

Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
May 15, 2019 at 12 p.m.
19056 Parkway Road, Melfa, Virginia 23417



Commissioners in Attendance

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

Staff Present

Robie Marsh, Executive Director
Christy Betz, Assistant Executive Director
Aileen Joeckel, Executive Assistant

Ex-officio Non-voting Member in Attendance

Staci Martin, Virginia Tourism Corporation

Guests Present

Cutis Smith, A-NPDC Director of Planning
Cherron Davis, manager, New Church Welcome Center

1. Call to Order

- Coker called meeting to order at 12:07 p.m.
- Coker changed the order of agenda to accommodate Ann Wall from Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associate out of Richmond Virginia, who was on conference call.
- Wall announced the 18-month audit was completed and all was in good order with the audit. Wall Suggestion for the next audit to be in 6-month, January 1, 2019 to end of this fiscal year June 30, 2019. There after the audits will be done every 12 months.

2. Administration

- At 12:27 p.m. Tar made a motion to approve the financials, seconded by Holloway and passed unanimously.
- Coker noted that the minutes needed one amendment, James made a motion to approve minutes pending the correction, which was seconded by Holloway and passed unanimously.

3. Public Participation

- At 12:28 p.m. Smith, from A-NPDC spoke about Economic Development Committee of the Eastern Shore having the same mission as the Tourism Commission, including promoting all products of the Shore no matter the business type. Smith spoke of partnering closely with Tourism so that we are in unison in searching for growth areas and promoting Shore businesses on and off the Shore together. Next Economic Development meeting June 12th.
- Cherron Davis, reported 50 Years of Love celebration will be held Jun 29th at the New Church Welcome Center. New Church was selected as a high-profile site for major media event coverage. Planned festivities start at 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. or 3p.m.

4. Consent Agenda

- At 12:41 p.m. Tar made a motion to approve consent agenda, which was seconded by Holloway and passed unanimously.

5. Assistant Director Report

- Betz reported April traffic below last year 1.7%, May is up .5% over last year “to date”.
- Betz organized Fam tours for Welcome Center staff: held for Upper Shore, Middle Shore and Lower Shore.
- Industry Relation: Betz announced 14 new partners signed on, 1 previous partner returned.
- Betz participated in Coastal Alliance Travelers Day at the Norfolk Airport with an Eastern Shore display. Susan Schaffer of Norfolk Airport offered a spot-light display at airport information center, Marsh requested including URL of new website in display.

- Betz arranging town manager meetings to discuss off season tourism ideas plus inviting towns Blitz at Southern Welcome Center to high-light their offerings for visitors.
- Betz working with New Church Welcome Center on new ways for businesses to be show cased.
 - Coker commented that we need better outreach to VAB & Norfolk for day trippers.
 - Holloway mentioned Cape Charles has had more visitors from VAB & Norfolk the last few years. We need to figure out what it is that is reaching these day trip visitors and expand on that.
 - Shotwell reported Sandmark Marketing has a hotel coffee table guide that Chincoteague advertising in, she believes that has made a difference. Sandmark has their guides in Ocean City, Delaware, Hampton Roads hotels, 14,000 rooms they advertise to.
 - Davis reports that they see more travelers from Ocean City, Ocean Pines and Berlin day tripping. We need to tap into that area as well.
 - Martin suggested to get list of top employers across the bay and get our rack cards into their employee break rooms, medical centers and medical professional building.
 - Davis recalls a few years back there was an insert into Coastal Virginia Magazine, Virginia Pilot and mailings. Holloway stated that was very successful. Martin comment that there would be matching grants that would assist with the cost of a program like that.
 - Marsh comment that once we are fully staffed, he was looking into those nearby areas as target markets. Holloway added that the remainder of the year there has to be a strategy, 3 tiers with same message going out all at once. Coker added we need to make sure we aren't missing anything that was done last year that was successful
 - Holloway said to be sure to repost content and share other partners content with repost.
 - Marsh remarked to remind partners when sharing on Instagram and face book to use #visitesva in their post
 - Smith recommendation to reach out to Sarah Baldwin and inquire about her new app "Local Scoop".

6. Executive Assistant Report

- No comments on report.

7. Executive Director Report

- Marsh reported he was actively interviewing for the Marketing Director position.
- Marsh added a new agenda line item: Status of New Initiatives in 2019, which will be a continuing line item.
- Marsh is focusing on new website launch end of May, beginning of June.
- Marsh stated all website workshops have taken place, finalizing "Explore the Shore Map", updating videos. Joeckel is contacting all listing without pictures. Otto will be contacting all listings with usernames and passwords once we go live with website so businesses can maintain their listings on their own.
 - Coker asked is there a plan for making sure website is fresh not having businesses that are no longer in operation listed. Marsh responded that would be a task of the new marketing director plus Betz is in the field knowing what is happening.
 - Holloway asked about a strategy on the release of the new website, be sure to include on the shore and offshore releases.
 - Shotwell added to get as many websites as you can to link to ESVA and ESVA website link back that will increase the hits on the new website. Coker added to have Eastern Shore Partners link their websites to us. Martin suggested in our help guide to have a step included that links to ESVA website when a new business is listing on our website. Shotwell stated to have ESVA listed in the navigation bar of other websites is gold, also, be aware there is a 90 day drop in hits on new websites before they rebound.
 - Martin asked about looking into a billboard before you go through the Hampton Tunnel; possibly rent for June, July and August. She suggested to just say, "Look what you can do on the Eastern Shore www.visitesva.com" Marsh mention the billboard just before to get onto Shore Drive, Martin informed all that Cherry Stone and Brewery in Cape Charles have discussed that billboard and the marketing grant would qualify for these initiative.

- Smith added A-NPDC has done a study for a retail marketplace located off the Shore in VA B. also a kiosk of plug and play show casing ES products.
- Davis added to ask Virginia Beach Creative Development Partners (CDP) if we could do a blitz in their centers.
- Marsh reported we received 50 Year of Love grant funds
- Marsh stated 50 Year of Love Instagram influencers: Julie & Charles McColl are coming from Fairfax, VA. July 9th – 12. Marsh coordinated with Holloway and Shotwell for the visit. They are spending a night in Chincoteague, Onancock, and Cape Charles, Holloway has arranged a golf cart parade in Cape Charles during their stay. Coker commented that a packet of new events happening on the Shore should be given to influencers.
- Marsh reported ESVA Tourism 50 Years of Love celebration October 1 – November 19, printing tri fold brochure that acts as promo piece and punch card for scavenger hunt. Four different categories: festival, museums, sights & drinks. Requirement to enter raffle prize: must go to 5 different locations, 3 must include a festival, museum, sight. Two are participants choice, also there must be one sight visited in each, Lower Shore, Middle Shore, Upper Shore. They must get a punch or post a picture on Instagram or face book. Tag #visitesva, and VTC #sharewhatyoulove.
- Date for second strategic meeting will follow the close next BOC meeting June 19, 2019.

8. Status of New Initiatives in 2019

- Shotwell added new publications to follow and be a part of “Eastern Shore First and “Shore Drive Living”.
- Shotwell stated to repost as much information as possible, Google Alerts, ESVA Creative, Northampton County newsletter, #visitesva keeps visibility of Shore out there.
- Holloway states status of love sign planned for in front of Chamber of Commerce building, waiting for new staff person to be hired before they begin discussion.

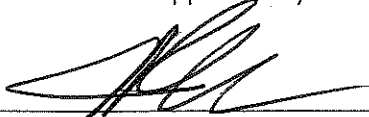
9. Matters by Commissioners

- Tarr announced Accomack Board of Supervisors will vote to continue to fund the ESVA Tourism Commission as is structure to date through June 30, 2020. Coker commented that Northampton County Supervisors would do the same. Marsh advised that the Executive Committee of the Chamber of Commerce agrees with the extension.
- MacGarvey reported CBES Bike tour will be in Exmore and they are looking into a Resale Shop Trail, as Exmore has 9 resale shops.
- Holloway stated there are 7 new business in Cape Charles. Getting new lamp post on Mason, new benches on Strawberry which has a new plaza between stores. Parking will change this fall and go to regular angle parking. Sunset Beach Resort and Cherry Stone Campground now have shuttle buses for service to Cape Charles.
- Shotwell reported Chincoteague 50 Years of Love celebration will be June 21 – Aug 10. New businesses, pizza food truck, pizza and sub shop, frozen banana shop, Pico tacos moved to Crab Shack location.
- Martin announce Danelle Emerson of VTC should be contacted with PR list of what’s new for Virginia Tourism website. Puppy Drum Vineyard and Adventures ECO Tours of Jamesville is getting ready to open. 2019 is the 100 Anniversary of Prohibition and to think about Speak-Easy events. 2020 is the 100 Anniversary of Women’s Right to Vote.
- Martin suggested a workshop on marketing grants so that partners can take advantage of funds that are available.
- Coker would like to see stats on Social Media/promotions that we are putting out.
- Holloway mentioned to be sure to be ADA compliant. Having a phone number listed on website takes care of that.
- Martin reported “Something in the Water” held in Virginia Beach is a 3-day event of music, education, sports, art, culture, health, wellness and more. People are renting their homes in VAB to get out of town, we need to tap into that, Historic Garden Week will be during the same time, great time to host VAB residents.

10. Adjournment

- Tarr motioned to adjourn, which was seconded by MacGarvey and the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

These minutes have been approved by:


_____ Chairman

6/19/19
_____ Date