

**Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 18, 2022, at 1 PM
19056 Parkway Melba, Virginia 23417**

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic concerns, this Board Meeting was held as a hi-bred in-person or by Zoom Call for comfort level of participants.

Commissioners in Attendance

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

Staff Present

Robert Sabbatini, Executive Director-Zoom
Christy Betz, Destination Development Dir
Emily Machen, Marketing Director
Aileen Joeckel, Executive Assistant

Chamber of Commerce- Observer

Ace Seybolt

Guest Present

Jay Abella, Cape Charles Main Street
Cherron Davis, New Church Welcome Center

Ex-officio Non-voting Member

Laura Messer, VTC Representative

1. Call to Order

- At 1:14 p.m. Coker called meeting to order.

2. Public Comments

- Jay Abella shared Cape Charles Main Street is working on advertisers for the 2023 – 2025 map. Sales are going well with some folks having to give an additional thought where they want to spend marketing dollars. This may be an insight into possible concerns if a recession is looming in the future.
- Ace Seybolt mention bill SB 1391 proposed by Senator Lynnwood Lewis would bypass locality's ability to regulate Short-Term Rentals if property is managed by a licensed Virginia Realtor.
- Coker stated that the Northampton County Board of Supervisors are creating a resolution against the proposed bill.
- Holloway stated that the main issue the town of Cape Charles is concerned with is the loss of community that STR creates. Workforce is also another issue.

4. Consent Agenda

- At 1:01 p.m. Spuck made the first motion to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Shotwell and passed unanimously.

5. VTC Updates

- Laura Messer reported the grant cycle opened yesterday with a closed date for applications February 28, 2023, at 5 p.m. Marketing Leverage Program grant, Festivals and Event grant, DMO grant, apply online. Rocket Lab is set to have their first launch on Monday.

6. Building

- Coker stated all the documents are signed but the Tourism Commission has not written the check for closing the joint ownership of the building. The only concessions Coker and Tarr made was to

have a large down payment with a 5 year note for both the Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Commission to carry until the building is paid off. Waiting on the title search right now.

7. Commission Updates

- **Welcome Center Update**

Betz reported the Welcome Center is running smoothly with a new volunteer starting yesterday. It is slow right now with less than 100 people a day. There has been a 17% increase in visitors year over year for 2022.

- **Travel Guide**

Betz reported the travel guide is waiting on a high-resolution photo from Gordon Campbell. Once we have that last picture we are ready to send out the guide to the printer. With the remaining travel guides we will be shipping the old visitor guides to a publication in Philadelphia.

- **Digital Marketing Analytics**

Machen reported things are going well. Followers are growing steadily from the content that is building about the Shore. Marketing grant ads have stopped which shows a downturn in analytics. A normal occurrence.

- **Food and Travel Magazine**

Machen gave an overview of the opportunity with Food and Travel Magazine which is a national publication. It is an editorial with a full-page ad. The placement of the ad will be the last two pages of the magazine. Included in the package is the print magazine, digital package, thirty second video dedicated to their web page, and social media presence. Chincoteague also has three pages in the same edition of the winter publication.

- **Tourism Summit**

Betz reported a lot of planning is going on. Jon Schallert is booked as the guest speaker. Jon will be interviewing 6 of our tourism partners before the summit. These businesses will be included in the summit presentation. There will be a three-minute interview on WESR promoting the summit. Radio spot will also be done advertising the summit. Island House will be doing the food, Island Creamery ice cream. The networking portion of the summit will run from 3-5 pm. Chris Buck from Ruby Salts will be shucking and serving his oysters. Chatham Vineyard wine, Cape Charles Brewery beer will be served. There will be ads in the Eastern Shore Post and eblasts promoting the summit. The speaking engagement includes 45–60-minute keynote speech, 2- 90-minute sessions at the summit, a 90 -minute zoom meeting three weeks after the summit. Betz thoughts are to hold the zoom meeting at the community college as a Lunch and Learn hosted by the ESVA Chamber. Betz suggested a change to the agenda for the summit. Jon Schallert presentation be split into two sessions with half the group in the morning, the other half of the group would hear Schallert speak in the afternoon. If Schallert is doing his presentation twice to two smaller groups ESVA TC believes it would be more beneficial for the summit attendees. The agenda would be to have a 10–15-minute welcome introductions done by Sabbatini and Coker. John Schallert introduction speech, group splits in two with one group leaving for a classroom where the program would proceed, and Jon Schallert does his presentation to half of the tourism partners. Lunch break everyone will be together and Johnny Mo and Heather Travis playing music. After lunch the group switches places.

- Sabbatini asked the BOC what they thought of dividing the attendees into two sessions for Jon Schallert presentation? BOC believed that was a good decision.

Betz continued that the dividing of the group would be done strategically so that the audience would be balanced with vocal engaging partners in each group. The reservation sign up will be on the visitesvatourism.com website which will include signing up for the networking session too. The Tourism Commission want to make sure we have enough oysters, wine, and beer for networking but not more than we need.

- Holloway asked to do a text blast a couple of days before the summit to the attendees so that the attendance rate is higher than last year.
- Spuck suggested to guilt the attendees by sending the text reminder stating that ESVA Tourism has invested a considerable number of resources into this free event. Your attendance is expected with a reservation. If you cannot attend send a cancelation notice to us so that we can give our investment in your business to the next person on the wait list.
- **Goals for 2023**

Sabbatini stated one of the ESVA Tourism goals for 2023 is taking Space Tourism a step further. Looking at different ideas on opportunities for ESVA TC to build upon what we have and grow Space Tourism on the Shore. Setting up watch parties in different towns. Talk to some of the restaurants and businesses and advertise the launch date and make it a big deal. It is true rocket launches can be scrubbed but that is normal. Promoting the fact that you can see a launch from many locations on the Shore is important to establish. Sabbatini would like to hear the BOC thoughts on pushing Space Tourism to the next level.

- Shotwell shared that Antares rocket launch has slipped back to May 26, 2023, after that last rocket launch there will not be another Antares until 2025. All the components for the engines and motors must be built from scratch in the US. Components to the rockets are no longer being built in Ukrainian and Russia. It is unknown if Rocket Lab launches will be as spectacular as the Antares rocket launches.
- Tarr stated that Rocket Lab is going to shoot off the electron rocket on January 23rd. Rocket Lab will be having more frequent launches. It will soon be apparent if these launches are spectacular. Rocket Lab wants to put as many rockets in the air as NASA will let Rocket Lab.

Sabbatini stated ESVA TC will build on that. Another goal for discussion is does ESVA TC want to work on our logo/brand this year?

- Holloway stated that is a great goal. A plan for brand identity and launching the brand with a strategy for getting it out. This could be a good DMO grant.
- Coker added this is a long-term project that will take some time. It's something that should be investigated after the summit.
- Spuck added it is a big budget item.
- Messer added that a group out of Gloucester, Virginia, Consociate Media, Stephanie Heintz has a 3-phase plan on branding. A lot of communities are getting their help with ARPA funding from this firm.
- Betz also spoke with Consociate Media. ESVA TC has a tentative meeting with Steve Chandler of Chandlerthinks. Steve is a destination rebrander. He was the alternate person we were interested in for the summit as the headline speaker.
- Sabbatini continued those are the items we are going to touch on as future goals.

8. Matters by Commissioners

- MacGarvey had nothing new to share on Exmore but very excited about the upcoming summit.
- Shotwell shared Chincoteague numbers were up 12% for December which was higher than 2019 and 2021. Chincoteague ran ads using ARPA funding in Richmond, Hampton Roads, and Northern Virginia areas. February 16th is the annual Chincoteague Chamber membership meeting. Sabbatini and Betz will be speaking at the event and promoting the Tourism Summit. Death by Chocolate, February 17 & 18. Search for Shamrock, March 17 & 18. ARPA funds have been used for rebuilding the Chincoteague website, an outside kiosk has been ordered, a widget for the

