

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

I. Call to Order

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:41 a.m. The meeting was held via Zoom videoconference.

Board Members Present: Jessica Bellis, Judy Bixler, Kristen Greenaway, Michael Hoffmann, Amy Kreiner, Mark Salter, Jeff Schneider, Cassandra Vanhooser, Kim Weller

Board Members Absent: Angela Eade, Ron Engle, Ian Fleming, Harold Klinger, Laura Price

Staff Members Present: Krista Boothby, Pam Keeton

Guests: Kristen Lycett, Phillips Wharf, Interim Director, Phillips Wharf Environmental Cetner

II. Approval of Minutes

Ms. Bixler presented the minutes from the January 12, 2022, meeting. Mr. Schneider made a motion to approve the minutes with Ms. Greenaway seconding the motion. Minutes were approved.

III. Director's Report – Cassandra Vanhooser

Tourism Day 2022: The Maryland Tourism Coalition held an outdoor Tourism Day event in Annapolis on Feb. 1. It was lightly attended by legislators most of whom are still working virtually, but it received some media coverage. Our own Captain Judy Bixler spoke at the event as she serves as the Maryland Tourism Development Board chairman. Ms. Bixler encouraged Board members to write letters to our legislators asking them to support the MTDB budget which has an additional \$2 million in it this year. Ms. Boothby attended the lunch after the pep rally and said she enjoyed the food and fellowship. Ms. Vanhooser will send the names of legislators and the number for the bill that the Maryland Tourism Coalition is backing that will give a tax credit for people who spend money traveling within the state of Maryland.

EDA Grants: The Maryland Office of Tourism has released information about the EDA grant that they received and will be distributing. Ms. Vanhooser encouraged members to consider what projects they may have that would qualify. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis. Ms. Vanhooser will share the information with the Board.

ARPA Survey: The results from Talbot County's survey soliciting input from citizens on how to spend the money from the American Rescue Plan Act. Tourism and economic development are both allowable expenditures, but tourism was not ranked high among the priorities. Councilman Pete Leshner announced in the County Council meeting on Feb. 8 that the results of the survey will be released within the month. Ms. Vanhooser will share the information when it becomes available. Business sentiment is positive for the next 6 months, with issues being inflation, supply chain, and workforce. 43% of survey takers were from Talbot County.

Business Appreciation Summit: Talbot County's annual business appreciation summit will be held on May 6 at the Tidewater Inn. Ms. Vanhooser asked the Board to consider what businesses, projects, and individuals would be eligible for a community impact award. The EDC will select the winners in early March. She will send the nomination form in a follow-up email.

Business Sentiment Survey: After the Town Reports, Ms. Vanhooser followed up on a comment made by Ms. Bellis, who said that optimism is in the air around Easton. Ms. Vanhooser said that is more than anecdotal. The Business Sentiment Survey conducted in December 2021 shows that business owners and manager report a positive outlook on the economy for the next 12 months. The complete survey summary is attached.

IV. Manager's Report – Krista Boothby

Visitor Center Committee Report: The committee met on January 19, 2022. The consensus was that an updated, relocated Visitor Center is needed and the next step should be to conduct a feasibility study. Ms. Vanhooser submitted a letter of Intent to Apply for a MHAA grant to pay for a feasibility study, and she is requesting matching funds from the general fund for this grant. The AARPA survey indicated a low priority ranking for tourism by Talbot County residents.

Visitor Center Committee minutes were sent with Board Meeting Agenda. On the final page is a list of Visitor Centers in our region for board members to stop in if in their vicinity.

Great American Outdoor Show: Ms. Boothby stated she will be attending the Great American Outdoors Show in Harrisburg, Pa., on Feb. 10. This show is a marketplace for sports fishing and hunting, and she is helping man the Maryland booth. She created a

hunting and fishing guide “profile sheet” specifically for the event that will be included on the tourism website.

I. Comments from Board Members

Mr. Salter reported that more visas have been issued for the hospitality industry for this year.

Ms. Vanhooser reported that Talbot County Council confirmed Mary Kellogg, co-founder of the Tilghman Waterman’s Museum, as newest Tourism board member.

- V. Next Meeting:** Tourism Board Meeting, March 9, 2022. The yearly Business Appreciation Summit is scheduled for May 6, 2022.

- II. Adjournment:** Mr. Schneider moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Bellis seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:15 a.m.