



**Minutes  
Tourism Board Meeting  
February 19, 2018**

**Present:** Anthony Casey, Phil Liske, Don Mulrine, John Phillips, Cathy Schwab, Debi Sewell

**Staff:** Ceres Bainbridge

Mr. Liske called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM.

Don Mulrine made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Casey seconded them. They were approved by a unanimous vote.

Ms. Bainbridge gave the financial update. It indicates that we are spending on schedule. The power bill has been a little lower as the result of using an electric radiator. Mr. Phillips felt like we were doing a good job of managing spending. He asked if we were doing any new publications that weren't covered by the marketing grant. Ms. Bainbridge explained that we would be doing few ads outside of the grant, but that we would be working up an ag tour in 2019 that would probably end up as a brochure.

Ms. Bainbridge told the board that Jake from the county had come by to look at the condition of the building after she mentioned its ongoing deterioration to the commissioners. He agreed that the building was not sealed with the holes in the doors, but that he had no money in the budget to address repairs or maintenance. The board was concerned that it gives a shabby impression to visitors, but Ms. Bainbridge said that visitors don't take notice of those details, because it is so lovely and interesting.

Mr. Phillips suggested that Ms. Delude inquire to the commissioners' plans regarding the building and if it will be years before it is sold, what are their plans for taking care of it. Mr. Mulrine reminded everyone that the MHT and SHA would have to approve any improvements and could draw the process out.

Ms. Bainbridge told the board she would be attending the outside agency budget meeting next week. She initially requested an extra \$3000 for the newly required audit in her 2020 budget as an "out-of-our-control" budget expenditure. However, Margaret Roe said that she spoke to Sara Visintainer and to remove it from our request, despite the fact that the commissioners required it. Mr. Casey said it should stay in there. Mr. Phillips said if it's not a current requirement and we haven't gotten the new MOU back to sign, then we shouldn't conduct an audit or put money aside to conduct it until it is confirmed.

Mr. Mulrine suggested meeting with the new county administrator, Jeremy Goldman, to discuss tourism. She said she will. Mr. Mulrine mentioned that there was a big push for tourism, including ag tourism, in the Governor's budget. Mr. Liske discussed his challenges with getting help from the State Office of Tourism, but found them not to be responsive. It was the local Caroline County Tourism Office that helped him get going.

Ms. Bainbridge asked for any dates the board already knew for events: Alpaca Festival, Ridgely Road Rally and Car Show, and Supper at Sunset will all be held the weekend of September 21 and 22. These will go on the tourism calendar now.

Ms. Bainbridge talked about how January, February, and early March are whiplash busy for all DMOs in Maryland, because they know Maryland marketing grants are do and sales people bombard our offices to get themselves into our marketing plans. This is combined with closing out old marketing grants, applying for the

new one, and making local funding requests from the county and towns of Ridgely, Federalsburg, Greensboro, and Denton. Cathy Schwab said that she might be able to come in and answer phones and/or fulfill information requests to take off some pressure.

She said that these are usually new contracts, rather than our regular advertising avenues: Attractions, Tidewater Times, Chesapeake Farm and Garden, etc. The new publications include: USA Today (Mid-Atlantic issue), Country Living, Groups Today, Travel South, Edible DelMarVa, and SHORE magazines. Ms. Bainbridge also mentioned having people coming in because they saw the highway signs.

Ms. Bainbridge explained that she missed the DMO meeting. She started in the short, but strong snow storm and decided to turn around just before crossing the bay bridge. A number of DMOs started and turned around as well.

Ms. Bainbridge attended the Great American Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, PA and worked the Fish Hunt Maryland booth. A number of people from Maryland came by to say how proud they were of the booth. She also met with Mr. Schrader who was very appreciative for any promotional efforts by our office. The office does receive their room tax again. She was able to make good contacts and thinks it was a good fit for Caroline Tourism.

John Phillips mentioned that Idlewild Wildlife Management Area has 3,300 acres of hunting and Marshy Hope Creek has some of the best bass fishing in the state of Maryland. Two reasons Fish and Hunt is a good fit for us. She is hoping to attract group tours. Mr. Liske suggested that smaller buses are better than full-size buses. Often clubs or small groups are able to go to restaurants, etc. without special permissions.

Ms. Bainbridge attended the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area strategic planning meeting in Chestertown. She also attended another meeting with Dorchester County and OTD reps about the economic impact study for the Tubman Byway. The National Park Service will help fund an expanded study, but it will take almost another year to complete, beginning with a new RFP that will indicate the expanded scope of work.

Tourism Day: She visited with the Eastern Shore Delegation in Annapolis with other DMOs, to remind them of the value of tourism. More than 220 people work in visitor services in Caroline County. The delegates also asked us to let their constituents know that the minimum wage boost to \$15 per hour is moving quickly along as was the school opening date debate. Ms. Bainbridge attended the Federalsburg Lions Club meeting about their many activities, including Frog Fest. She also purchased an ad in one of their event brochures.

Cathy Schwab reminded us that Saturday is Caroline's Most Beautiful Volunteer. They need more nominations. They really don't allow enough time to promote this worthwhile recognition. They need more help in getting the word out next year. Perhaps Tourism can help.

John Phillips wanted to confirm that the board is making a \$125 contribution per month toward Ms. Bainbridge's health insurance. Which they are. Mr. Casey mentioned that the motel needed visitor guides. Ms. Bainbridge said she'd drop some off after the meeting. Ms. Schwab suggested that board members take some and distribute them in their areas. The office is still challenged by the low number of visitor guides.

The heritage area awards will be held in Caroline County this year, but date will be determined later. We will be getting a new Tubman Byway marker in Denton, by virtue of money suddenly being found left over in the original grant.

Don Mulrine made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Casey seconded it. It was approved by unanimous vote.