

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
March 17, 2021 at noon  
19056 Parkway Melfa, Virginia 23417**

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

Commissioners in Attendance

**All by Zoom:**

John Coker, Northampton Co. Supervisor, Chair  
Billy Joe Tarr, Accomack Co. Supervisor, Vice-Chair  
Evelyn Shotwell, Chincoteague C of C-  
Clarice MacGarvey, Northampton County Appointee  
Matt Spuck, Accomack County Appointee

Staff Present

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

Ex-officio Non-voting Member

Staci Martin, VTC Representative

Guest Present

Cherron Davis, New Church Welcome Center  
Meredith Lusk, Moonrise Jewelry

Commissioner in Absence

Tammy Holloway

1. Call to Order

- At 12:05 p.m. Coker called meeting to order.

2. Public Comments

- Cherron Davis, from New Church Welcome Center, reported that numbers at the WC are rising and people are looking forward to being on the move. Richmond has not given the go ahead for the WC to open completely. Overnight reservations are up, including many campgrounds are booked for the summer.
- Meredith Lusk, from Moonrise Jewelry, commented that she was observing the meeting and eager to hear tourism plans for the upcoming Spring.

3. Consent Agenda

- At 12:09 p.m. Tarr made the first motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Spuck and passed unanimously.

4. VTC Updates

- Martin requested if events are canceled to relay this information to VTC. Tentatively the VTC marketing team is scheduled to visit the Shore on May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. Spending time on the south end of the peninsula to capture interesting video for Tik Tok. VTC has set up a Tik Tok channel for messaging to the under 25 market. WanderLove will be marketed through social and digital formats with launch date July 15<sup>th</sup>- November 15<sup>th</sup>. "Define What You Love" marketing campaign begins August 17 – November 15. Define What You Love campaign focus is for out of state fall road trips and drive markets. Marketing the campaign through digital, social, TV, and radio will be used. VTC will present the full state marketing plan March 29<sup>th</sup> which Martin will share with the BOC in mid-April. Virginia.org will be changing the data share vendor that is used. The change

will be to Simple View. There will be some programming fees and expenses to interact with the new system. VTC is working to have marketing leverage grant money be available to pay for the programming fees for the conversion. Martin has been promoted within VTC with expanded duties but will continue to be the ESVA liaison with VTC.

## 5. Commission Updates

- **Election of Treasurer**

Coker announced that when BOC James resigned the commissions treasurer slot became vacant. Coker and Tarr suggested Spuck as a replacement. Coker requested a nomination for Spuck to take the Treasurer position.

- At 12:19 p.m. Tarr made the first motion to elect Matt Spuck Treasurer, seconded by MacGarvey and passed unanimously.

- **FY20 Audit**

Marsh announced that the annual audit is now in progress and should finish in a day or two. The audit is happening virtually. Later this week a suggestion list from the auditors will be sent to the commission. The audit report will follow.

- **Marketing Director**

Marsh announced the new Marketing Director, Emily Machen will begin March 24<sup>th</sup>. The remaining WanderLove videos will be completed under Machen's and Betz guidance.

- **2021 Activity Guide-Delivered**

Betz announced that the local distribution is going well. Feedback from our partners on the guide has been very positive. Joeckel is shipping out case shipments of the guides to visitor centers around the state.

- **Take Out Challenge Winner**

Betz announced that Cara Burton was the Take-Out Challenge winner. There were 6 people that posted regularly and were trackable for the contest. Betz continued that in the next couple months the Local Choice contest should begin.

- **Update: New Church Billboard Facing**

Marsh showed the BOC additional photos to consider for the billboard refacing. The little girl on the beach photo was selected again this time with better color intensity. Marsh will begin the refacing replacement process.

- **Ready, Set, Go Taskforce - Game plan**

Marsh reported, Ready, Set, Go Taskforce, Phase I: Survey has been completed and results in. Phase II: A series of virtual roundtable discussions ended last week. Phase III: The task force will get back together early next week. Notes taken during the round table discussion have been handed over to Shannon Alexander from ANPDC to compile. A series of online quick reference guides, training resources, and workshops will be developed from data. Phase IV: Resilience training will be set up during an April – May time frame. Marsh stated that feedback from participants in the round table discussions was very positive with a request to make this an annual event.

- **Gateway Welcome Center - Update**

Betz reported numbers are going up at the welcome center. Guides are kept on the outside of the welcome center for travelers to take. The max number of visitors allowed in at a time are 5-6 until staff is fully vaccinated. Betz would like to start working on the town blitz this travel season. The program was very successful in 2019 directing travelers to towns on the Shore.

## 6. Matters by Commissioners

- Coker asked for BOC to review the by-laws and personnel manual over the next 30 days. Marsh will send out copies of both documents electronically for the commissioners to review. At the next BOC meeting 30 minutes will be added for a work session with the commissioners to review and approve changes.
- Tarr inquired if the first Thursday virtual BOC meeting needs to be canceled. It was agreed that at this time it is not necessary to continue the extra meeting.
- Spuck shared the only plans in motion for Onancock are that second Fridays will begin in April, May and June with outdoor dining and music.
- MacGarvey shared AAA will be writing about Shakespeare in the Park which takes place in September at the Exmore park. The article will be in the August issue.
- Shotwell reported that Search for Shamrocks will be going on this coming weekend but will be modified because of Covid-19. February and March had good weekend visitation on the island. The Easter Decoy Show and Seafood Festival have been canceled. Two new events have been created. The Chincoteague Decoy Art and Getaway Auction is planned to replace the Easter Decoy Show. The new event will be an online auction of decoys and other donated items with special packages the hotels and businesses will be putting together for the weekend. The second new event is named, Around the Tent in 3 days. A bingo card will be available from the Chincoteague Chamber for purchase, businesses on the card offer discounts or special offerings to encourage shop visits. The filled cards are returned to the Chamber to be a part of an extravaganza prize drawings.

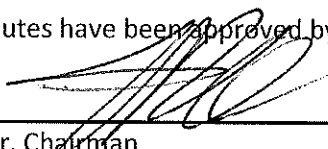
#### 7. Closed Session

- At 12:47 p.m. Coker made a motion to go into closed session to discuss personnel matters, seconded by Tarr, and passed unanimously.
- At 1:05 p.m. Coker made a motion to reconvene in open session, second by Tarr. All members were polled, and the commission came out of closed session.

#### 8. Adjournment

- At 1:06 p.m. Coker made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Tarr, and the meeting was adjourned.

These minutes have been approved by:



5/25/21

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John Coker, Chairman

Date

