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**Minutes**  
**Tourism Board Meeting**  
**September 12, 2019**

**Present:** Debbie Bowden, Lynda Blades, Anthony Casey, Tara Coursey-Hill, Jen Hodge, Phil Liske, Don Mulrine, John Phillips, Cathy Schwab, Debi Sewell, Tracey Snyder

**Staff:** Ceres Bainbridge

Mr. Liske called the meeting to order at 8:02.

Ms. Blades made a motion to no longer expect printed minutes and directors report. Ms. Sewell seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Sewell and Ms. Coursey-Hill pointed out that they were not in attendance at the August meeting. Mr. Mulrine made the motion to approve the minutes with those two changes. Ms. Blades seconded it. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Bainbridge showed the board the financial update which is in a new format that Mr. Clemens thought would be more useful to the board. Ms. Bowden overviewed the financial review and explained on how to read the Profit and Loss budget vs. Actual.

Ms. Bainbridge explained that we received our reimbursement from the State Marketing Grant for \$21,056, the full amount of the grant. We were able to do this by using the State template as they roll out the "Open for it" campaign in which case, we receive 100 percent reimbursement for each ad we place. It also gave us the opportunity to enter different markets that are quite expensive including, Country Living, AAA Mid Atlantic magazine, and some others.

Ms. Bowden made a motion to accept the budget as it was presented. Mr. Mulrine seconded it. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Ms. Bainbridge informed the board that we had not received the MOU back from the County yet. Ms. Bowden said she would follow up on it. Ms. Snyder mentioned that the LEASE for the office space was nearly ready for signatures.

Ms. Bainbridge delivered her report: Budget priority will be to revamp the visitor guides to indicate the most up-to-date information; the agricultural guide, and the Created in Caroline Guide reprint. She will discuss with the other three counties in the Heritage Area might be able to produce four agricultural guides with Queen Anne's, Talbot, and Kent Counties. This idea is just getting started to take shape. Ms. Bainbridge has engaged Rober Thayer to film some agricultural shots for the tour.

Ms. Bainbridge informed the board that her "Not All Heroes Wear Capes" banners were big success at MACO in August. This was really a boost.

Governor Hogan announced that Maryland is the #1 Underground Railroad experience in the WORLD, in an effort to gear up for the release of a number of Tubman film projects and coinciding with the Year of the Woman in 2020. Also, in anticipation of more interest in Tubman as the projects roll out, the State Office of Tourism is going to print 50,000 more Tubman Byway guides and we will receive 2,000 of them.

The Tubman introductory film at the State Park will have a private premier for those who were in it on the night before it will open to the public. The following week, there will also be a little celebration for the leading members Team Tubman, who worked on the many aspects of the project since 2005.

On August 26, Ms. Bainbridge attended a Tubman Byway Host meeting held at Preston Automotive by Maureen Curry of the State Office of Tourism. This is a short program that informs businesses and organizations along the byway corridor about the byway, what it is, and how to answer questions for visitors if they are approached. We had a much larger turnout than expected with 26 people attending, including Ms. Blades and her daughter. There will be another one later in the year for the northern part of the county. If you are located within two miles of the byway, you are considered part of the byway corridor.

Ms. Bainbridge informed the board that Blades Orchard was named the best place to pick your own apples in Maryland by the Only In Your State campaign!

Ms. Bainbridge pulled together some artworks from the Fabric Arts Center for an exhibit that was being held in conjunction with the National Folk Festival in Salisbury. Every county on the Eastern Shore of Maryland was represented in this lovely exhibit.

Tourism is working with the Arts Council to pull the Created in Caroline Tour together. She is concerned that it is so late in the year to not have all of the artists confirmed.

Caroline Tourism and the other Eastern Shore counties will continue sending a representative to the American Bus Association annual meeting. Most of the tours do include Linchester Mill with a stop at a produce stand. This collaborative effort allows us to have a presence at this event which introduces bus tour operators to our destinations. The ABA will meet in Baltimore in 2021, and we are hoping to make a big impression at that event, too. We are attempting to put together two **Familiarization Tours** for the Eastern Shore counties.

The State and Eastern Shore counties are eager to build up bus tours, but there are simply not enough (none), step-on guides (as in step on the bus at the destination) to provide tours. We have approached Chesapeake College about the possibility of their holding a training program to help train guides. The college wants a curriculum and budget. This will be an ongoing effort as we go forward. Mr. Liske mentioned that it would be good to have professional training to meet visitors. It was a huge loss when Chesapeake Tours was sold to Anthony Cohen, because he only works it now in Dorchester County, focusing on Tubman.

In preparing to move the Tourism Office by packing. Ms. Bainbridge asked the historical society to make arrangements to move the items in the warehouse area. Ms. Mackel will be picking up her desk and some other items she left at the tourism office. There are many boxes of materials and records (15 years' worth) that Tourism inherited when Economic Development went under the county that have to be moved. Mr. Mulrine asked if there was an MOU with the Park Service in those records.

The building was to be shown the afternoon of this day.

Mr. Phillips told Ms. Bainbridge did a good job with her presentation to the Commissioners. She should continue to keep up the good work.

Lynda Blades announced that they were starting U-Pick the next weekend up until Halloween, and she encouraged everyone to spread the word via social media. The Alpaca Festival will be on September 21 and 22. The Tour the Shore Road Rally is also the 21<sup>st</sup> and the Ridgely Car Show is the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Ms. Snyder announced that the Chamber will be holding a tour of the Tubman Byway and stopping at the Alpaca Farm along the way.

Mr. Phillips suggested that such a busy weekend is a good thing by offering people options to do on a day out. Some people think it is too busy. It is probably unavoidable, because of the lovely weather in the shoulder seasons.

Ms. Sewll made a **motion to adjourn**. Mr. Phillips **seconded** it. It was **approved by unanimous vote** at 8:57.