

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
November 16, 2016 at 2:00 p.m.  
25-A Market Street, Onancock, Virginia 23417**

Commissioners in Attendance

Larry LeMond, Northampton Cty Board of Supervisors,  
Chairman  
Steve Potts, Bill's Restaurant, Vice-Chairman  
Paige Addison, CBBT  
Carol Evans, Cape Charles House B&B  
Blake Johnson, Island House  
Laura Belle Gordy, Accomack Cty Board of Supervisors

Staff Present

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

Guests Present

Russell Jones, Mayor of Onancock  
Jean Hungiville, ES Chamber of Commerce  
Clarice MacGarvey, Town of Exmore  
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce

1. Call to Order

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

2. Consent Agenda

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

3. Public Participation

- MacGarvey reported that Exmore is finalizing a multi-use public building as a performance space. She thanked the ESVATC and VTC for recommending a tourism grant. There will be activities like Shakespeare in the Park for spring and summer. The water park is under consideration – but is rather pricy. The town is focused on its citizens and tourism.
- Shotwell reported that the Christmas parade is 12/3. October numbers were up 8%, possibly due to the rocket launch and oyster fest. Chincoteague will place a December ad in Times Square.
- Hungiville reported that the ES Chamber of Commerce did a recent online survey with a 28% return with many good ideas. Upcoming activities include tax seminar and a January political overview.
- Jones reported he was here for the first time, to observe.

4. Welcome Center Report

- Visitor Counts: Running about 1.9 – 2.6% behind for November.
- Facility: Evaluating best approach to floor maintenance.
- Consumer Email: Implemented dbase signups via tablet.
- Office Activity: Launched new WC staff/volunteer monthly newsletter.
- Xmas Party: Will be December 6 from 4:30 to 6:30 at Sally Richardson's home.

5. Operations Report

- CBBT Sign Refresh: Underway, with an expected December delivery pending weather conditions.
- WC Printer: Ongoing issues continue with new printer installed over the summer. Addison offered the CBBT's printer for large color projects.

6. Industry Relations Report

- 2017 Guide: Over \$80,000 has been received from ad sales for the 2017 Guide. All 5 premium positions were sold, accounting for \$25,000. 2017 sales equaled or exceeded 2016 sales in all but ½ page ads.

## 7. Content Producer Report

- 2017 Guide: Managing all ad contracts, obtaining creative, doing changes to current ads and working with the designer.
- Social Media: Managing Instagram visual channel.
- Blog: Compiling events across the region for holiday landing page and 2017 culinary events.

## 8. Executive Director Report

- Fall Marketing: Data shows an increase due to new fall marketing tactics.
- Analytics Summary: Visits to the WordPress blog are not reflected in Website Unique Visitors. October 2016 compared to October 2015: Guide Requests: +25%; Website Unique Visitors: +57%; Website New Visitors: 76%; Website Top Five Cities: VA Beach, DC, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cape Charles; Website Top Five Pages: Do, Suitcase, Get Outside, Calendar, Eat; WordPress: -32%.
- Financials: These key reports continue to be shaped and refined. LeMond pointed out that the WC payroll taxes showed zero and should be fixed and requested that funding requests be sent out at the beginning of each quarter.

## 9. Old Business

- 2017 Guide: Several options for cover are in review. Short articles are being included which direct readers to the website for more information. A reference to "Off 13" and a short article will kick off an evolution towards a potential "Off 13" marketing campaign.
- Birding Festival: The next strategic planning meeting will be November 29. The Shore is a premier birding attraction for the East Coast and could include other locations from Cape May to North Carolina. LeMond inquired about room availability; Shotwell and Allison estimated 18,000 in all. Potts mentioned that local businesses can charge premium prices if the ESVA becomes a major birding destination. Johnson inquired about the date of the festival; it is always Columbus Day weekend. Shotwell added there are already 3,000 people in Chincoteague that weekend for the oyster festival, so it would be a perfect fit. Johnson inquired would there be an anchor event? Allison said the festival focal point is a lecture by a renowned expert.

## 10. New Business

- Industry Relations: Addison stated that an industry relations program could educate and inform local and regional government and tourism industry partners about the Tourism Commission's outcomes and strategies; serve as a cost-effective educational tool involving the community college to unify industry; share info on VTC grants and marketing programs and Off 13 ideas. LeMond requested this important discussion be continued in a January workshop.
- Education: LeMond and the Board thanked Allison for her "white paper" on Eastern Shore tourism and the accomplishments of the Commission and suggested she disseminate it widely to key stakeholders.
- Top Priorities: Finishing guide; working with Staci Martin on strategic planning; planning new website; and industry relations. Shotwell stated that Chincoteague is holding a strategic planning session on January 18. Allison added that there is a VTC plan in place that is very broad that can be adapted locally without having to repeat the entire strategic planning process.

## 11. Matters by Commissioners

- Potts reported that his restaurant is packed for Thanksgiving, 900 people expected. He is promoting Christmas by the Sea with a chauffeured tour, ending up at Christmas Manor with dessert with Mr. and Mrs. Claus and a New Year's Eve horseshoe drop with a theme of boots, chaps and cowboy hats.
- Evans reported that a microbrewery is being planned in Cape Charles; there is a December film premiere of "Unlawfully Yours" at the Palace Theatre, a movie partially filmed in Cape Charles; Festive Fridays holiday marketing is gearing up; B&B's are doing a December cookie trail; New Year's Eve event is a crab pot drop with food trucks and more activities.

- Johnson reported on the Wachapreague oyster roast, with quite a few people from out-of-town and attendance of over 700 people; he catered the Hospital Ball, and it was a big success.
- Addison reported that federal funding has been approved for the new CBBT tunnel, with a start in October 2017.

#### 12. Adjournment

LeMond stated the next meeting will be Wednesday, January 25 at 2:00 p.m. with a workshop meeting at 12:00 p.m., and asked for a motion to adjourn. Addison so moved, Johnson seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 3:57.

These minutes have been approved by:

/s/ Larry LeMond, Chairman

1/25/17

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Larry LeMond, Chairman

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Date