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**Minutes**  
**Tourism Board Meeting**  
**November 14, 2019**

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

**Staff:** Ceres Bainbridge

Mr. Liske called the meeting to order at 8:04.

Mr. Mulrine made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Sewell seconded it. They were approved by unanimous vote.

Mr. Clemens who has been doing the books is resigning and will not changing the format of the budget, but he is training Robin Ball to take over. Ms. Hodge volunteered to help her get up to speed on how to format the budget for the next meeting. The budget is challenging to interpret in its current format that Mr. Clemens initiated. The board would prefer a year-to-date format. After some clarification, Ms. Bowden made a motion to accept the latest financial report. Ms. Sewell seconded it. The financial report was approved by unanimous vote.

After weighing the options, ASG is the less expensive than other accounting firms and they know us. They will perform our financial review once again this year. Mr. Liske signed the agreement. Ms. Ball will get the materials ready for Lisa Durham.

Ms. Bainbridge told the board that new security updates from Microsoft will require a new computer. They mostly agreed that it would be the best plan. Ms. Beechey asked that Ms. Bainbridge send her the specs for the computer she is using now. Ms. Bainbridge also told the board that she had paid for the website visitCaroline.org with GoDaddy for three years.

Ms. Bainbridge saw the movie "Harriet" at a special showing in Cambridge. It is stirring and action packed, not entirely accurate, but it is right for today's audiences. Ms. Blades and her daughter and Ms. Bowden also attended and enjoyed it.

Ms. Bainbridge met with representatives of the Tubman Byway at the Leverton House near Preston and a developer who was providing some background on created an "augmented reality" aspect there and three other sites in Dorchester County. She and partners from NPS Network to Freedom, Dorchester Tourism, and the Harriet Tubman State Park will evaluate proposals for the project in December.

Caroline Tourism is partnering with Dorchester and Talbot counties to develop a FAM (familiarization) tour for interested parties as part of the offerings at the 2020 American Bus Association's convention in Baltimore. There will be two tours of the Shore sent for consideration. One will be more a bay to beach tour. Tubman the other entry. Four tours of the state will be offered, two before the convention and two after it. Our application and tour outline was submitted to the State Office of Tourism which will submit the best four to ABA for consideration. This would be an opportunity to have an overnight trip on the byway so that Caroline County can get most of the exposure on the second day.

Ms. Bainbridge discussed the drop-off of bus tours. For larger buses, two step-on-guide services left the Shore in recent years. Chesapeake Tours and Chesapeake Lady Tours left a gaping hole that most of the mid-Shore counties experience. Two newer operators are focusing only Tubman, but both are staying in Dorchester. Caroline is hampered by a limited number of beds and large dining spots. Tours need to begin here and end at

the State Park to work in Caroline's benefit, but only if the visitors have opportunities to spend money while here. Ms. Bainbridge and Ms. Bowden met with Tubman Tours, Inc. owners Alex and Lizz Greene. They are interested in expanding their tours next year if possible. Ms. Bainbridge will be meeting with the owner of Chesapeake Tours, Tony Cohen, in December. For strictly local tours, the tourism assistant used to call clubs and senior living places and offer them day-trip itineraries. These groups often have their own buses and are looking for things to do. This could be a good project for a volunteer because it could be done remotely. If we could coordinate with the historical society to open their buildings, it even be better.

The Tourism Office is now established with phones, addresses changed. Boxes and files are unpacked. It is beginning to feel familiar.

Ms. Bainbridge attended the Maryland Tourism and Travel Summit in Rocky Gap. Once again, it was excellent. The speakers are terrific. The insights gained are priceless. The networking and learning opportunities valuable. This is mostly a reimbursable event in the grant.

It was at the awards banquet that the Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area counties, Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot, won the 2019 Market Expansion Award for our multifaceted, marketing project "Tastiest Catch" which was a three-year effort, starting with recipe cards from each county, an ad campaign in the Washington Post, three years hosting a booth and the Washington Travel and Adventure Show. It was topped off this year by the recent publication of a "Maryland's Tastiest Catch" cookbook, which is for sale for \$25 a piece and would make a lovely, regional gift.

Ms. Bainbridge ended her formal report with the announcement that the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad All American Road received two awards from the national Association for Interpretation, for the Driving Tour and Map Guide (Second Place Site Publication) and for the Byway Audio Guide (First Place Digital Media), She helped developed both while working on Team Tubman, which also included the former director, Kathy Mackel.

Caroline County grew by 5.8% in 2018. This is a biggest jump in five years:

2014 = .8%  
2015 = 2.6%  
2016 = 4.9%  
2017 = .3%  
2018 = 5.8%

Created in Caroline brochure has been delayed by a few reasons, but it is almost to the printer. She has ordered extra yard signs for out-of-the-way places. We need to get this event running earlier next year with the help of the Arts Council. Ms. Bainbridge starts running ads on three radio stations targeting Delaware and mid-shore counties, totaling 150 ads over three weeks. There is a small ad in the Caroline Review now and she will place one high impact ad in the Star Dem and in the Times Record running up to the event and boost the post several times. We will work with the Arts Council to involve more artists and promote the event. This year we learned a lot and we will continue to expand and improve it each year. Ms. Blades will help call artists next year. Ms. Blades suggested inviting RUA CAMPER folks to camp at their farm for the event. There are a number of these groups that we should invite via our board members farms and lands.

Ms. Blades suggested having a planning meeting to prioritize the projects. Ms. Beechey suggested hiring a meeting leader. Mr. Phillips asked her if she would do it, since she has previous experience in doing this. That meeting will be January 9.

Ms. Bainbridge mentioned being aware of cyber trolling regarding the management of Tourism and concerns about personal security.

Ms. Sewell made **a motion to adjourn**. Ms. Blades **seconded** it. Adjournment was **approved by unanimous vote** at 9:36.