



Minutes
Tourism Board Meeting
March 19, 2019

Present: Lynda Blades, Anthony Casey, Tara Coursey-Hill, Jeannette Delude, Phil Liske, Don Mulrine, John Phillips, Cathy Schwab, Debi Sewell

Staff: Ceres Bainbridge

Ms. Delude called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM.

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

Ms. Bainbridge gave the financial update informed the attending board members that he requested a more detailed report, which she supplied. Marina has stepped down and Audrey Clemens and her husband Bill will be taking over booking and accounting. Regional partnerships have not been paid up yet, but will be in the last quarter of the fiscal year. We will receive reimbursement for our ads in the summer this year.

Ms. Bainbridge told the board she was late for the county budget meeting because of a calendar error. She apologized profusely to the commissioners and was told not to worry because she presented a flat budget and they were in a hurry. She will be attending other meetings to show her sincere interest in the budget process.

Ms. Bainbridge was curious to know if Federalsburg is a Main Street town. Don Mulrine confirmed they were, but that it mostly went to project grants that Happy writes and gets for the city. Remembering that there was mention of a bass tournament in Federalsburg, Ms. Bainbridge asked about the possibility of bringing it back. Debi Sewell mentioned that the Lions were planning a kids' tourney at Frog Fest and that could possibly lead to other events or an expanded event for adults next year.

The first regional meeting of Civil War Trails signage system was held on the Eastern Shore. The representatives hope to modernize the signs to appeal to a new generation of visitors. They also hoped to move the sign in Federalsburg from the park to the downtown. The sign is sponsored by the Caroline Historical Society, so Kathy Mackel and JOK went to look at it. They said the park was full of people and that there was no one downtown. While the CW Trails organization wants to move it downtown, the historical society will tell them no.

CF: SB628 - Authorizes Maryland Tourism Development Board to issue grants to nongovernmental tourism organizations. Lou Fields, who is spearheading the effort to support this bill, would like to have a portion of the DMO grant pool. He is also going to try to change the criteria for how the funds are spent and he's talking about trying to earmark the additional \$66K the Governor put in the budget. Ms. Bainbridge attended a meeting with the House Ways and Means Committee along with other DMOs, as well as Mr. Fields and his supporters. The opinion of the DMOs is that they are professionals who are marketing their destinations to the best of their ability.

We have ads in places where we've never put them: 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. Many of these ads will be 100 percent reimbursable.

Ms. Bainbridge represented Caroline County in the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area's booth at the DC Travel and Adventure Show. This was the third and final year we will be doing that, but once again, we were stormed with attendees. We gave out another 900 bags with the logo, so in three years we gave away 2,700 totes. Hopefully, those people, who for the most seemed very interested in visiting, will come.

Also, with the heritage area, Ms. Bainbridge will be reviewing 22 grants tomorrow. This is more than they have had in the past. There are two from Caroline County: one from Federalsburg to complete interpretation on the cabin and one from the historical society to complete the work on the Medford house at Choptank Landing. Both grants rated higher than 90 percent, but so did several others from different counties. The Maryland Heritage Area Authority will make their final decisions by July.

Ms. Bainbridge met with Jim Lewis in the Extension Office to talk about the ag tour. He thought it was a good idea and suggested I might first write a column for DelMarVa Farmer to see if it would raise interest. However, he also warned the window of opportunity was quickly closing for their reading it right away, because of planting. He suggested that the farmers save the issues and read them all at once as their work lightens up a bit. Just among people she has talked to, Ms. Bainbridge knows of at least 6 or 7 farms that would be interested and there are more. Farms and farm weddings are very popular right now.

Federalsburg received more clicks on our Christmas event calendar! Debi said the Lions Club promotes it hugely, but they definitely came to visitCaroline.org for their details. Ms. Delude suggested cozy winter tours of farms over the holiday, but Ms. Blades said that farms are not pretty in winter and people might be very disappointed. In towns, twinkle lights and luminaria can serve as attractions with carolers or events. The Town of Vienna has a huge turnout for their one-night Christmas event. Greensboro used to do it, but enthusiasm faded.

Ms. Bainbridge suggested that the board just send her their ideas about events or ads or markets or projects, so that we can act on them when feasible. That way, they would all reside in one file. That would also include having an open house, but there is so little parking, that it should be when there is an event in town where people could walk over the bridge to the wharf. Something like the Spring Thing on May 11.

Jeannette Delude may talk to the commissioners about the condition of the building. New board members wondered why tourism wasn't located in the new Denton Visitor Center. Don explained the history of the wharf and the new visitor center and the nature of the problem. However, board members feel like tourism should logically be located in the visitor center and that the appearance of the wharf does not show off Caroline County's best. Nonetheless, Ms. Bainbridge isn't complaining about the location, just the condition.

Harriet Tubman Conference is in June and Spring Thing in May. Heritage area's Heritage Heroes awards will be held in Caroline County this year on June 15th at the Visitor Center in Denton. The event is in the early evening. Please plan to attend!

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. Liske seconded it. It was approved by unanimous vote at 8:53.