

Talbot County Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 9, 2022
8:30 a.m.

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The meeting was held via Zoom videoconference. Mr. Klinger attended the meeting in Ms. Vanhooser's office.

Board Members Present: Jessica Bellis, Judy Bixler, Angela Eade, Ron Engle, Ian Fleming, Kristen Greenaway, Michael Hoffmann, Mary Kellogg, Harold Klinger, Amy Kreiner, Mark Salter, Cassandra Vanhooser, Kim Weller

Board Members Absent: Jeff Schneider, Laura Price

Staff Members Present: Krista Boothby

Guests: Kristen Lycett, Phillips Wharf Environmental Center

II. Introduction of New Board Member

Ms. Bixler introduced Mary Kellogg, who was appointed by the County Council to serve the remainder of Kelley Cox's term. She represents the Bay Hundred region.

III. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Bixler presented the minutes from the February 9, 2022, meeting. Mr. Hoffman made a motion to approve the minutes with Ms. Bellis seconding the motion. Minutes were approved.

IV. Director's Report – Cassandra Vanhooser

Talbot County Business Appreciation Summit – May 6, 2022: The Summit will be held on May 6, and Ms. Vanhooser asked Board members to mark their calendars and plan to attend. The speaker will be Johnathan Holifield, a former NFL football player, former White House advisor, and author of *The Future Economy and Inclusive Competitiveness*. After the breakfast event, the department will host a casual Meet-and-Greet reception for the new USDA Rural Development Director David Baker at The Bullitt House, and finally, we will hold a Round Table Discussion on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with Johnathan Holifield at the Building African American Minds Athletic

Center on Jowite Street. Anyone interested in sponsoring this event should reach out to EDC Chairman Reza Jafari. Ms. Vanhooser and her staff are prohibited from soliciting funds from the businesses they serve.

Community Economic Review Meetings: Ms. Vanhooser reminded long-serving members of the Listening Sessions that were held in 2017 after merging the offices of economic development and tourism. As part of the Eastern Shore Economic Recovery Project, the department is offering a new twist on an old theme with Community Economic Review Work Sessions in each town.

Erin Silva from the Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative will present information from the Delmarva Index about Talbot County and the community where the meeting is being held. Then we will ask attendees to comment on three questions: 1) What is the greatest challenge in your community? 2) What is the greatest opportunity in your community? 3) What one thing would you like to see happen in the next 1 to 3 years? Ms. Vanhooser asked that each Board member plan to attend at least one session, preferably the one in your community. Proposed dates include: March 24, April 21, May 19, and June 16. This is the final push for the Eastern Shore Economic Recovery Project.

EDA Grants: Ms. Vanhooser noted that she sent information in February about the EDA grants that are coming through the Maryland Office of Tourism. Unfortunately, she had little additional information about these grants as OTD has been slow to release information. A number of organizations have reached out to her, but I am still waiting for information like everyone else.

Rural Economic Development Fund: Ms. Vanhooser also made the group aware of the proposed \$50 million Rural Economic Development Fund that is part of the governor's supplemental budget. If this passes through the legislature, and she expects that it will, \$10 million will be allocated to each of the five regional councils. We are part of the Mid-Shore Regional and should see a portion of those funds. More to come as the budget moves through the legislative process.

Frederick Douglass Projects: The department has four Douglass projects underway. Projects include:

1. Brian Warner has selected the final additions for the Frederick Douglass Mural as his Eagle Scout project.
2. Autumn Redman is creating a Geocaching Trail in Easton for her Girl Scout project.
3. The Talbot County Free Library is working with the department to have the Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe designated a National Literary Landmark.
4. The department is working with Parks and Recreation to implement Phase I of the park master plan.

V. Manager's Report – Krista Boothby

Great American Outdoor Show: Ms. Boothby attended the Great American Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, PA February 10. This was a partnership with the Maryland Office of Tourism. Four Talbot County fishing and hunting guides had booths were present at the show and she stopped by each to let them know Talbot County was there to show support. A one-sheet hunting guide and one-sheet fishing guide (front and back) for the show and for local distribution was created. Please contact Ms. Boothby if you would like to have the guide for display at your business. They can also be found on TourTalbot.org.

Chesapeake Country All-American Road Interpretive Plan: The tourism offices of the nine counties on the Eastern Shore that encompass the Chesapeake Country All-American Road have selected Conservation by Design, run by Melanie Pierson, to create the interpretive plan for the scenic byway. Ms. Pierson conducted the Mid-Shore's interpretive plan for the Chesapeake County Scenic Byway. The group's first meeting with her will be March 24. The Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism will be advocating for wide-ranging stakeholder engagement for the project.

VI. Town Reports

Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.

VII. Comments from Board Members

Ms. Bellis asked Board members for their input on how rising gas prices might affect the local tourism industry. Takeaways from the discussion include:

- People may be hesitant to travel to Europe because of the Ukrainian conflict and may will look closer to home for experiences.
- Geopolitical conditions may bring more visitors, but rising gas prices will affect low-wage workers and may cause them to look for work closer to home. There is a concern that our destination will not be able to meet the expectations of
- Businesses and organizations are already postponing building plans because of rising materials costs.
- Businesses and organizations are grappling with the decision to raise prices thanks to the rising cost of goods, services, and transportation.
- After a long struggle through the COVID-19 pandemic, small businesses may buckle under the weight of another economic setback.

VIII. Next Meeting

Ms. Bixler asked if Board members would prefer to continue to meet via Zoom or would rather meet in person. Several members expressed that they believe Zoom meetings are more efficient. The group agreed to continue to meet via Zoom. The next meeting will be held on April 13, 2022, at 8:30 a.m. via Zoom.

IX. Adjournment: Ms. Bellis made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Engle seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:11 a.m.