

Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
November 28, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.
25-A Market Street, Onancock, Virginia 23417

Commissioners in Attendance

Steve Potts, Bill's Restaurant, Chair
Ace Seybolt, Chincoteague Resort Realty
Laura Belle Gordy, Accomack Supervisor
Carol Evans, Cape Charles House, Vice Chair
Paige Addison, CBBT
Blake Johnson, The Island House
Monika Bridgforth, BIC

Commissioners in Absence

John Coker, Northampton Supervisor

Staff Present

Allan Burns, Industry Relations Manager
Sarah Head, Executive Assistant

Guests Present

Billy Joe Tar, Accomack Supervisors
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber
Laura Dodson, Northampton Chamber
Robie Marsh, Eastern Shore Chamber
Karyn Belknap, Ten Good Sheep

1. Call to Order

- Potts called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

2. Consent Agenda

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

3. Public Participation

- Tarr introduced himself as the Chincoteague representative of the Accomack Board of Supervisors.
- Shotwell said Chincoteague was preparing for Christmas events, including the parade and a homes tour. Visitor numbers for October were up slightly from last year and the Chincoteague Travel Guide is getting ready to go to press.
- Dodson introduced herself as the new Northampton Chamber Director and gave an update on the Festive Fridays in Cape Charles.
- Marsh stated that Eggs & Issues was coming up soon and that the ES Chamber has been working on putting together the business directory for their Essentials publication.
- Belknap gave an update on the last ACV meeting and said that the Shore is not interested in investing more money with them. She also announced a new (and separate) grassroots project that is aiming to promote the Shore through the creatives.

4. Executive Assistant Report

- Head attended the VA-1 conference where they announced the new 50 Years of Love Grant. She said that she believed that there was a really good chance the commission could get the grant and listed some of her ideas, which focused on the theme "Tastes of the Shore."
- Head reported on 3 upcoming articles from Eric Wallace: New vs. Old Economy (next month in VA Living), Paddling the Shore (February in Destination Magazine) and Through-Hiking Assateague (Spring in Backpacker Magazine).
- Facebook is being kept current and the Holiday Blog was updated; however, there have been no further posts on the blog or Instagram.
- The Eastern Shore 2019 Visitor's Guide project has been put on hold due to lack of time and direction.

5. Industry Relations Report

- Burns reported that traffic at the Welcome Center is about 7% ahead of last year.

- The Welcome Center is on the verge of the One Millionth Visitor in under 10 years. Presentation/award ceremony is scheduled for Friday, November 30. The prize will include a 1 week vacation and a multitude of gift certificates for shops, restaurants, etc., all donated by our local businesses.
- New rack cards: CC Ryder Rentals, Parksley Art Gallery, Sunset Beach Resort, Maui Jack's Waterpark, Nature Conservancy
- Removed rack card: Rita's Restaurant (out of business)
- Burns stated that outstanding accounts receivable has been reduced to below \$3,000.

6. Old Business

- Website Update: Four town workshops have been held to the result of an additional 50 businesses, pushing numbers up to 50% of total desired listings. Soft launch is scheduled for December 3rd and the plan to continue reaching out to unlisted businesses is underway. Event listings are extremely low because businesses have to go through VTC and the commission might need to re-evaluate our plan. An extension for the proof needed for the website grant reimbursement is possible, due to the circumstances.
- Insurance Renewals: Liability and property insurances might need to be changed or adjusted when the office moves from Onancock to Melfa.
- Accomack Budget Call: Budget requests were supposed to be due December 14, 2018 but Marsh received an extension, pushing the deadline to January 31, 2019.
- Seybolt asked for clarification on the contract with Otto. Head stated that the contract did include uploading of business information. Johnson asked about the money spent in October and it was determined that this was part of the extended amount agreed upon by the board at an earlier meeting.

7. New Business

- Transition of ESVATC: Potts noted that this would be the last official meeting of this commission and thanked the commissioners, as well as the partners, for all of their time and effort throughout the years.

8. Matters by Commissioners

- Addison spoke on handing everything over to the incoming board and offered to help Robie in any possible way throughout the transition. She also said she hoped that the importance of regional tourism would not be forgotten.
- Bridgforth commended both Burns and Head on their hard work during the difficult transition. She seconded the regional tourism notion that Addison spoke on.
- Seybolt stated that the political dynamics of the past few months were very learning.
- Johnson said that he appreciated the opportunity to be on the board and said that Allan was leaving big shoes to fill. He also wished Head the best and offered his help moving forward.
- Gordy discussed her years with the commission and said that she was sorry to see this change but was willing to support Robie. She also thanked Burns and Head.
- Evans thanked the entire commission for using their respective skills to make the commission thrive and establishing a prime example of regionalism, which needs to continue with the new leadership.
- Potts spoke on the progress that the commission has made over the years. He said that he was most proud of the strength of the partnerships with local businesses that had been made.

9. Closed Session

- At 2:36pm Johnson made a motion to go into closed session to discuss personnel matters, which was seconded by Seybolt and passed unanimously.
- At 3:00pm Addison motioned to reconvene in open session, which was seconded by Bridgforth. All members were polled and the commission came out of closed session.

10. Return to Open Session

- General discussion regarding the transition of the Tourism Commission ensued with Robie Marsh, the ED for the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, who will begin to serve as the Interim ED for the Eastern Shore Tourism Commission, effective January 1, 2019.
- Bridgforth made a motion that Marsh be allowed to access the office space, files and staff in order to smooth the transition during the interim. The motion was seconded by Seybolt and passed unanimously.

11. Adjournment

- Gordy motioned to adjourn, which was seconded by Johnson and the meeting was adjourned at 4:12pm.

These minutes have been approved by:

_____, Chairman

Date