

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
June 19, 2019 at 12 p.m.
19056 Parkway Melfa, Virginia 23417**



Commissioners in Attendance

John Coker, Northampton Supervisor, Chair
Billy Joe Tarr, Accomack Supervisor, Vice-Chair
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce
Clarice MacGarvey, Northampton County Appointee
Tammy Holloway, Cape Charles Town Council -by phone

Commissioners in Absence

Adman James, Accomack County Appointee

Ex-officio Non-voting Member in Attendance

Staci Martin

Staff Present

Robie Marsh, Executive Director
Christy Betz, Assistant ED - absent
Susannah Morey, Marketing Director
Aileen Joeckel, Executive Assistant

Guest Present

Curt Smith, A-NPDC Director of Planning
Laura Dodson, Northampton Chamber
Cherron Davis, New Church Welcome Center
Karyn Belknap, Ten Good Sheep
Karen Rush-Monroe
Barbara Johnson

1. Call to Order

- Coker called meeting to order at 12:06 p.m.

2. Introduction of Guest Speaker

- Smith gave presentation on A-NPDC Economic Development Initiatives. The role of A-NPDC, as it pertains to the Tourism Commission, is to be developers of opportunities and assets that can enhance the Tourism Commission's mission. Key to the Eastern Shore, Smith stated that we have two developed Regional Economic Development Plans: a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (DEDS) and a Stronger Economies Together (SET). These two plans are viewed as high quality plans placing us in a competitive position for being awarded funds from Richmond, Federal Programs and other grant opportunities. The A-NPDC focus, in-regards to tourism, is to develop workforce and residence awareness, to be ambassadors for the Shore, and grow the arts industry into a larger economic driver on the Shore. The A-NPDC would like to forge new marketing strategies with the Tourism Commission. Examples are: (1) Local Product Branding for products grown, harvested, and made by small business, (2) Entrepreneurship programs training and funding, (3) New brand development: Wallops Complex - marketing & recruiting businesses to connect to Wallops Complex as stated in the Wallops Aerospace and Defense Plan, (4) Rural Coastal Virginia Brand: Ecotourism and Working Waterfronts, pushing RCVA grants, examples: protecting and enhancing working waterfronts, which are far reaching and including NASA, museums, ferries, ecotourism, water trails - virginiawatertrails.org, bike trails and pedestrian facilities.
 - Coker commented that we need to consider an event tracker mechanism and an event structure, to assist in a higher success rate with new planned events

- Coker also mentioned that we need to find a way to quantitatively provide stats on entrepreneurship here on the Shore and promote the Shore lifestyle as a base for this growth.

3. Administration

- At 12:37 MacGarvey made a motion to approve the financials, seconded by Tarr and passed unanimously.
- At 12:38 Tarr made a motion to approve the minutes, second by MacGarvey and passed unanimously.

4. Public Participation

- Davis spoke about the 50th anniversary of the “Virginia is for Lovers” slogan. The New Church Welcome Center will have their celebration on Saturday, June 29th from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. It will be a taste of the Shore with food, games and give aways for attendees to enjoy. She invited everyone to please come and tell all your friends.

5. Consent Agenda

- At 12:43 Shotwell made a motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Tarr and passed unanimously.
- There were no questions about Staff reports.

6. Old Business

- Personnel Updates: Marsh introduced the New Marketing Director, Susannah Morey to the Commission. He stated that she has hit the ground running and accomplished a lot in one week.

7. Status of New Initiatives in 2019

- New website update: Marsh reported the new website is about to go live today. When process is complete Marsh will reach out to the Commission to go over the new website. Once the Commission approves it, we will begin the process of promoting and marketing the new website. The new URL is visitesva.com.
- Marketing plan for new website release: Marsh stated the following ways we will promote the new website.
 - Inform Industry partners of URL ask them to share with their contacts
 - Use newsletter distribution list which includes tourist emails
 - Share through reciprocal links on partner websites
 - Spending money on Social Media and paid boost
 - For Commission reference, Marsh reported that a digital billboard on Interstate 64, cheapest rate \$4,000 a month, static billboard is even higher. He recommended against spending money on this avenue.
 - He is currently looking into local billboards and would like to get two on Hwy 13.
 - Shotwell mentioned most billboards run about \$300 a month on the Shore
 - Davis added a south bound billboard south of New Church scales is available
 - Joeckel added a north bound billboard owned by Blue Crow was available for \$200 a month in Keller.
 - Smith stated he can supply traffic counts on Hwy 13
 - Martin reported that billboards also qualify for Marketing Grant funds.
- Social Media/Website Analytics: Susannah shared the following:

- Website views are up (old website) 20%
- She will be creating a spreadsheet for YTD numbers on social media and website activity
- Website viewed mostly on computers, followed by mobile device, website is also optimized for mobile phones which will work nicely with billboards promoting URL.
- Facebook followers: 23,400
- Instagram followers: 2,000 mainly women from VaB and Richmond.
- You Tube subscribers: 65
- Starting Instagram initiative where postings can be saved in high lights. Developing icons to save postings under categories, that can be accessed indefinitely.
 - Belknap reported that for ESVA Creative, Belknap reposts highlights of the arts on the Shore. That content can also be shared as reposts. Marsh added as a reminder to everyone, to not forget to always include #visitesva and tagging the Tourism's VISITESVA pages when posting and reposting on Instagram and Facebook, as it will broaden each page's exposure.
- 50 Years of Love: Marsh reported
 - Sally and HH will represent the ESVA Tourism Commission at the New Church Welcome Center. They will be giving away bags, hats, Birding Guidebooks and Visitor Guides.
 - VTC Social Media Influencers visit set for July 9 – 12, itinerary is being set for them to explore the Shore.
 - Martin shared there will be another visit the following week, this group will arrive on the Governors plane, details are not out yet.
 - Marsh added, Susannah will begin work on the Tourism Commission celebration of 50 Years of Love, creating brochure and social media promotion.
- Travel Writers: Marsh reported
 - Larry Bleiberg, freelance writer with AAA Travel Magazine, spent a couple days on Tangier Island, the article won't be published until late this year or early next year.
 - Holloway spoke about a YouTube video being produced by David Parker for Virginia Found, he has a 20-year background in TV. David stayed on the lower Shore for two nights, one night at Bay View Inn the other night at Cherrystone Campground. David will most likely return to the Shore for the Middle Shore and Upper Shore visits in September. David has positive energy looking for quirky fun stories to tell. He has a letter of intent from WHRO a Public TV Station for this Show. It is a 4-part mini-series of unexplored places.
- 2nd Strategic Planning Session: Marsh requested that everyone check their calendars a for date.
 - The Commissioners chose the date for 2nd Strategic Planning session to be held on October 16, 2019 after the regular BOC meeting.

8. Matter by Commissioners

- Coker informed the Commission that the Northampton County Board of Supervisors have approved the extension of this Commission, as is, for another year.
- MacGarvey reported that Exmore has a new business, tourism related, Bay Country Kayaking run by Shannon Alexander operating out of Willis Wharf. Exmore is also hosting the CBES Bike Tour this fall, which they are hoping to include a German beer garden for the returning bikers. MacGarvey announced that Exmore is also looking into doing a bike trail which they hope to include going down to Willis Wharf in the trail. Smith reported Exmore may be eligible for a grant from, Safe Routes for School funds. Martin suggested the Recreational Trails Program which offers a 50/50 match that Exmore can apply for. Martin suggest getting in touch with the realtor

that owns the old department store and have an open house that day. Davis thanked MacGarvey for the representative from Exmore that will be at 50 Years of Love Celebration at the Welcome Center on June 29.

- Shotwell reports that this Friday Chincoteague will be the first to begin the 50 Year of Love celebration with a kickoff concert at Robert Reed Waterfront Park. Chincoteague has rack cards with the event list that will be distributed far and near. A new Chincoteague video is completed and will be on the Chincoteague website. June 18 Chincoteague was featured in Delmarva Live, small town series. It was a pay to play promotion. Chincoteague visitation is up 10% YTD in office visits, best indicators of traffic increase is the TOT funds.
- Martin spoke about the VTC State Tourism Plan, the contract has been awarded to SIR a research company out of Richmond. We will be receiving a survey, which we can forward to other people, please respond and encourage others to also respond to the survey. The survey is about tourism marketing and tourism development. If you are a partner on a marketing leverage grant, please log in and get your numbers. We may have 2-4 new leverage grants coming in, this is good news for the Shore. Martin met with the museum working group here on the Shore in preparing them for a program that is developed to drive visitation to museums. There is a grant round that is opening in October with the Foundation for Humanity to help get staffing and programing for museums. Also, a National Endowment for Humanities grant will pay for tour guiding staff. She suggested that we consider working towards this in 1-2 years and get all the museums together so that each museum can receive 1 or 2 paid tour guide staff. Virginia is for Space Lovers grant continues.
- Holloway reported that Dodson has joined Main Street Cape Charles team as a volunteer. The 50 Years of Love celebration, "Summer of Love", begins July 6th in Cape Charles with their calendar events running through August 24. HGTV was filming in Cape Charles today for another episode of "Beach Front Bargains".
- Marsh shared that Le Tour de Shore Bike Ride was a success with slightly over 280 riders this year. Roughly 80% of the riders are from off the Shore.

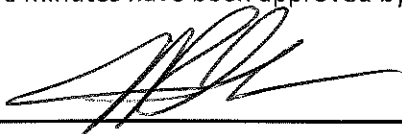
10. Upcoming Dates

- July Board Meeting – Wednesday, July 17, 2019 at 12p.m.

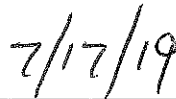
11. Adjournment

- Tarr made a motion to adjourn, MacGarvey seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:26.

These minutes have been approved by:



Chairman



Date