

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 15, 2020 at 12 p.m.
19056 Parkway Melfa, Virginia 23410**



Commissioners in Attendance

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

Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member

Staci Martin

Commissioners in Absence

Adam James, Accomack County Appointee

Staff Present

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

Guest Present

Kim Moore, Inn at Onancock
Karyn Belknap, Ten Good Sheep
Cherron Davis, New Church Welcome Center

1. Call to Order

- Coker called meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

2. Public Participation

- Belknap informed the BOC that the Artisan Guild Board will be expanding board appointments. The Guild has two long standing board members moving to Pennsylvania. The Studio Tour, Thanksgiving weekend, was a huge success. The marketing strategies were successful, this year's Studio Tour saw visitors from the Philadelphia area and as far South to North Carolina border and West to Charlottesville. Barbra Hart and Karyn Belknap will be chairing the 2020 Studio Tour next Thanksgiving weekend.

3. Consent Agenda

- At 12:05 p.m. Holloway made the first motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Tarr and passed unanimously.
- Coker questioned Betz on the \$81,740 sales for 2019. Betz responded that the end of year sales totals came from Square's End of Year Report which includes everything that was invoiced in 2019. Invoiced sale items include, Visitor Guide ads, Southern Welcome Center revenue of rack space, light boxes, etc. BOC would like to see the total sales number broke into the different sale items that it reflects on. Shotwell added, also compare last year ad sales to this year. Marsh stated next year will be a better time to compare. Visitor Guide 2019 did not have ads in that issue. Betz will compare year to date next year.

4. Strategic Plan Action Items

- Martin handed out the mission draft statements and vision draft statements developed at the strategic planning session held in October.
- At 12:15 p.m. by a consensus vote mission draft #3 was adopted.

Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission will leverage the unique assets, ecosystem, and charm of the region to promote tourism, stimulate the local economy, and support community development on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

The vision statement:

Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission will lead the region as a conduit for the Eastern Shore of Virginia in sustainable tourism practices including marketing, destination management and tourism product development.

Martin continued by handing out the ranking list of priorities discussed during ESVA tourism strategic plan. Marsh handed out the top 12 priorities from the ranking list for BOC to have a quick reference. Martin continued the priority task list will take time. Some of the tasks will be easy to execute other tasks are longer term goals.

5. Status of New Initiatives in 2019

- **Recap: 50 Days to Explore the Shore**

Morey reported on the final report for the 50 Days to Explore the Shore. At the end of the campaign there were 17 posts on Instagram using requested # tags. Eight people sent in their completed brochure. The advertising account on Facebook reached 146,743 unique accounts. The Google ad word campaign had 80,500 impressions with 567 clicks, blog traffic promoting 50 Days had 7,093 visits. The VTC 50 Days "landing page" for the Shore had 88 visitors. The Tourism Commission expanded fall media promotion including 900 new photographs and 600 different albums that can be used for many years to come.

 - Marsh added, there is a new video that will be completed soon. Marsh explained that the intent in choosing a scavenger hunt theme was to promote the entire Shore during the shoulder season.
 - Holloway added Bay Haven Inn of Cape Charles still use the brochure as a check list to what is available on the Shore.
 - Martin added that she believes we had 250,000 views. The \$10,000 grant fund brings each of those views to a cost of .04 each, which is a successful rate of return.
- **2020 Visitor Guide**

Betz announced the blue line for the visitor guide arrived Friday. Morey found a few needed edits. The schedule for printing begins later this week.

 - Holloway inquired about the plans for distribution of the visitor guides and if any new points of distribution have been added.

Marsh informed BOC that he will send out a complete report of the breakdown of distribution. Marsh continued there has been an increase in the number of guides printed and adding new distribution locations in DC, NC, MD DE, with four test locations in PA.
- **2020 Tourism Summit**

Marsh informed the BOC that a save the date email blast had been sent out to tourism partner for Monday February 10th. Marsh asked for comments on the selected date, the three scenarios for summit theme and a guest speaker list.

 - Holloway asked for the date to be changed. A new date was selected, Monday April 6th 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Holloway also mentioned that a short survey to our partners to find out what our partners are looking to get out of the summit would be a good idea. Holloway agreed regionalism as a theme for the summit makes a great deal of sense.

- Coker tasked Marsh to put a draft agenda together with what the summit will look like, knowing it can change, send the draft to BOC before the next meeting. At BOC February meeting we can fine tune the agenda.
- Holloway added it's important that our partners can receive big picture information from the state and realize how to make that information work for them. Promoting regionalism and being aware of what is going on up and down the Shore and conveying that to our visitors, increases the visitor experience.
- Martin suggested breaking into groups and create sample itineraries amongst the group at the table.
- Holloway added that those skills helps the partners learn how they can use social media, calendars, and blogs. Tourism partners can connect those themes into what is happening regionally and build itineraries that include their businesses.
- Shotwell added encourage every business to be listed on the website and posting events grows tourism. Building skills on connecting the dots helps businesses get to the next level.
- Davis suggested getting a successful speaker from a different part of the state. A charismatic personality that may do things differently and offer a new perspective. Also have breakout sessions so that partners can attend workshops/speakers that pertain to their needs.
- Coker would like these questions asked of the partners:
 - Tell us what this Commission is not doing for you.
 - What is the Commission doing that's right or could be improve on?
- Moore suggested a live survey monkey that can be sent to attendees on their electronic devices while at the summit. Share the results at the end of summit.
- Holloway would like the former Commission recognized and honored at the April summit. The past Commission had many accomplishments that we are building upon today. We need to invite them personally and let them know why we are inviting them. Marsh pointed out that we would need to recognize all of the past Commission Boards, as the Commission has had many successes since it was formed in 1984. He cautioned that recognizing one over the other could be perceived negatively by others.

Marsh stated by January 31st he will get a draft layout for the summit agenda, which can be amended. A survey a monkey will be sent to industry partners, by the end of the week, geared toward topics of interest for the summit.

- Social Media/Website Analytics

Morey handed out an overview of social media use. Last month users on the website increase by 36%, length of session time increased also, with the bulk of visitors being new. On Instagram our reach grew by 25%, our impressions went up 23%. The world record striped bass article had a huge reaction on Facebook which attributed to our large increase and our engagement following that story. A new campaign will begin on January 28.

6. New Business

- Middle Shore Welcome Center

Marsh stated one of the goals of the new Commission was to reestablish the Chamber as a Middles Shore Welcome Center. Marsh asked what does the BOC envision this to be?

 - Davis suggested to reach out to Val Guffy, VGuffy@virginia.org. Val conducts site visitation for certification of Welcome Centers. One of the prerequisites is to be open 5 days a week, 2 days must be Saturday and Sunday. Davis added a certified Welcome Center must accept other Welcome Center brochures at no cost.

- Martin stated that a certified regional Welcome Center must have a certain amount of distance between each of their locations.

Marsh asked the BOC how the new Welcome Center should charge for tourism rack cards to be placed at this location? Marsh informed the BOC that a stop light will be installed at the entrance to the Industrial Park by the end of this summer providing easy in and out access. These thoughts and many others need to be considered and worked out.

- Holloway suggested that a two for one price is a consideration for having rack cards at both locations. Staffing cost is going to be a big consideration also.
- Martin sees the Community College as a potential plus providing interns.
- Morey informed the Commission that an intern-job listing has been placed with the Community College for an intern. Morey had been advised that an unpaid position is more difficult to fill.
- Shotwell stated the Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce does pay their interns.
- Betz added that volunteers do a great job at the Southern Gateway Welcome Center. The Middle Shore Welcome Center could be of high interest for retired people in this area to volunteer.
- Coker inquired about billboard signage.

Marsh responded the lower Shore, northbound billboard location needs a lot of work it's on hold right now. The middle Shore, south bound billboard location needs to be identified. The area of interest for this billboard would be before you get to Onancock. The Chamber has new signage for the front of the Chamber office. The sign incorporates both the new Chamber logo and the tourism logo with lettering on top, "Welcome. Visitor Information".

- Holloway shared that the LOVE sign committee, which includes ESVA Creative, has gotten together and will begin the process of designing the Love sign for the front of the Chamber office.

Morey announced that Cape Charles made the cover of the 2020 State of Virginia Guide.

- Holloway added it would be good to let our partners know that they can order the State of Virginia Guide and it's free.
- Martin added you can also order bumper stickers and campground guide booklets from VTC.

Morey added, the Virginia Guide, campground guide, and bumper stickers would be good information to send an eblast to our industry partners.

- Annual Conflict of Interest Signing

Marsh reminded the BOC that the Conflict of Interest forms need to be signed and sent back to BOC respective counties by February 1st.

Marsh stated that he will be updating the by-laws for the ESVA Tourism Commission. The procedure is as follows: Executive Director updates the by-laws, once BOC approves the by-laws they are then sent to both counties for the County Supervisors to approve.

7. Presentation: 757 Envision 2020 Overview by guest Joash Schulman

- www.envisioning2020.com website presentation
 - Martin stated she felt it was important for the BOC to be aware of new branding initiatives that are happening in our region. Martin asked does the BOC want to embrace this movement for the Eastern Shore, coattail the movement and cling to preserving the authenticity of Eastern Shore or not embrace it at all. To have the Commission register the domains for the Eastern Shore to use 757 would be a smart move to start with. The 757 initiative is bigger than tourism it also involves economic development, employment and population growth.

- Karyn informed everyone that #757 is used heavily on the Shore and predominantly by the creative community of the Shore.
- Footnote: ESVA Tourism has registered domains esva757.com, esva757.net, esva757.org esva757.info, prior to the 757 Envision 2020 presentation.

8. Matters by Commissioners

- Martin will continue to work on the strategic plan for the Commission. Martin also is working on the regional section of the Drive 2.0 plan for BOC to review. Drive 2.0 is a long-term strategic plan developed by VTC to help increase tourism visitation and spending across the Commonwealth.
- Shotwell handed out the 2020 Travel Guide for Chincoteague. Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce annual membership meeting will be February 27. Dr. Jim Shaeffer, of the Eastern Shore Community College, will be guest speaker. The meeting will be held at the new firehouse. Chincoteague has a travel writer, from RVA Traveler for the Richmond Magazine, on the island the past three days.

9. Closed Session

- At 2:14 p.m. Coker made a motion to go into closed session to discuss personnel issues, seconded by Tarr and passes unanimously.
- At 2:29 p.m. Tarr made a motion to reconvene in open session, second by Holloway. All members were polled, and the commission came out of closed session.

10. Adjournment

- At 2:29 p.m. Tarr made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Holloway, and the meeting was adjourned.

These minutes have been approved by:

John Coker, Chairman

2/19/2020
Date