



Minutes
Tourism Board Meeting
October 18, 2018

Present: Lynda Blades, Anthony Casey, Jeannette Delude, Don Mulrine, Dave Whaley,

Staff: Ceres Bainbridge

Ms. Delude called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM. Mr. Casey made a motion to approve the minutes from the September meeting. Ms. Blades seconded the motion. Minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Bainbridge reviewed the financial update. Tourism budget exceeded its budget by a \$1500, but redoing the website was part of the reason, and she will make it up this year by placing 100 percent reimbursable ads. The WBOC campaign had to be paid for in advance, but cannot be reimbursed until January. The office will also be reimbursed \$1000 from the ESHI grant. We received our first quarterly payment from the county and will receive the next one January 1.

The State Marketing grant has been on the calendar year for the last two years, but next year, 2019, they will return to the fiscal year. So, we will receive our entire grant in January and must spend it by June. Then, we will start the FY 20 grant on July 1. It is a good opportunity to publicize Caroline County in a big way as long as we have the cash to float the ads until reimbursement.

The month of October is a very busy one for the Director. She attended two events each weekend, including the Alpaca Festival, the Linchester Mill Antiques Show, the Equestrian Shoe, and the Ridgely Car Show. She also attended quarterly meetings for the State Office of Tourism, the Heritage Area, and TADD.

Ms. Bainbridge reported on her meeting with the Commissioners on September 18. The most impressive detail was that the WBOC campaign in July increased traffic to our VisitCaroline.org by 130 percent. That campaign included Facebook, banner ads on WBOC website, and radio ads. The commissioners were glad to see the Arts Tour brochure and enthusiastic about a farm tour next year. All-in-all, it was a good meeting.

In addition to our regular ads in Tidewater Times, Attractions, and Recreation News, Tourism placed radio 100 ads in October - 50 for the Ridgely Car Show and 50 for the preceding weekend's events at Adkins Arboretum, Downtown Denton, and the Martinak State Park horse show. Although the weather was iffy for some of these events, we hope this raises awareness of so much to do in Caroline County.

Ms. Bainbridge attended the Mid-Atlantic Tourism and Public Relations Association (MATPRA) Marketplace at Nemaquin Woodlands Resort in Laurel Highlands, Pennsylvania. Sixty travel writers were invited to meet the DMOs and hopefully come visit their destinations. A few were particularly interested in quiet, affordable, family destinations, so a story or two may result. The meeting also offered a multi-age panel discussion on marketing in the age of social media and the future of print that was very informative. Part of the Marketplace experience is showing off the host destination and allowing writers and DMOs to socialize while visiting sites and having experiences. Ms. Bainbridge was able to visit the Flight 93 Memorial and a painting class with writers and others. Next year, MATPRA Marketplace will be held in Richmond, and Tourism will probably not attend.

Another writer, whom Ms. Bainbridge toured around last March, is doing an article for AAA World Online about quirky events in the Mid-Atlantic. Ms. Bainbridge gave her a couple of ideas, and she chose the Thresherman's Show in August to highlight. We'll be watching for it to come online.

Recreation News did a really nice story on Caroline's Cycling Guide. The author chose the route that goes from Denton to Greensboro and thoroughly enjoyed himself and his lunch. Ending the story with, "The

Caroline Cycling Guide is the epitome of simplicity and clarity.” A very high complement for something that leads strangers along our roadways!

There was a discussion when Ms. Bainbridge brought up the tattoo artists, Ken and Kent, and questioned whether people would travel to them to get a tattoo. Targeting “hipsters” with tattoos may be a good audience.

Ms. Bainbridge told the board about the Artists’ Studio Tour and pulling the details together. Ms. Blades suggested connecting with one in Kent County in the future. She has made contact with the artists to get them signed up and committed. We have about 10 who want to do it, now. There will also be spaces where artists who don’t have studios can display their work. The brochure will go on the website and link to the Arts Council website for artists’ profiles.

On Columbus Day, Ms. Bainbridge welcomed about 20 librarians from Caroline County to the Choptank River Heritage Center. They were totally engaged and were very supportive of Tourism’s efforts.

Dorchester County received an MHAA grant to perform an economic development study on the Tubman Byway, which will include Preston and perhaps Denton. They will be releasing an RFP in November. The State Office of Tourism is very interested in the results.

Ms. Bainbridge mentioned that the Quaker Meeting House on Choptank Electric property in Denton is falling apart and needs paint and TLC. She discussed it with Kathy and the Historical Society has approached the Choptank Trust to see if they would fund a refurbishing.

Tourism has switched insurance companies from Nationwide to **Selective**. Karri Todd from Avery came and looked at the building and assessed what we have and how much coverage we need. The cost is about the same, but the service is more personal and feels more complete.

Next year, the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Heroes Awards will be held in Caroline County. Cathy Schwab suggested the visitor center, but Adkins Arboretum was also brought up.

After hearing that Tourism’s budget is now so small Lisa Durham from ASG suggested that it no longer needs to be audited every year, but that something called a “compilation” would be legally fine and much less expensive.

The County requested that we sign our MOU with them annually when Ms. Bainbridge met with them. She submitted it to the County immediately after her meeting with the Commissioners, but has not heard back yet.

Meeting Date Change: The November meeting will now be held on Tuesday, November 13th at the Legion Road building. There was discussion that Tuesdays might be better anyway, but no decision was made.

To recap: Some of the names suggested for new board members: Debbie Brohawn from Smokey Cat, Michelle Bullock, a State Park Manager, Debbie Sewell from the Federalsburg Lions Club, Kat Evans (formerly at Rec. & Parks) and/or someone from the Federalsburg Historical Society. Board members were encouraged to nominate new members at the next meeting for discussion.

There was a brief discussion of having a holiday calendar, but the Town of Denton has done a very nice one.

Anthony Casey made a motion to adjourn. Dave Whaley seconded it. Meeting was adjourned with unanimous vote at 9:09.

Ms. Bainbridge distributed name badges to the board and encouraged them to wear them at events.