

Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 15, 2021
8:30 a.m.

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at precisely 8:30 a.m. The meeting was held via Zoom videoconference. Harold Klinger and Mark Salter attended in person at the Talbot County Visitors Center at 11 S. Harrison Street in Easton.

Board Members Present: Jessica Bellis, Judy Bixler, Ron Engle, Ian Fleming, Kristen Greenaway, Michael Hoffmann, Harold Klinger, Amy Kreiner, Laura Price, Mark Salter, Jeff Schneider, Cassandra Vanhooser, and Kimberly Weller

Board Members Absent: Angela Eade

Staff Members Present: Krista Boothby

II. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the April 14, 2021, and May 6, 2021, meeting were presented. Jeff Schneider made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Michael Hoffmann seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. Director's Report

Summer 2021 Overview: Ms. Vanhooser gave an overview of the summer's activities since the last meeting in May. Milestones included the installation of a Civil War Trails marker at Covey's Landing detailing the birth of Frederick Douglass, the addition of Krista Boothby at Economic Development and Tourism manager; the completion of the Eastern Shore Agriculture Plein Air Collection in partnership with the Avalon Foundation and Maryland Cooperative Extension – Talbot County; the ribbon cutting for the Chesapeake Country All-American Road; and the unveiling of the Operation Frederick Douglass on The Hill mural. See attached presentation document for photos.

Replacement for Kelley Cox on Tourism Board: With a heavy heart, Ms. Vanhooser noted that the board must seek a replacement for long-serving member Kelley Cox, who passed away unexpectedly in May after a heart-liver transplant. Members agreed to consider options and bring nominations to the next meeting. Ms. Price said that the County Council can advertise for applicants if needed.

Restaurant Week Promotion: Ms. Vanhooser said that she does not have adequate information at this time, but the U.S. Economic Development Administration will be releasing funds specifically targeted to tourism. She encouraged organizations with shovel ready projects to be ready to apply.

IV. **Manager's Report**

Welcome Krista Boothby: Ms. Vanhooser welcomed new Economic Development and Tourism Manager Krista Boothby. She noted that Ms. Boothby comes to us from a similar office in Lynchburg, Va., and that she has been a wonderful addition to the staff.

COVID-19 Vaccines. Ms. Boothby reported that her first project was the development of a new restaurant guide for Talbot County. No listings were printed with the Talbot County Travel Guide released in May to give it a longer shelf life and to anticipate potential changes caused by the pandemic. The restaurant guide fills the need to share restaurant options with visitors. The department printed only 5,000 so that the product can be updated quickly without excess waste. Members may request the brochure from the staff.

Mid-Atlantic Travel Public Relations Alliance (MATPRA). Ms. Boothby said that she was first introduction was at the MATPRA Media Marketplace that Talbot County hosted in 2016. Unfortunately, the event has been cancelled for this year. Ms. Boothby and Ms. Vanhooser will consider other ways to reach out to journalists.

Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit. Ms. Boothby shared that the Maryland Tourism Coalition's annual convention will be held in Anne Arundel County, Nov. 8-10. She and Ms. Vanhooser will attend, as will Ms. Bixler, assuming it is not cancelled. Ms. Vanhooser noted that anyone can attend, and that board members should review the information to see if they or staff would be interested in attending.

- V. **Tourism by the Numbers.** Ms. Vanhooser gave an informational presentation on the county's public accommodations tax. She said that she had received many questions recently and that there is some misinformation circulating. She believes it is important for board members to understand this information.

The county's rate is 4%, the lowest in the state. Several members asked about the feasibility of raising the accommodations tax or instituting another fee that would help fund tourism. Ms. Vanhooser suggested that a task force be formed to explore options. Mr. Schneider made a motion formalizing the suggestion, which was seconded by Michael Hoffmann and passed unanimously.

Ian Fleming, Michael Hoffmann, Jeff Schneider, Judy Bixler, and Harold Klinger agreed to serve. Angela Eade will be invited as she represents short-term rentals. Ms. Vanhooser will distribute her presentation, as well as the accommodations tax numbers

she received from the Talbot County Finance Office. Ms. Bixler directed Ms. Vanhooser to set up a meeting.

- VI. Master Plan for Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe:** The park's advisory committee presented the completed master plan to the Talbot County Council in a work session on Tuesday, Sept. 14. Ms. Vanhooser, who served as the project manager with Parks & Rec Director Preston Peper, showed a video representation of the vision for the park. She said that the consultants recommended the creation of a Friends of Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe Group to shepherd the project. They await direction from Council on how to proceed.
- VII. Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be held on October 13 at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom videoconferencing.
- VIII. Adjournment:** Ms. Bellis moved that the meeting be adjourned. Kristen Greenaway seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:42 a.m.