

Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes
November 9, 2022

I. Call to Order

The Tourism Board met via Zoom videoconference. Chairman Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

Members Present: Jessica Bellis, Judy Bixler, Angela Eade, Ron Engle, Ian Fleming, Kristen Greenaway, Michael Hoffmann, Mary Kellogg, Amy Kreiner, Laura Price, Jeff Schneider, Cassandra Vanhooser

Members Absent: Harold Klinger, Mark Salter

Staff Present: Krista Boothby

Guests: Holly DeKarske, Easton Economic Development Corp.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes – October 12, 2022

Ms. Bixler presented the minutes from the October 12, 2022, meeting. Mr. Hoffmann made a motion to approve the minutes with Mr. Fleming seconding the motion. Minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Director's Reports

Coffee and Conservation: Ms. Vanhooser reminded members about the Coffee and Conservation Networking Breakfast at Waterfowl Festival on Friday, Nov. 11. Lt. Gov. Boyd Rutherford and DNR Secretary Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio will be the guests of honor.

Economic Impact of Tourism: Talbot County partners with other Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) and the Maryland Office of Tourism Development to fund an annual economic impact study. Ms. Vanhooser received the results late on Monday and was anxious to share the Talbot County information with the board. Tourism Economics is the company that completes the survey.

Economic Impact of Tourism in Maryland

- The state saw a strong bounce back year in 2021, recovering most of the losses in 2020 due to the pandemic.
- The report showed that spending by overnight visitors increased nearly 6% from \$784 in 2019 to \$830 in 2021.
- When comparing 2021 to 2020, the report found that visitor spending grew 42% from \$11.6 billion in 2020 to \$16.4 billion in 2021.
- Domestic and international visitors also increased, up to 35.2 million in 2021 from 24.7 million the previous year.

Economic Impact of Tourism in Talbot County (report attached)

- Visitor spending grew 58% in Talbot County in 2021, 35% more than in 2019.
- Most key indicators in Talbot County are near or have surpassed pre-pandemic (2019) levels in 2021.
- Visitor volume in 2021 in Talbot County has grown to 108% of 2019 levels.
- Nearly 2,800 visitor-supported jobs represent 16.7% of all jobs in Talbot County with jobs very close to pre-pandemic levels.

Accommodations Taxes: Ms. Vanhooser has been invited to present a report on accommodations taxes at the Dec. 14, 2022, St. Michaels Commissioners meeting. She has accepted the invitation, but asked the Tourism Board to make a recommendation about pursuing an increase in the tax. Ms. Vanhooser noted that Talbot County will have a new Council, and they will need to be briefed about the board's recommendation before the Dec. 14 meeting and educated about the issue as we move through the public process in 2023.

After a great deal of discussion, Mr. Hoffman made a motion pursue an increase the public accommodations tax; Ms. Greenaway seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Vanhooser will invite board members via email to serve on a committee to work on this issue.

Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit: Ms. Vanhooser briefly noted that the annual summit is scheduled for Nov. 13-16 in Ocean City. She, Ms. Boothby, and Ms. Bixler will attend. For future reference, she noted that the summit is open to anyone in the tourism industry.

Visitors Center Feasibility Study: Ms. Vanhooser reported that the funding from the Maryland Rural Economic Development Fund should be approved in

the next few weeks. Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism will receive funding for a feasibility study to determine the best

Date for December Tourism Board Meeting: Mr. Hoffmann has invited the Tourism Board to a luncheon at the Inn at Perry Cabin on December 9. Ms. Kreiner made a motion to cancel the December Tourism Board meeting on Dec. 14 and to accept the invitation on Dec. 9; Mr. Schneider seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Manager's Report

Capital Region USA Global Marketplace Attendance: October 10-12, 2022 in Washington, D.C. Ms. Boothby attended Capital Region USA's Global Marketplace for two days of face-to-face "speed dating" style meetings with 31 travel agency representatives from France, Germany, Ireland, Great Britain, and other countries, tasked with bringing foreign travelers to the Capital Region. Agency reps described as top-tier travelers with long vacation times. Follow up is ongoing.

MATPRA Media Marketplace Attendance: October 18-20, 2022 in State College, PA. Ms. Boothby attended the Mid-Atlantic Tourism Public Relations' (MATPRA) Media Marketplace in State College, PA. Some 45 media attended the event. Research is ongoing regarding the media with which Ms. Boothby engaged. Follow up is on an as determined basis.

V. Town Reports

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

VI. Comments from Board Members

Ms. Bixler thanked Ms. Price for her service on the Tourism Board.

VII. Upcoming Meetings

- Coffee and Conservation at the Waterfowl Festival, Nov. 11
- Talbot County Tourism Board Meeting, Jan. 11

VIII. Adjournment

Ms. Bixler called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Schneider made the motion to adjourn, and Mr. Hoffmann seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:41 a.m.