

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
August 21, 2019 at 12 p.m.
19056 Parkway Melfa, Virginia 23410**



Commissioners in Attendance

Billy Joe Tarr, Accomack Supervisor, Vice-Chair
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce
Tammy Holloway, Cape Charles Town Council -by phone
Adam James, Accomack County Appointee

Staff Present

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

Commissioners in Absence

John Coker, Northampton County Supervisor
Clarice MacGarvey, Northampton County Appointee

Guest Present

Laura Dodson, Northampton County Chamber

Ex-officio Non-voting Member in Absence

Staci Martin

1. Call to Order

- Tarr called meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.

2. Public Participation

- Tarr announced that the week of Pony Penning was the busiest it had ever been in its 94-year history. Even more positive for Chincoteague, the profit on proceeds came in at 50% more than expenses.
- Dodson announced the 4th Annual Northampton Agricultural Fair will be Saturday October 5, from 10a.m. – 2p.m. Dodson asked if Tourism would like to have a booth at this years' event. She continued that the Holiday House Tour sponsored by Northampton County Chamber and Bay Creek Resort is set for Saturday December 7th, the hours will be 9a.m. – 12p.m.

3. Consent Agenda

- Tarr announce that the July financials are incomplete, so we will not be voting on that part of the consent agenda, he also asked if there were any request to change the consent agenda. With no changes Tarr asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda.
- At 12:06 Holloway made the first motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Shotwell and passed unanimously.
- Betz reported that visitors are down by 8.4% from 2018 at this time, she spoke with Addison of CBBT and their traffic count is up. Betz is not concerned but did ask if anyone had any thoughts on how to encourage visitors to enter the Welcome Center.
 - Holloway suggest getting in touch with VDOT and request a bigger sign to let visitors know restrooms are available.
 - James suggested signs on the back of the stalls in the bathroom with a good catch phase.

Betz mentioned asking Blue Crab Bay Co. for nuts to serve, she also thought having another people counter on the outside door to the Welcome Center to compare the visitor count on those that enter the Welcome Center info area. Betz reported that Dave Parker's visit went extremely well. The episode that he filmed was picked up for airtime on WHRO the month of March 2020. Betz informed all, not at her request, Parker filmed her son crabbing off her parent's dock. Parker had never been crabbing before and asked if he could come over and film the crabbing experience. Betz commented that it's hard to find places to crab publicly.

- Shotwell reminded everyone that the bridge out to Assateague Island has crabbing as well as the waterways on Assateague Island. Holloway added that the Cape Charles pier has crabbing also Kiptopeke Park.

Betz announced that she and Morey are working on an itinerary September 3-7, for Eric Weiss and Heather LA Corte from On Better Living. Betz reported that she and Morey are also working on an itinerary for Malerie Yolen-Cohn whom will be coming the end of September. Betz reported that she met with Cara Burton to discuss the new Library and a museum challenge on the Shore which lead to a further discussion about creating a series of challenges/quest for tourist. Example: creating cards that list all the museums on the Shore and challenging tourist to see how many they can visit. This can be duplicated for other experience available on the shore, birding sites, water trails etc.

4. Status of New Initiatives in 2019

- New Website
 - Morey reported she is also working through several errors found in the new website. Once tourism resolves the invoicing issues with Otto, Morey is looking to find another knowledgeable web developer to help with new issues that may pop up, right now Morey has been in conversations with Dianne Dawson as a possible contact.
 - Holloway stated that Otto should have thoroughly gone through the website to make sure all links were functioning and the website was up to speed before they allowed the website to go live. Billing us for issues that should had been functioning at time of launch should not be on us.
 - Shotwell explained that the same thing happened when Chincoteague's website went live many things weren't working. Shotwell had to go line by line through the contract and address each item that was not functioning, and we were being billed to fix. Shotwell continued when they had the SEO taken over by another group there was a huge improvement in the analytics. Shotwell also reminded everyone that it takes 90 days from when the website goes live for the analytics to improve.
 - James stated that the surprise additional invoicing has been a major issue with last year's budget.
- Social Media/Website Analytics
 - Morey reported that she spoke with a Facebook Marketing Representative to help her improve her post reach. Instagram impressions have increased, the analytics are posted weekly Morey will have to chart those result so that she can show an accumulative monthly result as other stats are calculated by the month.
- 50 Days to Explore the Shore
 - Morey stated that the, 50 Days to Explore the Shore, brochure is almost completed and ready to print, Shirley has been doing a great job in putting it together.

- New Billboards on Route 13
 - Morey stated that she has a contract for a billboard in New Church facing Southbound which also has lights. Morey hopes the billboard will be up in September. We are planning on having Shirley Deeds design the billboard. Tourism is still looking for a Northbound billboard location.
- 2020 Visitor Guide
 - Morey reported she is developing contracts for the Visitor Guide ads that Betz will be selling.

5. Matters by Commissioners

- Holloway shared that there was a great article in the Washington Post on Cape Charles and asked if it could be shared.
 - Susannah responded that she did share the article on Tuesday.
- James shared he is working with Main Street Onancock group. James stated that we have two great book ends on each end of the Shore, Cape Charles and Chincoteague. What Onancock and other towns in between need to do is decide what sets them apart from each other and market their uniqueness, second have local businesses be open, third create day trips from both ends of the Shore, where visitors are clustering, so tourists have a purpose to travel away from where they are staying and discover other localities and interesting shops/experiences up and down the Shore.
 - Shotwell stated that Chincoteague went through similar challenges. Some local businesses were only open a few days during the week, and most weren't open at night. Visitors complained, the Chamber set a goal to get a commitment from 6 businesses that would remain open to serve the visitors, it was a struggle. Now we have a happy balance.

James continued that the Hospital Ball will be September 21st in the Four Corner Plaza parking lot. There are great auction items this year if anyone likes getting dressed up this is the event to attend. James asked if the Tourism Commission would be having a tailgate spot at the ESVA Chamber event Surf and Turf? Christy answered no. All Commissioners stated it's important for other businesses to see Tourism participation.

- At 1:06p.m. Tarr asked for a motion to have Tourism participate in the Surf and Turf event put on by the Chamber and purchase a tailgate spot for \$160. James made the first motion to approve Tourism participation in the Surf and Turf event, seconded by Shotwell and passed unanimously.
- Shotwell shared the analytics on posting video that she shot with her cell phone during Pony Penning. Ponies leaving the corrals 510K views, Pony Swim 318K views, Pony Parade 241K views. She did comment that we need to keep sharing and reposting all that we see posted about the Shore. Morey added that when anyone posts please add #visitesva. Shotwell is now working on the upcoming Oyster Festival.
- Tarr shared the Annual Chili Chowder Cook off and Car Show sponsored by Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company will be September 28th from 10a.m. – 3p.m.

6. Upcoming Dates

- September Board Meeting – Wednesday, September 18, 2019 at 12p.m.
- Our Strategic Planning Session will be after our October 16th Board meeting

7. Adjournment

- 1:08p.m. James made a motion to adjourn, Holloway seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.

