and merchandise. The budget ended up \$32,000 in the red. Revenue from ad sales came in way under what was projected, but more income came in from Accomack County and Onancock. Coker said all of the pluses and minuses evened out except for the website, which was funded through the rainy day fund. There had been discussion about putting the rainy day fund into a CD, Allison said. The finance committee would also be looking into whether the website should be capitalized, Coker said.
- Top Three Priorities: Allison's top three priorities were the website, training Sarah Head and transitioning Laurie out and working with the bookkeeper.

9. Matters by Commissioners

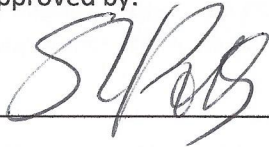
- Coker said ship anchorage in Cape Charles was a huge issue. Ships being able to discharge sewage into the bay could potentially ruin several industries on the Eastern Shore. Bay Creek has been sold. A company would be brought in to run the golf course. There were also rumors that developers would be brought in to build houses and there was talk of building a conference center. A large hotel at the end of Mason Avenue was in the works and moving forward. Watch houses had become a zoning issue in Northampton County. Airbnb houses were also a concern. VDOT was proposing to redo the Cape Charles intersection. Under the plan the turn lanes would be lengthened and widened. There was no recommendation to reduce the speed limit. Coker encouraged everyone to make a public comment about the plan. Coker said his primary goal was to decrease the speed limit around that intersection.
- Addison said the Friday, August 3, tour of the new tunnel construction has filled up very quickly and there was a waiting list. Chessie, the tunnel boring machine, would be commissioned soon but would stay in Germany until needed.

- Johnson said he had done one dinner cruise out of Wachapreague. Plans for the oyster roast were coming together. The carnival was over so life was quiet in Wachapreague. Allison asked Johnson if he wanted the oyster roast to stay on the annual food festivals blog, which is where the fall marketing would push to. Johnson said it sold out in a day last year so there wasn't a need to advertise it and people got angry when it was advertised and they couldn't come.
- Gordy said that the Accomack Board of Supervisors was working to get the speed reduced at Nandua Middle School, but VDOT told them that wasn't necessary, and she wished Coker luck with his VDOT project. She also told the board that the road into Onancock from Onley would be changed to three lanes. There would be one lane going each way with a turn lane in the middle and dedicated bike lanes on both sides.
- Bridgforth said that thanks to Burns the Eastern Shore Museum Network realized they hadn't paid for their rack space. Meet the Carvers would be held again in the fall and in September there would be a private celebration for the ground breaking for the renovations of the quarter kitchen.
- Evans said the Cape Charles Fireman's Carnival would run for the first two weekends in August. The Schooner Virginia would also be doing sunset cruises both of those weekends.
- Coker said that he thought the proposal that was made at the last meeting to put signs at either end of the Shore with the website on them was a great idea. Coker said that Northampton County could soon have access to pieces of land where they could arrange with landowners to put up billboards. Addison explained that when the signs were first put up the decision was made not to put the web address on them for fear of people bypassing the welcome center in favor of using the website.

10. Adjournment

- Evans recessed the open session for 10 minutes at 3:30 before going into closed session. A closed session to discuss personnel matters began at 3:40 and concluded at approximately 4:30 p.m.

These minutes have been approved by:



Steve Potts, Chairman



Date