

Talbot County Tourism Board  
Visitors Center Committee meeting  
1-19-2022

In Attendance: Judy Bixler, Ron Engle, Jeff Schneider, Cassandra Vanhooser, Kim Weller

Absent: Ian Fleming, Kristen Greenaway, Amy Kreiner

Staff: Krista Boothby

I. Synopsis from last BOD meeting

- a. Do need new visitor center and like the idea of it being out on U.S. Route 50 next to the Community Center.
- b. Agree current location is not adequate for growth and purpose.
- c. Visitors Center needs high visibility.
- d. Ms. Bixler stated there are a wealth of people visiting looking for something to do. Rt. 50 location would give access to new people.
- e. Mr. Engle said the Center will need to be built for a sustainable for future. Would be good to establish a mission.

II. Plan Development

a. Location

- i. Ms. Vanhooser has spoken with the director of the Parks & Recreation department regarding building on the Community Center property. There is not space inside the Community Center and the two missions are not really compatible. This area is the next stage for development, being near the site of the new hospital and gets potential visitors before they hit the bypass.
- ii. The AARPA survey ranked a Visitor Center as the lowest priority, so that would mean little to no funding from that source.

b. Concept

- i. Ms. Bixler said the Rt. 50 location does not allow for showing off the community's water oriented character so we might want to add that as a design element.
- ii. Center should be built to be revenue-generating with rentable meeting space.

- iii. Ms. Vanhooser said we will want to engage the public, through charrettes, hire a consultant for public process and design. She talked about the CBMM's visitor center process that they are currently undertaking.

c. Funding

- iv. Ms. Weller stated the lodging tax issue might be revisited in a positive light for the St. Michaels Council if there was a plan that included a Visitors Center as they thought the funds were just a budget stopgap.
- v. Mr. Engle stated that Easton Utilities is a possible revenue source for building the center but would want a shovel-ready project.
- vi. Ms. Vanhooser explained "Capital Enabling" legislation that would need to be submitted with the department budget. This does not mean it will be funded. She stated there is a "Compete Grant" open from the EDA but we would need a ready plan.

d. Staffing

- i. We would need a dedicated Visitors Center staff person to run the center.

III. Next Steps

- i. Ms. Vanhooser and Ms. Boothby will schedule visits to other Eastern Shore visitors centers.
- ii. They will layout a process plan.
- iii. A mission statement will need to be created for the visitor center.
- iv. Send list of visitors centers to committee.
- v. Next meeting: to be called.

**Nearby Visitor Centers to Visit:**

City of Annapolis: 26 West Street | Satellite booth at City Dock: Dock Street

City of Baltimore: 401 Light Street

Caroline County: 3 Crouse Park Lane, Denton

Dorchester County: 2 Rosehill Place, Cambridge

Kent County: 122 N Cross Street, Chestertown

Queen Anne County: 1000 Welcome Center Drive, Centreville

Wicomico County: 8480 Ocean Highway, Delmar