



**Caroline Economic Development Corporation, Office of Tourism  
Board of Directors Meeting  
February 10, 2022**

Caroline Economic Development Corporation, Office of Tourism held their monthly Board of Directors meeting on Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 8:00 am via Zoom.

***In Attendance:***

Y	Tara Hill-Coursey	Executive Director	N	Dan Franklin	Director
Y	Debbie Bowden	President	N	Phil Liske	Director
Y	Debi Sewell	Vice-President	Y	BJ Tarr	Director
X	Vacant	Secretary	Y	Don Mulrine	Director
X	Vacant	Treasurer	Y	Angel Perez	Director
Y	Linda Andrew	Director	N	Kevin Reichart	Director
Y	Jamie Beechey	Director	Y	Tracey Snyder	Director
				<a href="#">Larry C. Porter</a>	Public

Ms. Bowden called the meeting to order at 8:01. A quorum was established. Ms. Bowden welcomed all to the February meeting. In addition to the above board members, Commissioner Larry Porter attended the meeting. The board secretary position remains open; Ms. Sewell will again be serving as scribe for today's meeting.

***Minutes:***

The January 2022 minutes were emailed to the board prior to the meeting. There were no additions or corrections to the minutes. Mr Mulrine made a motion to accept the minutes as distributed. Ms Beechey seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as presented.

### ***Cash Flow Review:***

Ms Hill-Coursey presented the cash flow report. Account balance as of February 7, 2022 is \$64,913.53. The total income generated since the last meeting is \$22,497.30, which includes a quarterly Caroline County appropriation of \$21,960.50 and room tax revenue totaling \$536.80. We have budgeted \$1000 for room tax revenue and have already received 73% of that amount. Ms Hill-Coursey correlated this to the increased occupancy rate at the Denton Best Western. Ms Hill-Coursey stated that it is again time to approach the larger towns for their appropriations. Historically, the towns of Denton, Federalsburg, Ridgely and Greensboro have all contributed \$2000 each towards Tourism. Once dates to address the town's governing bodies have been confirmed, Ms Hill-Coursey will ask for volunteers to accompany her to the meetings.

### ***Marketing Report:***

Ms Hill-Coursey reported on our online/social media statistics. In January 2022, our website, *VisitCaroline.org*, had 1525 pageviews with 683 established users and 654 new users. Tourism's *Caroline County, MD* Facebook page has 5875 followers and our Instagram (*carolinecountymd*) page has 1119 followers. Increasing our presence on Instagram was discussed, with Ms Hill-Coursey reporting that the State of Maryland Office of Tourism uses Instagram frequently and tags Caroline County Office of Tourism in posts to help promote our events. The January newsletter, *Caroline Monthly*, was sent to 1764 contacts and highlighted upcoming events in the County such as the Tubman Bicentennial and Maryland Heritage Areas grant opportunities.

The Sweet Caroline ad campaign was launched leading up to Valentine's Day and featured ways to celebrate the holiday in Caroline County. Our webpage included a landing page with Valentine's Day gift ideas, events and specials all within Caroline County. An additional new ad campaign focuses on Caroline County dining and uses the "Open For It" State-reimbursable creative. Local restaurants already featured include: Earth Tone's Cafe (Denton), Tenchi (Greensboro), Federalsburg Family Restaurant (Federalsburg), Ridgely Ice Cream Parlor (Ridgely) and Katie Mae's (Preston). Ms Snyder contributed that this program allows her to promote Caroline County businesses who are non-Chamber members.

### ***Executive Director Report:***

Ms Hill-Coursey submitted the FY23 budget proposal to the Director of Finance this week. The proposal is for \$87,842 which does not include an increase from previous fiscal years. A response to the budget proposal is anticipated by April 12, 2022.

Our tax documentation is complete and ready to file. Our office has contacted the County Finance Department and is awaiting clarification on whether we need a full financial review or

simply a compilation. Our accounting firm has indicated the compilation will be more cost-beneficial to us.

Ms Hill-Coursey informed the board that on February 8, 2022, she presented the County Commissioners with the board endorsed letter regarding the proposed move under Economic Development. She felt they seemed supportive but had some questions on how this arrangement would affect the County budget going forward. Those figures will be presented to the Commissioners next week. She mentioned one comment of note that there is hesitancy in making a change when a new board will be seated later this year.

A small extension has been requested for the DMO grant report since Ms Hill-Coursey and family spent much of January in quarantine. The NTF grant application has been moved to April 1, 2022. This grant will provide audio and potentially A/R (Augmented Reality) components to the stops within Caroline County.

A marketing partnership between Dorchester County and The Baltimore Sun will bring a social media influencer to Dorchester (02/17) and Caroline (02/18) Counties. Ms Hill-Coursey has prepared a list of stops in Caroline County for him to explore.

Stories of the Chesapeake held its first workshop with more than 50 attendees. Ms Hill-Coursey estimated at least a quarter of the attendees represented Caroline County groups. The workshops are for those interested in obtaining grants for heritage projects. The next workshop is on February 15, 2022 at 1:00 via Zoom.

Maryland Tourism Day was held on February 1, 2022 in Annapolis. Caroline County Tourism was a sponsor and was displayed on the banner for the event.

Ms Hill-Coursey discussed Governor Hogan's announcement of \$9.6 million awarded to the Maryland Department of Commerce Office of Tourism to support tourism marketing, promotion, and development throughout the State. The funding is through the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration's (EDA) \$750 million American Rescue Plan: Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Program. There are four areas of grant money, earmarked for specific reasons. These are competitive grants that do not require a match.

- \$2.8 million being awarded to the 25 DMOs so they can invest in inviting residents and visitors back to restaurants, entertainment venues, wineries, breweries, attractions, shops, and services in communities across the state.
- \$1.9 million will be awarded to state and local government agencies, economic development organizations, and other industry partners to further develop tourism opportunities across Maryland. Specifically, this is focused on opportunities where the industry benefits from visitor spending, including events designed to encourage overnight travel and events surrounding hospitality training and workforce development.
- \$2 million to create access to outdoor recreational activities and provide educational resources about recreating responsibly.

- \$2.9 million will be used to support the 18 scenic byways marketing promotion to drive visitors to Maryland's towns, attractions, and accommodations along these routes. (We are a part of the Chesapeake County and the UGRR Scenic Byway.)

The 48th Annual Ocean City Trade Expo is scheduled for March 6 & 7, 2022 at the OC Convention Center. Ms Hill-Coursey relayed that this is THE place for hospitality buyers and sellers to meet.

Ms Hill-Coursey informed the directors that Jessica Conley has been formally presented to the Commissioners as a potential board member and we are awaiting their response.

Commissioner Porter had some questions regarding how the county hotel tax was distributed. In 2021 the County collected \$36,917 in hotel taxes. Tourism received \$2,200 and the Town of Denton received \$34,717. He is initiating a more in depth look into any existing MOU or other agreement. Mr Porter also requested that Tourism support the Goldsboro Train Station Project. Ms Hill-Coursey will converse with board member BJ Tarr, who is also involved with the project. Finally, Mr Porter discussed a collaboration between DAR and Maryland Historical Trust to erect a plaque on the Courthouse Green commemorating an African-American Caroline County resident who fought in the Revolutionary War.

There being no further business to discuss Ms Snyder made a motion to adjourn; Mr Mulrine seconded. Motion unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 8:52.

Respectfully submitted,  
Debra V Sewell  
Vice-President  
Caroline Economic Development Corporation, Office of Tourism