

***Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission Minutes
Accomack Co. Airport
2:00pm August 26th, 2009***

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Carol Evans, Chair
Steve Potts
Robert Lentz
Lisa LaMontagne
Dave Burden

Absent:
Paige Addison

STAFF PRESENT:

Donna Bozza, Director
Sandra Johnson, Office Manager

GUESTS:

Cherron Davis
Suzanne Taylor

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Carol Evans opened the meeting at 2:10pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Minutes from the August 26th meeting had previously been emailed to Commissioners. Chair Carol Evans asked if everyone had received the minutes and if there were any changes or corrections. Bozza added that since we have a new office manager, it takes a couple times in getting minutes correct so that TC can understand and if someone else was reading it they could understand. Bozza if you go to page 3, we amended the budget to correspond with Northampton County TOT from \$85,000 to \$94,000. Lentz motioned. Vote passed unanimously.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

The August financial reports were also sent to all Commissioners by email. Chair Evans asked for questions or corrections. Evans asked Sandra Johnson if she would give financial report. Johnson received Transient Occupancy Tax from Accomack County, Northampton County and Town of Onancock. Johnson stated that everyone should have received Profit and Loss and General Ledger. Lenz so we're up from last year. LaMontagne are the figures based on previous year? Do we use the same number or do we increase those numbers? Bozza figures are based on the previous year. Johnson will email those figures for next meeting FY 08-09 v. 09-10. Evans, we accept financial report as presented.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Cherron Davis from New Church Welcome Center reports that figures are up from last year. Welcome center teams (FAM tour) are very exciting about coming to Shore this fall.

Suzanne Taylor – Chincoteague Chamber – It's been good a summer, figures about the same as last year. We had a travel writer from Tulsa Kids Magazine – it was suppose to be an intergenerational story but grandmother was ill. Hurricane Bill closed the beaches, but is now open and we lost some of the parking lot. The tourism business is really affected by the weather, people canceling their reservations, etc. Hats off to the welcome center staff, we've been hearing great reports.

CHAIR REPORT:

Evans: I recently attended a class meeting on Customer Service as were Bozza, LaMontagne and Suzanne Taylor. Suzanne has come up with a noteworthy brochure that will be used and it will be launched in early October. TC greatly appreciates all of Suzanne's work that she put into the brochure.

Evans: Bozza will be doing PR as will be Eastern Shore Community College. The Eastern Shore Community College will be speaking to businesses. LaMontagne the college will also be doing some advertising, interviewing some of the people that took the course for testimonials. TC we're still keeping in mind the schools for the customer service program. Lentz, whose is the coordinator for the Customer Service program.

Evans, Roy Lock at the Eastern Shore Community College is the coordinator.

Evans reports she's made several trips to welcome center and is very excited that things are going so well. Evans, Addison and Nan Bennett trained the staff on customer service which included a trip on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel starting at the Sea Gull Pier and then a tour of the facilities control and air ventilation systems, which was very interesting. If anyone is interested in touring, you can contact Paige Addison at Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel to be put on a waiting list or schedule a tour on any Friday's.

DIRECTORS REPORT:

Donna Bozza: We've been working on an Artisan Trail grant with couple of local artist and the ANPDC. We did not receive the grant. Larry Forbes is working with an assistant on an Artisan Trail grant for the County of Accomac. TC will help him anyway we can and asked Larry Forbes if he wanted to approach our sister county Northampton and make it a regional effort.

Lentz how's the design of the website coming along. LaMontagne our web master is leaving the shore. Bozza he'll still be working with us.

The Eastern Shore Chamber has sent out a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Workforce Center to be held on September 11th at 1p.m. Johnson will be attending in Bozza's place for the office. LaMontagne will be attending. Evans will be out of town.

Media update: Bozza we were contacted by a writer from About.com which has a huge travel section on their website, the writer asked several questions about Tangier Island. She will be doing a short feature and will include our website. She will also include The Town Onancock in this feature. The WVEC – Channel 13 – did an article this summer on Close Getaways. After that I talked with producer and mailed them a media kit. They'll be doing a story on the Shore and are inviting several businesses including Holly Grove Vineyards, Pam Barefoot-Blue Crab Bay Co. and Mallards at the Wharf. The writer will be doing ecotour with Dave Burden. Bozza will be giving over view of the entire area including Chincoteague and will also include Eastern Shore Video.

Evans what about the one this weekend, did you ever catch up with them? Bozza, they had already figured out what they were going to do. They had gotten funding from Delaware and Maryland to "Host Our Coast" and had extra money left and were nice enough to include our area. He stayed with family in Onancock and going to do day trips to include: Wachapreague, Kiptopeke State Park and paddling out to Cedar Island. Evan, it's great to have these partners' ships.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Welcome Center Update:

Bozza, Luke Kellam finished with construction and we'll be cutting his last draft. It was a little bit over the bid, \$2000 due to Flooring and lament extras. Final punch list Paige and Nan Bennett went over it with a white glove. Repainted flat or glossy and couldn't find any documentation stating, we paid to have repainted \$450. Luke Kellam was TC backup in making sure everything was done correctly and was coordinator with SunBay Contracting. Luke also gave us several breaks and we're sure he didn't make anything off of this job. Luke did a great job for the TC and gets the prestige for the center. Evans what's the total overall cost. Bozza the total cost was \$96,000. Capital funds covered the cost. Evans landscaping will be done by Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel.

a. Bozza there was an incident at the Welcome Center where two gentlemen came in and were asking all sorts of questions i.e., are the security camera hooked up and asking about money. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel police were notified. Staff handled this very well. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel dug up parking lot to run wiring for panic button that will go under the counter. All of this happened while there were no permanent locks on the doors. Bozza I want to give thanks to Evans, Addison and Johnson who stepped in so I could go on vacation, because the dates kept getting pushed back, time and again. I want to recognize Johnson to the Commission who stepped in and went down and ran the center for the day, went above and beyond her duties. My many thanks to Evans and Addison for getting it opened. Evans I want to just add that if we didn't have Addison stepping in and helping. Addison is a commissioner and plays a dual role. I'd like to see a letter to Addison for her undying dedication.

b. Bozza: The USDA grants which we have until March 2010 to fulfill the requirements. There are several items to still purchase, electronic door counter, printer

and kiosk. Nan Bennett is researching a counter model kiosk that goes on left hand side of reception desk. LaMontagne what is a kiosk and what's its purpose? Bozza it's an interactive computer that visitors can look for lodging, restaurants, etc. and it can do anything we want it to do. We're also looking to put in another light box over the brochure holder on left side coming in. Bozza thanked Burden for beautiful arrangement of flowers and Cherron Davis from New Church Welcome Center for the Tropical Rain tree they sent. The Wildlife Refuge is looking to have their display in by mid-to late September. Luke Kellam has asked to be there when the Wildlife Refuge comes in to keep everything in tack.

c. Total Visitors: Bozza: We've been open 16 days and count sheet is included in your packet. Please note we were closed on Friday due to A/C not working, it was over 90 degrees inside the center and too hot to keep staff working. The parking lot was closed Saturday for one hour due to Medivac helicopter coming in. Bozza talked with Jeff Holland and it only happens about three times out of a year. Bozza there have been over 5200 visitors. Lentz is this people talk too or just counted. Bozza it's just a total of person(s). LaMontagne are these just people we're talking to or everyone coming into the center? Bozza we're counting everyone that's coming in. In the future we'll have the electronic door counter. Potts is this fantastic and the numbers that people should pay attention to. Burden I've been into the center several times and the staff have spoken to everyone that comes into the center, so numbers should be pretty close.

d. Reception: Even the reception was held last Thursday, August 20th it was to thank our partners, commissioners, both counties and chambers. We had 34 people including Jeff Holland, Tim Holloway. LaMontagne was invaluable in helping getting this together and I think it went very well, all things considered with A/C not working. Everybody that came appreciated it and to see their eyes coming into the center to know they had a hand in it one way or another. It was a great evening and a night to remember.

Bozza, I've emailed Donna Mason about governor coming and TC consider having it the day before the Harvest Fest. TC will do it whenever the governor can come.

Lentz do we have insurance on the center. Bozza we had it even during the pilot program. Tracy checked this out before she left to make sure we had enough coverage.

2. FAM Tour

Bozza reported that Evans, LaMontagne, Cherron Davis and Suzanne Taylor have just come from a Committee meeting on the FAM Tour for this fall. The dates are October 13, 14, and 15. Ladies what's the saying "It's the sizzle not the steak." 1st day Lower Shore: Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel tour and lunch, Welcome Center, Kiptopeke State Park, Barrier Islands, Chatham Vineyards, tour of Cape Charles, Aqua and Bay Creek Resort providing twelve rooms (not sure if all condo or separate homes) and two B&B will be providing rooms overnight in Cape Charles. 2nd day Chincoteague and Suzanne Taylor will be arranging Refuge, Oyster Mariner Museum, rooms and meals.

3rd day going to Parksley, lunch at Camp Silver Beach, back to Onancock, Lisa is arranging Progressive dinner and B&B's arranging for rooms, Cherron Davis was kind enough to get back up at Comfort Inn if needed. The next morning breakfast then head to Holly Grove Vineyards and then leave the Shore very happy. Evans, we're hoping since we can't get to every location, that we can get DVDs and information on other locations and have a speaker(s) during the dinners. There will be more details to follow. We just found out Tangier will not be on board. The VTC asked for two nights and we've come up with three. This has been made possible from the support from all of our partners.

3. Travel Guide 2010

Bozza: We lost a great sales representative Chris Houser, who has relocated. Jay Bellamy is our new contact has been working together. Donna Richardson who is in training will be taking his place and I should be meeting with her soon. There are 125,000 copies. TC when we are out talking making sure businesses knows this is the only guide available 24/7. The guide is cost efficient being that the mechanism for distribution is in place. The cost for listing in back is \$75. LaMontagne are we keeping track of the guides being used at welcome center? Bozza, yes there's a list in your packet showing number left out and number of guides being taken each night. Evans did we ask about cost factor is we wanted to print more. Bozza, discussion with them unless we want to spend more money the price and quantity are set for the year. Evans, can we up the number of copies. Bozza, we'd have to sell more ads or raise the price. Bozza, Bob Lentz will tell TC what he's been working on and it sounds promising. Lenz trying to get artist involved, the cost would be \$300 is we can get 16 to sign up; it would a two page spread. I've sent information out about 200 and one has signed on. Positive feedback and can get a good present. In another month or two should know if it's going to work. Bozza, Burden is helping us with the cover shot. Virginia Living cover picture on the house on water, I mentioned it to Vista Graphics. Evans it kinds of reflect the one with the bike on the cover.

4. Customer Service:

Evans: I think I've covered customer service in the chair report. Evans asked LaMontagne if she had anything to add to customer service report. Everything is moving along we just need to make sure marketing continues. The Eastern Shore Community College is stepping up with Shore Talk, press releases. Evans their hoping testimonials and first class Bobby Walker coming. Bozza we're getting quotes for new designed logo. Bozza we will email draft of Gold Star Service Decal to all TC. Burden has they set all dates for classes. Evans there will be two sessions of three classes. Evans there's one on Chincoteague, one in Melfa, and one on the southern end. LaMontagne it's been reduced to three hours sessions instead of four hour sessions. Burden, are these classes all during the day. Evans, yes they are during the day, but if we get enough responses we can consider and evening class. Burden we use high school students and we'd like them to take the class. Evans maybe we could have evening classes. Evans classes are October 13, 14 and 15.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Evans, Johnson is circulating a sheet with Commissioners contact information, so we can update addresses, phone numbers. Evans let's open the discussion for new commissioners. TC has received some suggestions from Lenz for Accomack County. Addison sent names for Northampton County. Have we all had a chance to look at the names? Lenz, should we contact these individuals to find out if they have any interest in being on the Commission. I know we were supposed to send a list for each of us to go over. LaMontagne, we talked about suggesting name and then it was dropped. Evans how do we want to handle it at this point? Evans we're supposed to approach these people to see if they were interested. Burden I want to add Cela Burgess, don't know if she has the time or whether she'd be interested. Evans, why don't we revisit this at our next meeting and anyone who has name(s) ask these individuals if they'd like their names to be submitted for the Commission. Bozza we'll resend the list from Lenz, Addison and LaMontagne.

Evans I asked Johnson to give us our attendance records for the years starting in August 2008. We wanted you to understand we appreciate your attendance and need to stay on top of what we're doing. LaMontagne the by-laws state that it's four (4) consecutive regularly scheduled meetings or total of six (6) per annum.

Evans is there anything else that needs to come before the commission at this time?

MATTERS BY COMMISSIONERS:

1. Bozza reported that the Spotlight Display with Chatham Vineyards, Blue Crab Bay Co. and Holly Gove Vineyards are seeing a difference in business since the welcome center has opened. Pam Barefoot stated that a customer said she thought they were working for her. It was promoted so well, they saw a huge upswing in business. Holly Grove is going to use tracking numbers on their brochures to see if they get re-occurring orders.

2. LaMontagne we had interns here from CNN doing a story on Tangier. Town of Onancock knew they were here but didn't bother to mention it. I don't know when it will run. This was an opportunity lost. Bozza we did send media kit to them. LaMontagne just so everyone will know the Wildlife and Birding Fest in Cape Charles and the Town of Onancock will be doing the kick off September 17th. We have a lot of exciting things happening. We had a good turn out last year and hoping for more this year. Evans said Southern Living had a good article on Birding Fest and a listing in their calendar of events in the back.

Evans I don't know if you've taken notice, but there's a sign going south that says "Isn't Route 13 Boring" stop into Cape Charles.

3. Lentz now that the Welcome Center is open, where do we go from here. We have to start looking for sponsors. We need reoccurring finances. Bozza we need to roll out a plan on this and I've been waiting for Wildlife Refuge to go into the center. Evans to show the center in its entirety, we need proof that it's working before we take in tours. LaMontagne the number will show businesses that it's working. People are going to be amazed at how the center looks. Potts we need to go to the Chambers and I'll talk with Suzanne Taylor about getting the chambers together. This is the future of the Shore. Potts with the visitor's numbers and Pam Barefoot comments, other business will see if working and want to be competitive.

Grand Opening: LaMontagne for the grand opening we should have events outside leading up to the main event. Eco-tours, wine tasting, etc. Bozza the first thing the TC would have to do is contact Chesapeake Bay Bridge and Tunnel to find out what can/what can't we do. Evans it's September already. LaMontagne we need to get things lined up. Burden let's get back to something Lenz was talking about how many brochures do we tell businesses we need. They pay for a year service, letting them know how many we need so they can have them printed. LaMontagne, we take 500 at a time, we go thru 2-3 500's. Bozza that's something I don't want to comment on till we have at least 6 months in.

4. Closed Session:

Evans: Chapter 21, Sections 2.2-371.1, Code of Virginia 1950 Amended.

5. Coming back into regular session:

Evans after having discussed personnel issues and determining that staffing changes need to be made at the welcome center; nothing that need to be voted on.

Evans the commission has decided to give Bozza a Merit Award of \$2,250 for all her tireless effort with the welcome center. LaMontagne motioned. Vote passed unanimously. The TC decided to give Sandra a Spotlight Award of \$200 great effort in assisting Bozza in helping with welcome center. Lentz motioned. Vote passed unanimously.

MEETING ADJOURNED:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45pm. Evans, do I have motion to close. Potts motioned to close.

NEXT MEETING:

The next TC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 23rd at 2:00pm at the Accomack Airport.

Transcribed from tape and respectfully submitted:

Sandra Johnson

Accepted this _____ day of _____, 2009 by the Eastern Shore
Tourism Commission:

Carol Evans, Chair