

Talbot County Tourism Board

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

8:30 a.m.

I. Call to order:

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m. The meeting was held via Zoom videoconference. Harold Klinger 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, Kristen Greenaway, Harold Klinger, Mark Salter, Jeff Schneider, Cassandra Vanhooser, Kim Weller

Absent: Ian Fleming, Michael Hoffmann, Any Kreiner, Laura Price

Guests: Kristen Lycett,

Staff: Krista Boothby, Pam Keaton

II. Approval of minutes:

Ms. Vanhooser presented the minutes from the October 27, 2021, meeting. Mr. Klinger made a motion to approve the minutes with Ms. Eade seconding the motion. Minutes were approved.

III. Director's Report: Cassandra Vanhooser

Update on Proposed Accommodations Tax Increase: Ms. Vanhooser reported that Council representative Laura Price introduced the proposal when the County Council met with the Eastern Shore delegation in November. Representatives from the Town of St. Michaels attended the meeting and briefly stated their objections. The commissioners have also issued a letter formalizing their opposition. The initiative will not move forward during the 2022 Legislative Session. Ms. Bixler said that she is disappointed, but that the board needs to regroup and prepare to advocate for an increase in 2023-2024.

Advertising Review: Ms. Vanhooser gave a comprehensive review of the advertising plan for Talbot County Tourism. Please see the attached PowerPoint presentation.

Tourism by the Numbers: The Maryland Office of Tourism Development regularly provides economic impact numbers to Maryland's Destination Marketing Organizations. Talbot County also participates in a statewide economic impact study from Tourism Economics with the State and other DMOs. Ms. Vanhooser presented the most recent numbers, as well as the 2020 Economic Impact Study. Summary: COVID-19 has taken a

toll on the tourism economy in Talbot County, though we have fared better than many and the recovery seems to be underway. See attached documents.

Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit: Talbot County enjoyed success at MTTS, held at LIVE! Casino and Resort on Nov. 8-10. The Avalon Foundation won a coveted Maximizing Opportunities Award from the Maryland Department of Commerce Office of Tourism. Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism won a Maryland Tourism Coalition Award for best printed promotional material for the new Frederick Douglass Map Guide.

IV. Manager's Report: Krista Boothby

- **New Website Design:**

Design elements and site flow are complete. Staff is now working on updating all site content.

- **Visitor Center Meeting:**

Meeting for December 13 has been canceled for the committee. Preference is to have a full board discussion. Ms. Bixler recommended the discussion be added to the January 12, 2022, meeting agenda instead of a separate meeting. She asked that board members come to the meeting prepared to discuss their views on a new Talbot County Visitor Center.

V. Town Reports

Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.

VI. Comments from Board Members

Individual board members reported on news and events relevant to their tourism enterprises.

VII. Next Meeting: Tourism Board Meeting, January 12 at 8:30 a.m.

VIII. Adjournment

Ms. Bellis moved that the meeting be adjourned. Mr. Engle seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:50 a.m.