



**Queen
Anne's
County**

MARYLAND

Economic & Tourism Development

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County Commissioners:

James J. Moran, At Large
Jack N. Wilson, Jr., District 1
Stephen Wilson, District 2
Philip L. Dumenil, District 3
Christopher M. Corchiarino, District 4

Travel And Tourism Advisory Committee

Business Meeting Minutes for April 12, 2022

I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum:

The meeting began at 9:05am and the following Active Committee Members were present and represented a quorum:

Eric Hoffman
Dolores Jones (via Zoom)
Jody Schulz
Katherine Bonner
Michelle Brink-Pringle

Not Present:

John Anderes
Gail Owings
Brian Truitt
Derek Janes

Staff Present:

Heather Tinelli, Director, Economic & Tourism Development

Supporting Members Present:

Nancy Scozzari, Chief of Parks & Resource Planning, Dept. of Parks & Recreation
Linda Friday, President, QAC Chamber of Commerce (Zoom)
Gigi Windley, Executive Director, Kent Narrows Development Foundation (via Zoom)

II. Approval of Agenda and Minutes:

On a motion made by XXXXXX and seconded by XXXXXX, the February meeting agenda was approved by a unanimous vote of all members present.

On a motion made by Ms. Brink-Pringle and seconded by Ms. Jones the December meeting minutes were approved by a unanimous vote of all members present.

III. Department of Economic and Tourism Development Update: Heather Tinelli, Director of Economic & Tourism Development provided a department update for the committee:

- A.** Ms. Tinelli made the announcement that Katie Clendaniel, Marketing & Destination Development Specialist, has resigned and taken a new job in the private sector closer to her home. She continued to say we are very grateful for all Ms. Clendaniel accomplished in her time with QAC Tourism, she will be missed, and we wish her the best.
- B.** Ms. Tinelli shared the Visit Queen Anne's website on the monitor and navigated through to highlight updates that have been made and view the Calendar of Events. Ms. Tinelli stated that the Kent Island Day (May), Chesapeake Motoring Festival (June) and Bay Bridge Run (November) are returning this year.
- C.** The Ferry Project Feasibility Study plan continues to move forward with more counties showing interest. Ms. Tinelli and Ms. Lepter, Economic Development Coordinator, met with staff from Calvert and Somerset Counties to discuss their interest and what steps they will need to take to be included in the project. Dorchester, Talbot and Kent County are currently working with their county officials to secure matching funds for inclusion. The team recently met with Tom Sadowski, Executive Director of MEDCO, who stated they would pledge \$25,000 towards the grant match.
- D.** National Travel and Tourism Week is from May 1st through May 7th. The department is planning to follow the MD Tourism "Faces of Tourism" campaign. Throughout the week, the department will highlight employees that have been nominated from local hospitality and tourism businesses for their exemplary service, work ethic and attitude.
- E.** The department applied for an additional USDA Grant to implement Phase 2 of the Re-Branding Project. The additional funds would be utilized for upgraded welcome signs at each end of the county as well as continued website upgrades and support to other county departments.
- F.** The Visitor Center is now open 7 days a week which will continue through November 2022.
- G.** The department has the ability to collect email addresses that have been submitted from visitors on the website and send out monthly updates to include upcoming events and new business details.

IV. Parks & Recreation Department Update- Nancy Scozzari, Chief of Parks and Resource Planning, provided an update regarding current projects in the county.

- A. Legislation Update-** The department recently took part in a press conference with Sen. Cardin and the ED of the Port of Baltimore. The department presented several projects that they are hoping will qualify for congressional funding.
 - i. Ferry Point Nature Park Emergency Fix
 - ii. Pedestrian Overpass Bridge- located somewhere between the Bay Bridge and Kent Narrows
 - iii. Dredging Funds- the county currently has 11 properties that are in need of dredge support

B. Program Open Space-Ms. Scozzari explained that half of the Recreation Tax for the state is distributed to all jurisdictions. QAC is near the top of the list for funds allocated due to the amount of funds the county spends and the and the how the funds are utilized on projects.

- i. Pickle Ball Court
- ii. Rt. 8 Trail Extension
- iii. Terrapin
- iv. Park Restroom and Park Ranger Station.

C. Local Parks & Infrastructure Planning:

- i. The majority of the athletic fields located in the county are booked throughout the year with regular season play and tournament play sports. If they county wants to engage in offering more tournament, they may have to look at more land acquisition for indoor and outdoor sporting events.
- ii. They recently installed athletic field lighting and irrigation at Whitemarsh which is one of the premium facilities for hosting tournaments for baseball and lacrosse.
- iii. Parks and Recreation has a Full Time Playground Inspector that consistently inspects all the playgrounds for safety and equipment issues/replacement. Mowbray Park, which is the largest playground in the county, is now in need of upgrades.
- iv. The department just completed the restroom and Park Ranger station project at Terrapin Nature Park in Stevensville.
- v. The new restroom building at XXXXX Creek in Chester is complete and provides a great resting spot for Cross Island Trail users.

D. Park & Resources Planning-

- i. Ms. Scozzari stated she has advertised the opportunity for businesses to bid on the Matapeake Beach Clubhouse exterior paint project. The clubhouse will be available to rent for meetings, events and weddings.
- ii. Trail Lighting and Safety projects are planned for Kent Narrows Way North, Old Love Point Road
- iii. The department is working with SHA to implement a drawbridge crossing at Kent Narrows.
- iv. There is a proposed Rt 8 Trail Connector behind Target that would give access and connectivity to Rt 8 residents.
- v. Kent Narrows spur trail (paved walking trail) is planned to connect from under the drawbridge to the existing crosswalk. This project is included in the plan for the Hyatt Place Hotel. There is an additional spur trail funded by the National Recreation Trails that will come from the east parking under the bridge and connect to the hotel
- vi. The department applied for a MHAA grant to fund an architectural and archeological survey for Bloomfield Farm. The surveys are for recommendations on the condition of the building overall and uses to consider such as Conditional, Public or Institutional use.
- vii. There will be a ribbon cutting for the Blue Heron Nature Park this fall. The Park is located just south of the Blue Heron Golf Course, includes 3 miles of trails, over 113 species of birds and will provide the perfect environment for birding enthusiasts.
- viii. As mentioned previously, the department is moving forward with efforts to solidify funding for the Ferry Point Nature Park Emergency

Fix Project. Due to several major storms, the park has lost approximately 12 feet or 100 yards of shoreline which is crucial for the protection of the Kent Narrows. The department is working with DNR, County Commissioners and has applied for Congressional funding to help with the restore project. This issue is more critical and unique because it not only protects nature and wildlife but also protects the economic hub for the county.

- ix. The tennis courts at Mowbray Park are being removed and pickle ball courts are being installed. Due to the incredible interest in pickle ball the county is considering an indoor facility for year-round play. The tennis courts will remain at Love Point Park and the tennis courts at Grasonville Park are being replaced.
- x. There is a 9-hole disc golf course located at Whitemarsh Park and there is a request to install an additional course near Kent Island.
- xi. July 4th Celebration will return this year to the Chesapeake Heritage Visitors Center in Chester on July 4, 2022.
- xii. The turf fields located at both high schools are also being utilized for many lacrosse tournaments and track meets.
- xiii. The bulkhead project in front of the Visitor Center is schedule to be complete at the end of May.
- xiv. Improvements continue at Wells Cove to include LED lighting and additional irrigation.
- xv. The department is regularly working with MD DNR regarding abandoned and sunken boats in the region.
- xvi. The Park Rangers have completed Ranger School, Boating Safety, Public Landing Safety Courses.
- xvii. The Department is working on the final design for the new runway at Bay Bridge Airport and the hangers continue to remain full.

V. Old Business

A. Legislative Updates- Ms. Tinelli provided an update for the Advisory Board. and will continue to forward details as information is shared.

- a. All bills that TTAC was following specific to Queen Anne's County are still moving forward in the process as of Friday, April 8, 2022.
- b. The Drawbridge Fishing Prohibited bill specific to the Kent Narrows has passed both House and Senate.

B. Budget Submissions-Ms. Tinelli provided an update on the budget requests submitted for the department in February.

- a. The department requested an increase to the marketing budget from 105,000 to 150,000. This request was based on research polled from other county DMO's regarding their marketing budgets. The research showed that QAC was well below the average amount of our surrounding counties and also had not received an increase to this budget in many years.
- b. The department also asked for increases in their Consulting and Printing/Publishing budget to help fund the design and printing costs needed for the next Visitors Guide that will be produced in Spring of FY 2023.

- c. Ms. Tinelli requested a letter of support for these budget increase requests from TTAC to the County Commissioners. On a motion made by Jody Schulz and seconded by XXXXX, the Advisory Board approved the motion by a unanimous vote of all members present.

C. Metrics Report- Ms. Tinelli shared the Tourism Metrics sheet that will be produced and shared each month moving forward. The Info sheet includes hotel tax totals, social media statistics, top key search words. Visitor center counts, visitor guide requests, trail user stats and other details.

D. Digital Marketing Analytic- The department is currently running a digital marketing campaign through Media One and has recently updated the ads to reflect Spring and Summer seasons. Through these ads, the department can identify key search words utilized, where individuals are located, if the individuals click through to the website and how long they are on the website. Additionally, they are able to track the ping on their phone to see if the individual follows through with a visit. If the individual is just passing through it will not be included in the count however it will count as a visit if they stay for any amount of time and count as an overnight visit if they stay longer than 12 hours. It can recognize where people visit within the county and where they stay.

V. New Business

A. QR Code Campaign- Ms. Tinelli stated the Tourism Team has been discussing new options for engaging tourists when they are visiting the county. The team would like to create individualized QR Codes, based on the location and type of business in which it is located, to encourage visitors to seek more details about the county and our tourism assets. Ms. Tinelli is asking specific types of business to help us "test" the campaign. The department would be able to know which QR codes generate interest. Below are some potential places of interest for the testing:

- i. Historic Sites
- ii. Kiosk on trails
- iii. Breakfast tables at hotels
- iv. Menus at restaurants
- v. Breweries
- vi. Waiting area at restaurants
- vii. Website for upcoming sports tournaments

B. Tourism Partner Outreach Solution- Ms. Tinelli and her team has been discussing an option to reach out to all out Hospitality and Tourism Partners regarding updates, events, major traffic issues and tournaments hosted in the county. She discussed whether a group email or a potential private Facebook page specific to these businesses would be welcomed by the partners. They will continue this conversation at the next meeting when more members are in attendance.

VII. Member Reports:

A. Gail Owings-Ms. Owings provided an update on the status of the All-American Road. The National Scenic Byway was upgraded to the All-American Road which is the most prestigious category of the scenic

byway system. The committee has acquired a consultant to produce an interpretive plan. On April 18th and 19th, the consultant is hosting a virtual meeting to discuss what type of interpretation is desired on the byway. Ms. Owings encouraged members to attend the meeting to share opinions. The Eastern Shore section of National Scenic Byway (all American Road) starts in Chesapeake City, follows Rt 213, hops on to Rt 18 to the Bay Bridge, goes back to Wye Grist Mill and weaves its way all the way down the shore.

VIII. Adjournment-The April Travel & Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting was adjourned at 9:54am.

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