

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
March 18, 2020 at 12 p.m.  
19056 Parkway Melfa, Virginia 23417**



*\*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic concerns, this Board Meeting was held via a publicly advertised Conference Call to avoid exposure to the virus.*

Commissioners in Attendance

**All by conference call:**

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

Staff Present

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

Ex-officio Non-voting Member

Staci Martin

1. Call to Order

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

2. Consent Agenda

- At 12:04 p.m. MacGarvey made the first motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Tarr and passed Unanimously.

3. Topic Priority

**Tourism Video**

- Coker stated he liked the new tourism video but to many things were missing from the messaging. What needs to be added: family fun, beach scenes, paddle boarding, kayaking, eating ice cream, activities that attract families. Also, outside shots of many different B&B's from up and down the Shore including different lodging accommodations, camping and small motels. Shotwell added local charming lodging locations with multi price ranges. Coker continued other aspects missing, cycling, trails, birding. MacGarvey added showing specific charm of the Eastern Shore that can't be found anywhere else including more diversity of color, young and old citizens. Holloway mentioned scenes showing the holidays. Marsh added Creatives and their work was not represented. Marsh stated that ESVATC's intent was to also create several 10 to 15 second videos from the footage not used in this video project that would be specific to all activities and experiences available on the Shore. ESVATC would release these targeted videos as quick promotion teasers. Tarr added more than one video should be done to represent the different seasons.

**Help with social distancing**

- Coker shared his thoughts that the Eastern Shore represent a quality to social distancing. ESVA Tourism needs to help our citizens cope with the covid-19 virus fears. All our communities on the Eastern Shore can participate in walking, observing nature, bike riding and bird watching. All these activities are not done in groups but keeps us mentally stimulated and healthy.

- Shotwell shared Chincoteague Chamber's website, under health & public safety, is listing what's open on Chincoteague including hours and days of the week. Making sure we can do all we can to help small business. Chincoteague is using their Facebook posts in promoting walking and enjoying the outdoors. Chincoteague FB is also considering posting a YouTube or Facebook Live with a different child reading a chapter of Misty of Chincoteague every night. When all the positive messaging is over, and things are back to normal only then will Chincoteague launch a huge campaign inviting visitors back.
- Holloway stated that ESVA Tourism needs to focus on the Eastern Shore tourism industry partners. Have a master information source, like the ESVA Chamber's page, where everything is listed for our Tourism businesses. Listing who is open and to what extent the openings exists (hours, days of the week) also resources for businesses. Posts images regularly on Facebook of all the great things we have on the Shore. Another thought, a 1-minute video of different scenes on the Shore, dock side, sunrise, sunset, birds, happy thoughts. If we can get our minds off social distancing and appreciate what we have here on the Shore it could help us going forward when we are open for business.
- Martin added that VTC is focusing on business owners to assist them during business disruption. Amazon is setting up resilience workshops. Facebook created restaurant groups to facilitate resiliency for owners.

#### **Create a Plan**

- Coker explained that we must create our plan now for when the pandemic is over. Tourism is huge on the Shore and it is the ESVA Tourism Commission's job to have a huge roll out which is engaging and points to the Shore as the spot travelers want to go when we are open for business.
  - Shotwell stated that the trails are all open on Chincoteague, but the Visitor Center is closed.
  - Holloway is working at a cautious level; she is accepting previously booked reservations but not taking same day travel request. When Holloway receives a cancelation, she tries to convert the cancelation into a reservation postponement. Holloway agreed there must be a big role out announcement when this is over. ESVA is fortunate to have a less crowded environment for getaways.
  - James agreed that we need to list what businesses are doing, open, close, special hours, and specific arrangements for the public. The clerk's office is closed, no banking deals can close. James reminded everyone that when this is over many companies won't be allowing their workforce off because of a back log of work. He thought the travel industry could take another hit. The Eastern Shore is fortunate that we are surrounded by heavily populated areas which make us an easy long weekend getaway.
  - Holloway mentioned that we should investigate getting the visitor guide into the Virginia Pilot.
  - Morey is working on Zip Trips which are segments seen on the Hampton Road Show, Wavy 10 channel. The program features, for pay, destinations close to the Hampton Roads area.

#### **4. Strategic Plan Action Items**

- Martin stated that all promotions have been canceled or deactivated by VTC. Martin will be working from home during this time. VTC is working on an economic plan in anticipation of travel interruption through June. VTC will also have a resource page that has available programs for tourism industry partners. There will not be an open marketing grant session this spring. The marketing leverage grants that have been awarded can be used as recovery grants.

- Martin stated there are many programs that are being put together to assist the travel industry in Virginia. Martin suggested the ESVA Tourism Commission meet, by conference call, every Wednesday at noon for 15 minutes to be updated on travel industry partner assistance programs.

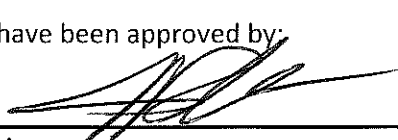
5. Matters by Commissioners

- Shotwell stated that all of us need to constantly share post of all the good things that are happening on Shore. Be sure to tag each community when doing that. The commission needs to be the clearing house for promoting good information and tag the Supervisors.
- Tarr thanked everyone for thinking ahead.

7. Adjournment

- At 1:15 p.m. Tarr made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Holloway, and the meeting was adjourned.

These minutes have been approved by:



8/13/2020

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John Coker, Chairman

Date