



**Travel And Tourism Advisory Committee**

**Business Meeting Minutes for May 9, 2023**

**I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum:**

Due to the temporary closing of the Chesapeake Heritage & Visitor Center, the meeting was conducted remotely at the Love Point Winery and Vineyards.

The meeting began at 9:00am and the following Active Committee Members were present:

Eric Hoffman  
Katherine Bonner  
Michelle Brink-Pringle  
Kelly Phipps

Not Present:  
Mary Jo McCulloch

Members that tried to attend via Zoom but were unable to join due to connection issues.

John Anderes  
Dolores Jones  
Gail Owings  
Ashley Genova

Staff Present:  
Heather Tinelli, Director, Economic & Tourism Development  
April Plummer, Travel & Tourism Marketing Specialist

Supporting Members Present:  
Gigi Windley, Executive Director, Kent Narrows Dev. Foundation  
Nicole Neboshynsky, Owner, Tasty Toucan Ice Cream Shop  
Karen Seppi, Love Point Winery

**II. Approval of Agenda and Minutes:**

Due to low member attendance and the inability to meet a quorum, the May Agenda and March Meeting Minutes were not able to be approved.

**Economic & Tourism Development**

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**County Commissioners:**

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

- III. Department of Economic and Tourism Development Update:** Heather Tinelli, Director of Economic & Tourism Development, provided an update for the committee:
- A.** The department is finalizing the marketing campaigns for remaining FY23 MD Tourism Grant funding.
  - B.** Ms. Tinelli worked with Stevensville A&E District to submit their 10-year redistricting application.
  - C.** The Ferry Feasibility Study, which will determine if the ferry would work, continues to move forward. The contractor has been selected and other counties are showing interest in joining. The current counties involved are Anne Arundel, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, and Calvert counties.
  - D.** Ms. Tinelli listed several major events coming up in the county like Kent Island Day, Chesapeake Motoring and Drink MD. A complete list can be found on the Visit Queen Anne's website calendar.
  - E.** The visitor center in Kent Narrows as well as Ferry Point Nature Park are now closed for construction/remodeling of parking lot. Staff members have access to continue working in the building. They are currently working to open a small Visitor Information Center at the Queenstown Outlets and anticipate it opening in mid-June.
  - F.** We continue the online campaign for visitor guide requests which provide leads. The staff were able to utilize the USPS bulk rate to meet the demand.
  - G.** Ms. Tinelli submitted FY24 budget requests to include a \$25,000 increase in marketing funding thus bringing tourism marketing funds closer the MD county average. She also asked for funds in established budgets be transferred and included in the EDIF (Economic Development Incentive Fund). With those funds, her requested increase, and the current balance, there would be nearly 1 million dollars available in the EDIF.
  - H.** Staff have requested visitor guides from all over the nation. Exploring the guides of others gives the opportunity to see trends, themes, layouts, and content ideas as they plan for the next QAC guide.
  - I.** The department will be hiring 2 interns to support the staff and help with projects part time. They would like to hire one high school student and one college student. Ms. Tinelli shared that she had an internship with QAC ED when she was in college. It was a great experience for her, and it influenced and supported her career choice.

**V. New Business**

- A.** Marketing Analytics Review- April Plummer stated that their analytics showed an increase in organic tracking 50% year over year, and she expects it to do the same this year.
- B.** List of local upcoming events in QAC:
  - 1) Concours d'Elegance
  - 2) Kent Island Day
  - 3) Chesapeake Bay Motoring Festival
  - 4) Drink MD
  - 5) July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration & Fireworks
  - 6) Bash By the Bay
  - 7) Bay Paddle
  - 8) Peach Festival

- C. Ms. Plummer shared that the Tourism department and staff have had a very busy two month stretch which included some of the following activities:
  - i. Fox 45 visited to do a story on the beginning of boating season in QAC. They interviewed Capt. Meredith, interviewed Ms. Plummer and Ms. Tinelli who mentioned the upcoming Bay Bridge Boat show and spoke to the owners of Dragonfly Paddle.
  - ii. They hosted journalists from Canada that were interested in touring the county. They were most interested in watermen themed activities like oyster recovery. They arrived for the first night to a sunset dinner at Libbey's Restaurant then returned 2 days later after exploring other Eastern Shore counties to more activities and a traditional crab feast at The Crab Deck.
  - iii. For National Tourism Week, MD Tourism staff will be doing "Maryland in A Day" to include a stop in QAC for lunch on the waterfront at Harris Seafood.
  - iv. This week QAC Tourism will be hosting Journalists from the UK and are interested in an Aqua-Wellness themed experience. Their visit will include paddle boarding and kayaking, bicycling on the Cross Island Trail, waterfront dining and more.
  - v. The Washington Post was in QAC to create a video that will be posted on their site with over one million impressions. The video includes drone footage, stops at local breweries and restaurants. Each stop referenced other tourism assets and businesses and was very successful at covering the most in a they amount of time that was available.
- D. Hotel Tax Update:
  - i. In February 2023, there was a 25% increase over February 2022.
  - ii. In March 2023, there was a 22% increase from March 2022.

## VI. Member Reports/Announcements-

- A. Kent Narrows Development Foundation- Ms. Windley provided an update for the TTAC Committee Members:
  - 1) All restaurants will open for the season this weekend.
  - 2) There will be a new bike rental kiosk at Holiday Inn Express
  - 3) Ms. Windley is working on the heritage related signage for the CHVC lot.
  - 4) The Motoring Festival will take place at the KI Yacht Club on June 10th-11<sup>th</sup>.
  - 5) The Concours d'Elegance car Show will take place at the KI Yacht Club on September 22<sup>nd</sup> -24<sup>th</sup>.
  - 6) KNDF is producing a Heritage Trail map for Kent Narrows area.
- B. Michelle Brink-Pringle, stated how popular the offroad trail in Stevensville has become and what a great addition it is for the county and communities. The trail has GPS markers for trail users that can bring EMS precisely to their location should there be an emergency.
- C. Eric Hoffman, Holiday Inn Express-Kent Island, and Kelly Phipps, Kent Island Resort, discussed the trends they are seeing regarding where the clients are visiting from and their age. They are noticing now that QAC is trending more towards a destination and less of a place to visit or pass through. Visitors are

coming from farther away and staying longer. Ms. Plummer stated, as she begins planning for FY24 marketing, she would encourage feedback from TTAC members regarding regions they would suggest for potential marketing efforts.

- VII. Next Meeting-** The next meeting date is scheduled for Tuesday, June 13, 2023, and will take place at the Holiday Inn Express-Kent Island
- VIII. Adjournment-** The March Travel & Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting was adjourned at 9:54am.