

Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 14, 2021
8:30 a.m.

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at precisely 8:31 a.m. The meeting was held via Zoom videoconference.

Board Members Present: Jessica Bellis, Judy Bixler, Kelley Cox, Angela Eade, Ian Fleming, Kristen Greenaway, Michael Hoffmann, Harold Klinger, Amy Kreiner, Laura Price, Mark Salter, Jeff Schneider, Cassandra Vanhooser, and Kimberly Weller

Board Members Absent: Ron Engle

II. New Board Member

Judy Bixler welcomed Kristen Greenaway, president and CEO of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels, who was recently appointed by the County Council to represent countywide cultural attractions. Ms. Greenaway said that she was honored to be a board member and looks forward to working with this group.

III. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the March 9 meeting were presented. Jeff Schneider made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Michael Hoffmann seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

IV. Old Business

2021 Travel Guide: Ms. Vanhooser said that the copy for the 2021 Travel Guide has been submitted and is in the layout stage. If you wish to advertise, now is the time to reach out to John Stefancik at *Chesapeake Bay Magazine*. The guide will be polybagged with the June issue of *Chesapeake Bay Magazine* and will go out on May 15.

Talbot County Visitors Center: Talbot County is very close to adopting its FY2022 budget. Ms. Vanhooser reminded the board that she submitted a capital budget request for a new visitors center with her budget request. She then asked Councilwoman Laura Price to explain the process. Ms. Price shared that submitting a capital budget request does not mean it will be funded, but, if approved, it generate capital enabling legislation.

This just adds it to the list of projects being considered by the county. It will not take precedence over projects that are more urgent in nature.

Ms. Vanhooser then said, “We have opened the door; now let’s walk through it.” Jeff Schneider, Amy Kreiner, Kelley Cox, Kimberly Weller, Harold Klinger, and Judy Bixler all agreed to serve on a committee to explore options and make recommendations.

Restaurant Week Promotion: The Tourism Board will not hold a Restaurant Week promotion, but St. Michaels will host their own “Taste of St. Michaels” the first week of May. Ms. Vanhooser says this is perfect timing, as it will take place during National Travel and Tourism Week.

Business Appreciation Summit: Ms. Vanhooser asked the Tourism Board to mark their calendars and plan to attend the summit, which will be held on April 30 at 8:30 a.m. She then challenged the board members to invite not one, as previously asked, but *three* other members of the business community.

V. New Business

National Travel and Tourism Week: This promotion is schedule for May 2-8. Ms. Vanhooser said that she is the chairperson of the Maryland Tourism Coalition’s Communications Committee, and she is working with other stakeholders around the state to put together a toolkit for partners. She also mentioned that this will largely be a promotion, and that we will not hold any corresponding events this year, though she would like to make a push to get hospitality workers vaccinated.

COVID-19 Vaccines. Choptank Community Health System has agreed to consider offering vaccines to hospitality workers during National Travel and Tourism Week. Jessica Bellis noted that the Avalon Foundation will be transitioning their annual Multicultural Festival to a Vaccination and Wellness Day. She said that Economic Development and Tourism might want to work with her team to promote this clinic to hospitality workers. There are many options for vaccinations, but the focus is for workers who may not have access to the shot via other means.

Virtual Hospitality Job Fair. A lack of workers is one of the greatest challenges for tourism businesses today. Ms. Vanhooser is working with the Maryland Department of Labor to host a Virtual Hospitality Job Fair. The Inn at Perry Cabin has participated in previous events with limited success. Others expressed concern about the issue and doubt about the success of a job fair. Ms. Vanhooser noted that this is a free service offered by the Department of Labor and that she would continue to explore opportunities with them.

Apprenticeship Orientation. Talbot County Economic Development and Tourism will join forces with Talbot County Public Schools and the Maryland Department of Labor to host an orientation to encourage participation in both youth and adult apprenticeship programs. That event will be held virtually on May 19 at 8:30 a.m.

New Hire. Krista Boothby will join the team in May 2021 as the new economic development and tourism coordinator.

VI. Comments from Board Members: Representatives from each of the towns and industry sectors reported on news and upcoming events.

VII. Next Meeting: Ms. Bixler noted that the board typically takes a hiatus in the months of June, July, and August. Ms. Vanhooser also said that she and Reza Jafari, the chairman of the Economic Development Commission, have discussed holding a joint EDC / Tourism Board meeting. National Travel and Tourism Week seems to be a great time to convene such a meeting. Ms. Price said that she had been thinking the two boards should meet together once or twice a year.

Michael Hoffman made a motion, stating that the Tourism Board should go on hiatus in the summer months, but Ms. Vanhooser should have the ability to reconvene the group as necessary. Mr. Schneider seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

VIII. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:36 a.m. The next meeting will be a joint meeting between the Economic Development Commission and the Tourism Board on May 6, 2021, at 8 a.m.