



Minutes Tourism Board Meeting September 20, 2018

Present: Lynda Blades, Jeannette Delude, Phil Liske, Don Mulrine, Cathy Schwab

Staff: Ceres Bainbridge

Ms. Delude called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM. Mr. Liske made a motion to approve the minutes from the April meeting. Ms. Schwab seconded the motion. Minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Bainbridge reviewed the Financial Report for the Fiscal Year '18. She pointed out that she was \$840 over budget, which can be attributed to the website rebuild which was \$1000 and we were not reimbursed for the WBOC campaign, \$1500, because it hadn't run before July 1. She played the radio ad for the board at the end of the meeting.

The big news is that Ms. Bainbridge conducted a marketing campaign with WBOC TV, their website, on radio, and on Facebook. The campaign in July resulted in 130 percent increase of traffic to VisitCaroline.org. This was measurable via Google analytics. We will continue to explore these types of campaigns in the future for their ability to measure responses.

Tourism also placed a half-page ad in Maryland Sip N Savor magazine. For this and the WBOC campaign Ms. Bainbridge used the State Office of Tourism templates, Indulge All Five Senses, so that they are eligible for 100 percent reimbursable through the marketing grant. This enables us to go for larger publications and media markets without going into debt.

The Summer "Capture Caroline" Photo Contest on Facebook as received some wonderful photographs, not all that could be used in marketing, but nonetheless, wonderful. We will try to print some for the artisan's tour or for an exhibit at the Foundry or new Visitor Center. Ms. Bainbridge will also look into putting them on the website, too.

Ms. Bainbridge reported to the Commissioners on September 18. They were pleased to see emphasis on the arts and the new brochure and interested in the next focus on agriculture. They appreciated the impact of the WBOC campaign results so clearly visible in the analytics. They are still interested in had numbers for ROI, which are still elusive. However, in general that feeling was that we are heading in a good direction. After the meeting, Mr. Mulrine suggested that there are ways to collect some hard numbers for events such as Summerfest, the Ridgely Car Show, and a few other events that rely on visitors as much as locals.

Ms. Bainbridge will a Mid-Atlantic Tourism and Public Relations Association (MATPRA) Marketplace at Laurel Highlands, Pennsylvania. Sixty travel writers have been invited to meet the DMOs and hopefully come visit their destinations.

Ms. Bainbridge reviewed the broad numbers from the State on tourism, which is down slightly statewide, but visitors are spending more money, so the numbers aren't noticeable worse. In fact, Caroline's two State Parks attracted 175,000 visitors over the last year! That is an amazing number, which is also reflected at all of the State's Parks. We should make sure there are plenty of visitor guides at each park all season long.

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.

There was discussion about getting some new board members from Federalsburg, as well as a restaurateur from the county. A few names came up including 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 asked to nominate new members at the next meeting for discussion.

Cathy Schwab suggested Stakeholders' Meetings around the county in January to encourage collaboration and event scheduling. Christmas is a good example of how each town schedules their activities around each other. This is a constant challenge, but a good one. There was also discussion about having a Tourism Open House for the public (close to budget season February/March) and an Annual Meeting to help raise awareness of what we do and what the value of what we do.

Board members like the Arts brochure and we're holding some back until after the arts tour on Thanksgiving Weekend.

We will be moving the board meetings around in the future, but next month we will meet at Legion Road. Cathy Schwab made a motion to adjourn. Don Mulrine seconded it. Meeting was adjourned with unanimous vote at 9:24.