

Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 13, 2021
8:30 a.m.

I. Call to Order

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

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

Board Members Absent: Jeff Schneider

Staff Members Present: Krista Boothby

Guests: Kristen Lycett, Interim Executive Director, Phillips Wharf Environmental Center

II. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Vanhooser presented the minutes from the September 8, 2021, noting that there was an error in the minutes she distributed. She has corrected that error now. Ron Engle made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Ian Fleming seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

III. Director's Report – Cassandra Vanhooser

Staffing: Ms. Vanhooser announced that part-time tourism coordinator, Marilou Russ, has resigned her position and is now working with Partners in Care. “Marilou was a ray of sunshine in our office, and we hated to lose her. But we will soldier on and will soon be advertise for another person to help with the administrative duties of this department,” Ms. Vanhooser said. Board members noted that they were sorry to see her go.

Current Grant Programs: The Talbot County Online Sales and Telework Grant is open now. Any business or nonprofit that has expanded its online sales or provided resources to employees for telework is eligible to apply. The department received \$30,000 to distribute, and the deadline is October 22. The Stories of the Chesapeake Small Grant

Applications are also due on October 29, and those funds are available to fund heritage projects in Kent, Queen Anne's, Caroline, and Talbot counties.

Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe Update: Ms. Vanhooser reported that she and Parks & Rec Director Preston Peper attended the County Council meeting on Sept. 7 where the Council members passed a resolution allowing the formation of a nonprofit organization to advance the Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe. The County has gotten some nice coverage in print, online, and on TV for this plan. Now all we have to do is make it happen, she challenged..

Open Board Position: At the previous Board meeting, Ms. Vanhooser was asked to approach Mary Kellogg, co-founder of the Tilghman Waterman's Museum, about serving out the position left open by Kelley Cox's untimely passing. Ms. Vanhooser reported that Mary would be honored to serve if the Board chooses to recommend her to the Council and they appoint her. Jessica Bellis made a motion stating the Tourism Board should recommend Mary to the Council for appointment. Kristen Greenaway seconded the motion after both spoke eloquently about Mary's abilities. The motion passed unanimously.

Talbot County Student Vaccine Card: Ms. Vanhooser reported that she is working with the Mid-Shore Community Foundation to recruit businesses willing to accept the \$50 gift cards being presented to students. The County has allocated no funds for this project. The money was raised by local philanthropists interested in having the community achieve herd immunity. The Talbot County Health Department is also supporting the project, but has allocated no funding.

Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit: Ms. Vanhooser reiterated her invitation for the Board to consider attending MTTTS or sending employees to the event which will take place Nov. 8-10.

Maryland Economic Development Administration (MEDA) Rural Economic Development Session: Talbot County is co-hosting this event on October 28 from 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m. The topic is diversity, equity, and inclusion in economic development.

Coffee and Conservation: The department is also preparing for Waterfowl Number 50 and will again be hosting a breakfast event on Friday, Nov. 12, at 8:30 a.m. This event is well attended and is a great networking event. Please plan to attend.

Public Accommodations Tax Committee: Ms. Vanhooser called on Harold Klinger, chairman of the committee to give a report. He noted that the committee met on October 6 via Zoom. After evaluating a number of options, they agreed that a rate increase was the appropriate path forward. A per room increase and a per person increase were discussed, but were ruled out. The committee meets again on October 18 and will call a special meeting of the board to discuss. Members of the committee include: Angela Eade, Ian Fleming, Michael Hoffmann, and Jeff Schneider. Ms. Bixler attends in her role as chairman, as do Ms. Vanhooser and Ms. Boothby as staff.

IV. Manager's Report – Krista Boothby

TourTalbot.org Redesign: Ms Boothby reported that staff are engaged in a comprehensive redesign of the tourism website. It will be far more content driven than the current website.

Talbot County Visitors Center Committee. Ms. Boothby said that Ms. Vanhooser has asked her to chair a committee that will discuss the future of the Visitors Center. What should it look like? Where should it be located? Will we even need a Visitors Center in the future? Anyone is welcome to join, but those who volunteered previously include Jeff Schneider, Amy Kreiner, Kimberly Weller, Harold Klinger, and Judy Bixler. Ms. Vanhooser asked Ms. Boothby to include the entire board in her invitation.

- V. Next Meeting:** The November meeting is scheduled for November 10, which conflicts with the Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit. The board will meet in special session at a meeting to be determined when the Public Accommodations Tax Committee is ready to present. Meetings will continue via Zoom videoconferencing.
- VI. Adjournment:** Ms. Bellis moved that the meeting be adjourned. Kristen Greenaway seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.