

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 27, 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
Paige Addison, CBBT
Blake Johnson, Island House
Laura Bell Gordy, Accomack County Board of Supervisors

Staff Present

Kerry Allison, ESVATC Executive Director
Allan Burns, Industry Relations Manager
Mary L. Mears, Welcome Center Manager
Laura Davis, Content Producer
Laurie Chamberlain, ESVATC Operations Specialist

Guests Present

Gerald Boyd, Eastern Shore Training and Consulting
Cherron Davis, VA Welcome Center at New Church
Elizabeth Dodd, Northampton Chamber of Commerce
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce

1. Call to Order

- LeMond called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. and corrected the agenda to read "closed session at the end of the meeting regarding legal matters".

2. Consent Agenda

- LeMond asked that the consent agenda and financials be approved. Gordy so moved, Johnson seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

- Shotwell reported 2,000 attended the Oyster Festival, and about 9,000 attended the Chincoteague launch viewing, with excitement and energy about renewed launch program. Possibly due to weather, September numbers were a bit lower. They are now focusing on Waterfowl Week in November and the Christmas parade.
- Dodd reported the Northampton County Fair was successful with over 700 people and many activities for all ages. Festive Fridays will be starting after Thanksgiving.
- Davis thanked the ESVATC for the FAM tour and commented that the visitors from VTC received red carpet treatment and want to come back.
- Boyd reported that he is involved with planning a virtual black history tour including a restored blacksmith shop in Onancock, partnered with Onancock Town Hall. It could open by June 2017. They are seeking financial support. LeMond said to let the commission know what they can do to help. Allison mentioned that there would be tie-ins to the plans for 2026, 250th celebration, which on the Shore would emphasize water culture, agriculture and the black history experience. She has already met with Ker Place, and Boyd asked to be kept in the loop.

4. Welcome Center Report

- Mears reported visitor counts are currently 1.9 – 2.4% behind October 2015.
- Two new employees, Paul and Nicki Tiffany, will work during the fall and winter, and Kim Quanbeck will be also be joining their staff in November.
- Mears reported on the situation at the Welcome Center during Hurricane Matthew, with several people stranded because of high water; some were at the Welcome Center two nights. Mears is developing a storm preparation protocol.
- Mears is working with Allison on inputting events to the website calendar.

5. Industry Relations Report

- More than 200 Activity Guide contracts were sent out; 79 have been returned (41 ads, 38 paid business listings). There were 73 ads and business listings in 2016.

- There are 27 new ads this year, a 33% increase
- Contracts still trickling in – October 31 is drop-dead date
- \$75,000 has been received or committed. All 5 premium positions were sold, accounting for \$25,000.
- Addison complimented Burns on his progress this first year, saying having someone who is part of the ESVATC doing the selling gives a face to the Tourism Commission. Burns said he enjoys meeting with people. Potts said these meetings help keep the ESVATC informed as to what is going on locally.

6. Executive Director Report

- September 2016 compared to September 2015; Guide Requests: N/A; Website Unique Visitors: +.01%; Website New Visitors: 76%; Website Top Five Cities: VA Beach, DC, Norfolk, Suffolk, N/A; Website Top Five Pages: /Oysters, Suitcase, Get Outside, Eat, Calendar; Wordpress: +781% ; Facebook: 21,403 likes to date, negligible growth last month.
- Allison thanked the Board for their help with VTC FAM tour. LM provided a gracious welcome to visitors at the CBBT. Addison not only set up the oyster roast but was quickly able to move it to Mimosa when bad weather threatened. Johnson and Rick Kellam took people out in their boats. Potts produced an incredible meal at the Chincoteague Museum and told stories of his family recipes. Mears and Laura Davis provided decorated oyster shells and incredible desserts. Allison and the Board thanked Cherron and her staff. LeMond commended everyone on an ambitious program and great job.
- Allison reported on three groups of writers visiting the Eastern Shore in the next few weeks.
- Allison reported on shoulder season marketing which includes partnering with Mills Wehner on oyster events and NPR spots. She will gather information from everyone next month and have a debriefing on fall marketing.

7. Old Business

- Allison reported on the Birding Festival committee strategic planning with VTC's Staci Martin, with eventually expanding it to cover the entire Eastern Shore. Since Cape May has a very large birding event, it would be natural to go from Cape May down the Eastern Shore.
- Allison reported on the Group Tour Task Force, an ad hoc group which met last week to develop a regional itinerary for the Eastern Shore to formally market group tours. The group tourism can't be measured easily; VTC markets to bus companies who market it to consumers. The next meeting will be 2nd quarter of next year with plans to be ready to market to brokers the following year.
- Chamberlain reported on bids received for repairing the ESVATC road sign on Fisherman's Island from Adco and Eastern Shore Signs. For the logo, Addison recommended the option of using a sticker sealed with laminate, proposed by Eastern Shore Signs, over a routed PVC option, saying that CBBT has other similar signs and they have stood up well. Cost is about \$1,100. Chamberlain said replacement of the logo would cost \$100. Potts agreed that this made replacing it affordable. Addison stated that coordinating safety measures with the sign repair work would take some time. Chamberlain suggested approving a bid now and letting the installer work it into his schedule either this fall or next spring. Johnson agreed. LeMond asked for a motion to approve the option proposed by Eastern Shore Signs. Johnson so moved, Addison seconded, and the bid was approved unanimously.

8. New Business

- LeMond reported on the by-laws. He has met with Gordy, Steve Miner and Cela Burge, who will draft a new joint resolution describing the responsibilities of each county to finalize in January or February, followed by updating the bylaws and the personnel manual.
- Allison reported on the Economic Development conference and described first discovering what consumers want and then marketing to those needs instead of the other way around. Recently A-NCPDC received a \$48,000 grant to look at developing the Northampton middle school site. The role of the ESVATC is shifting to be more strategic; she is working with Staci Martin and VTC. Curt Smith has recommended a national conference in West

Virginia on how to develop tourism in rural communities. LeMond commented on continuing growth of tourism as the biggest economic driver on the Eastern Shore.

- Allison's three priorities for the coming month are completing editorial content for the 2017 Activity Guide; continuing to work on strategies for Oyster Trail and Birding Festival, Renata Shepard and Experimental Film VA; and media trips.

9. Matters by Commissioners

- Potts reported on plans for Christmas by the Sea, and progressive home tour, Savor the Seasons.
- Johnson commented on 1,000 bike riders on CBES bike tour recently, which is a huge opportunity for the community and that there was no breakfast for them in Wachapreague. He questioned the return on investment of the Artisan Trail and Oyster Trail. Allison said best practice is it takes three to five years to prove the value of this type of investment. Steve Galyean, VTC head of development, just put \$5,000 into the regional oyster trail strategic planning. Mears mentioned that the Artisan Trail brochure with map is the second most popular guide because the large map is a good visitor tool. LeMond stated the number of Artisan Trail participants who sign up again will be a good measure of its success.
- Addison reported that the Federal government approved the construction of the new tunnel; they are putting together final documents and will be looking into the bond market next week.
- Burns reported that Sunset Beach is discussing the possibility of holding one more oyster festival, in March, as a fundraiser for the Cape Charles Rotary Club.

10. Adjournment

LeMond stated the next meeting will be Wednesday, November 16 at 2:00 p.m. LeMond moved that the ESVATC enter Closed Session pursuant to VA Code Section 3711 A(1), A(3), A (5), A(7), and read as follows: "A7 - Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body; and consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. For the purposes of this subdivision, "probable litigation" means litigation that has been specifically threatened or on which the public body or its legal counsel has a reasonable basis to believe will be commenced by or against a known party. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to permit the closure of a meeting merely because an attorney representing the public body is in attendance or is consulted on a matter. I certify that only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act were heard, discussed or considered in the Closed Session to which this certification applies, and (II) only such business matters as were identified in the motion by which this Closed Session was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting to which this certification applies." LeMond moved to go into closed session. Gordy seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

11. Closed Session

The closed session was ended at 4:15 p.m. Potts made a motion to certify that nothing except legal issues were discussed, Addison seconded.

/S/ Larry LeMond

11/16/16

Larry LeMond, Chairman

Date