MINUTES
Kent Narrows Development Foundation
Board of Directors Meeting
Chesapeake Heritage and Visitors Center
June 25, 2019

Board Members Present
Jody Schulz, Chair
Joe Pomerantz, Vice Chair
Mike Harris, Treasurer
Pat Worns, Secretary
Jerry Dammeyer
Michael Foster
Sheryl Jaros
Sue Kamp
Justin Kiernan
Walt Thompson
Jason Ruth
Peggy Young

Board Members Absent with Notice
Victoria Hoffman

Commissioners
Phil Dumenil

Guests
Liz Fitzsimmons, Managing Director, Maryland Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts
Linda Friday, Queen Anne’s County Chamber of Commerce
Marc Lacoste, Best Western Hotel
Marcia Ross, Assistant Director Tourism Development with the Maryland Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts

KNDF Staff
Gigi Windley, Executive Director

QAC Staff
Todd Mohn, County Administrator
Ashley Chenault, Tourism Coordinator
Jean Fabi, Economic Development Coordinator
Nancy Scozzari, Parks and Recreation

CALL TO ORDER
With a quorum of directors in attendance, Chair Jody Schulz called to order the regular meeting of the Kent Narrows Development Foundation at 9:04 a.m. Approval of reports were tabled until a quorum could be present.

RESOLUTION
Minutes
The Board unanimously approved the Minutes from the April 2, 2019, and the May 28, 2019, regular meetings of the KNDF.

FINANCIALS
Mike Harris:
The balance in the Queenstown Bank as of 5/31/2019 was $13,971.34. According to the most recent statement provided by the County, the KNDF 570 fund balance is at $192,369. The new Chesapeake Charities statement was received on
6/24/19 and the balance in that fund is now $9,661.92. The Foundation received a letter from the County notifying that a grant of $35,000 was awarded as a result of the grant request submitted in January, 2019. That check will be received in July. The funds from the special tax district are also expected to come in around that time.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Linda Friday of the QAC Chamber of Commerce reported that they organized a ribbon-cutting event for the new boarding facility for animals. The Chamber is offering a seminar on how to motivate employees. The Chamber will be managing the drug awareness and prevention program, “QAC Goes Purple,” beginning in September.

COMMISSIONER DUMENIL
Phil suggested that County Administrator Todd Mohn make a State of the County presentation to the KNDF at a future meeting. Board members agreed that the presentation would be welcomed at their July 16 meeting.

PARKS AND RECREATION
Nancy Scozzari reported that the Independence Day Celebration will be on Tuesday, July 2. The fireworks will be launched from Ferry Point Park, so the park will be closed at dusk June 31 until July 3. Parking will be at the Old Outlets Center. If the event is cancelled due to rain on July 2, a fireworks-only event will be held at dusk on July 3.

The seasonal park rangers are scheduled to be on duty daily until 10 at night until 10/1/19.

The bush-trimming maintenance at the Watermen’s Monument is being taken care of by the County.

Parks and KNDF are continuing work on the wayfinding sign project and also on refreshing the entrance sign to Ferry Point Park.

UPDATE: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM
Jean Fabi reported that the department — along with the workforce subcommittee of the Economic Development Commission, the Chamber, and the public schools — is focusing on workforce development this summer. The charge is to recruit businesses to sign up for the Youth Apprenticeship Program. An event for this Fall is being planned to promote career technology education. The date has not been set. The office is also working with the Maryland Department of Labor to promote traditional apprenticeship programs for adults. The office is also working to help to facilitate the expansion of the Boatel project.

A Staff Technical Advisory Committee meeting on the Four Seasons project is slated for June 25. It is open to the public, but there is no opportunity for public comment during this phase of the process.

Ashley Chenault handed out a Tourism Monitor Report that was compiled by QAC Tourism. She said the office’s ultimate goal was to “put heads in beds.” The report indicated that hotel tax receipts for the County were up. The attendance count at the Chesapeake Heritage and Visitor Center is up 14% over may of 2018.

QAC web site had 810 page views and 650 unique views, with a total of 1460 total monthly views. The Facebook Page currently has 2,228 fans.

The Tourism Office applied for a grant from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority to redevelop the lobby area of the Chesapeake Heritage and Visitors Center.

An automatic counter at the Center registered 20,649 entries into Ferry Point Park between June of 2018 and May of 2019. (The eco-counter does not count unique visitors, but records only the number of entrances into the Park). The weekend average on Friday and Saturday is 1,088. The entrance count on 5/18/19 was 3,096. The parks have eco-counters at other parks and on trails.

Ashley attended the IPW and International Travel Trade Event in Anaheim. She worked to promote the county to travel buyers out of the Maryland Booth. A more detailed report will be distributed at a later date.
PRESENTATION: MARYLAND OFFICE OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
Liz Fitsimmons and Marci Ross gave a presentation on the many initiatives and services offered through the Maryland Tourism Office to assist local destinations, attractions, and businesses.

The Office promotes Maryland as a travel destination for domestic and international tourists. It also promotes the state’s attractions, accommodations, and events through its website, VisitMaryland.org, annual publications, Destination Maryland and Maryland Calendar of Events, and two newsletters. Additionally, the staff advises third-party travel sellers such as travel agents and tour operators. A public relations staff has assisted travel writers to generate nearly $15.5 million in destination publicity. The office also manages eight Welcome Centers.

Liz presented the Maryland Fish and Hunt video that features fishing in the Kent Narrows and the Chesapeake Bay.

Fish and Hunt Maryland is a cooperative venture between the Department of Natural Resources and the Tourism Office. Liz noted that the videos produced by the tourism office are available for the KNDF to use.

The Office of Commerce has a new Secretary, Kelly Schultz, who is focusing on workforce development initiatives. The purpose of the office of Tourism Development is to stimulate and drive Maryland’s tourism. Ms. Schultz will be making a visit to Queen Anne’s County at a date TBA. Travel and Tourism jobs are an important part of the workforce mix. One out of every two jobs in the travel and tourism industry is a family sustaining wage. It is a myth that the jobs created by visitor spending are low wage jobs.

The Maryland Office Of Tourism Development works under a five-year strategic plan for to promote and develop the State’s travel and tourism related economy. The new planning cycle begins this year. The office will be asking for stakeholder input.

The office has a $2.5 million grant program. The return on investment for well-managed travel and tourism promotion programs is 27 to 1. The State of Maryland’s budget is $13 million. The challenge for Maryland is that the state and its businesses have to compete in the most expensive media market in the country. New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. markets are expensive to reach. In comparison, Virginia’s budget is $20 million. Current geographic targets for Maryland are New York, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh.

Key statistics associated with visitor spending were highlighted. Ashley noted that there is lag time associated with the reporting of travel and tourism metrics. The 2018 numbers are not reported out until Fall of 2019.

She reported that $18 billion in visitor spending came in to the State in 2017 that is 2.1% increase over the previous year. Transportation and gas are always included in the numbers. She emphasized that gas prices have been historically low so and because transportation and fuel spending factored into the reports the higher gas prices in previous reports have accounted for shown accounted for a higher percentage of growth being reported in previous years. The key metrics that indicate growth include those associated with overnight visits.

She noted that the State of Maryland has a Trail System second to none. The Chesapeake Bay Trail system is a differentiator for Maryland and so is the Underground Railway story. This September marks the 170+ Anniversary of Harriet Tubman’s self-liberation. A movie on Harriet Tubman will be released in the Fall. This is a unique opportunity to promote Underground Railroad sites.

She encouraged the KNDF members and related businesses to go online to visit maryland.org to update business listings, subscribe to the Office’s newsletter, and add relevant content to the site.

Cooperative advertising is available to the private sector and to destinations and attractions on an annual basis and is to be publicized through the County Offices of Tourism. The coop opportunities are generally released in the Fall.

The office makes use of Adara, a travel data coop for marketing solutions and travel data support. Reports from Adara can illustrate the effectiveness of the State’s web presence and associated marketing programs. Arrivalist is also a product that provides intelligence on visitation and helps to track the impact of media initiatives on travel demand.
She noted that there has been a change in the traffic that is coming into the Bay County welcome Center as a result of the Middletown Bypass. They are seeing a significant increase in large vehicles using the highway and the Center.

She proposed that the KNDF apply for funds from the office’s (PSCAP) Private Sector Consumer Advertising Program which is designed to generate overnight stays.

The idea is to leverage at least $25,000 in State grant funds with a combination of County, Kent Narrows and private sector funds. She proposed $25,000 in state match to $25,000 in local funds to create a $50,000 ad placement program. The campaign could be run through the KNDF.

The RFP’s come out in August and she encouraged the KNDF, the County and the business community to put together a program and apply for the funds. She suggested that collectively, we identify common themes and common goals. A meeting to discuss the program further was scheduled following the Board Meeting. The grant term is calendar year 2020. They work directly with the destination marketing organization.

Nancy Scozzari asked if the office was able to advocate for extension of the County’s Trail System. She said the office could write letters of support for local projects. The office can also advocate for a project at various committees through MDOT and SHA. Ryan Snow is the Eastern Shore rep for the Commerce Department and he will be helping to coordinate business advocacy efforts on the Eastern Shore. The new Secretary of Natural Resources is from the Eastern Shore.

Marcia Ross suggested that the Cross Island Trail is a differentiator for Queen Anne’s County and can be promoted both domestically and internationally. She encouraged local businesses to link to the Chesapeake Country promotional videos and use the visual assets provided through the Tourism Office. Every video that Maryland owns is found on YouTube Channel. She also encouraged the businesses to post info on the Maryland Crab and Oyster Trail. She suggested that “hook and cook” is popular now. It’s equivalent to the New England Clam Bake.

Gigi noted that the Maryland Office of Tourism’s work is effective in driving traffic to local websites. The KNDF site analytics show that about 6% of the traffic is generated through the Maryland Tourism Office’s website.

Mike Foster suggested that the presentation illustrated that it’s important invest accommodations tax funds so they can be leveraged in a manner that to grows the economy thus improve the destinations, attractions and quality of life for the residents and visitors.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

COUNTY GRANT
Gigi reported that THE KNDF received a letter from the County awarding the Foundation $35,000 for FY 2020.

NEW BUSINESS
Dessert First, a dockside coffee and dessert bar, is now open seven days a week from 7:30-9pm. It features Rise Up Coffee. It’s run by Billy and Sheri Ortel and is located in the dock bar area of Harris Crab House.

GRAFFITTI
Graffiti under Rt. 50 Bridge on one of the supports was documented and reported to County Officials, who in turn handled it through SHA. Gigi thanked the County for working with SHA to have it removed in a timely manner.

ROADWAYS
SHA District 2 is evaluating the request to lower the speed limit on Rt. 18. SHA is also looking at adding additional “No Parking” signs on the South side of Rt. 18 from Wells Cove Road to the west.
MARITIME RELATED INITIATIVES
A short meeting was held with James Wood to articulate the issues discussed at recent KNDF meetings. He suggested that the KNDF work with the marinas to develop a public information campaign to let mariners know that they should center their vessels when approaching the channel markers leading into the Kent Narrows.

He will help to develop a longer-term plan to address the other issues including working to apply safety markings around the jetty on the southern end of the Narrows and to continue to address a longer-term solution to the dredging issues. He will be available after August to focus on this.

A board discussion followed on maritime related issues; it was suggested that the Foundation work cooperatively with the Coast Guard and DNR to develop a waterway safety page for the website and also to develop associated materials.

MAINTENANCE ISSUES
Watermen’s Monument Area
An e-mail went out to Mike Watson requesting that the bushes around the monument be trimmed.

Walkway Between the Jetty and Bridges
Info was sent to the County requesting maintenance along the walk between the Jetty and Bridges. Weeds are prevalent throughout and most, if not all, and the bollards need painting.

PROJECTS
Economic Impact Study
A meeting was scheduled in earlier this month to go over the results of the study. Due to a matter associated with Dr. Diriker’s schedule, that meeting is postponed until July 8th.

Parking Lot Inventory
In response to a request by the Planning Office, we inventoried the parking of spots in the CHVC Parking lot and in the two lots under the bridge. Ron Gunter will make a presentation on current parking allocations at the July 11 Planning and Zoning Meeting. We have been asked to attend.

Ferry Point Sign
Nancy Scozzari is working with Shore Signs to get and estimate on the cost for refreshing the Ferry Point Park Sign and will report back to KNDF.

Promotion
Eastern Shore Discovery Map
Kent Narrows and Kent Island are underrepresented on this map, and the information on our area is not accurate. We have contacted the map producer and have asked for the misinformation to be corrected. Exit 41 was left off of the map and they have agreed to add it and make other changes that more accurately reflect the area.

A recommendation is made to the Board to consider purchasing a small ad at the cost of $545. The ad will appear on both sides of the map.

RESOLUTION
Pat Worns made a motion to transfer purchase the ad in the Eastern Shore Discovery Map at the cost of $545. Mike Harris seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Concierge/Pad Map Printing
Designs are completed and ready to be printed. There will be a generic map for the district as well as individually marked maps for each hotel. The maps can be printed once the funds from the County come in.

Old Business
The Cross County Connector Trail will be completed by this fall. Todd Mohn indicated that there will be an event planned to celebrate the opening.
New Business
The idea of developing a signature event for the Narrows could be explored again. The challenges range from finding a venue, to defining the scope of the event. Heritage and seafood could be the main theme. It was suggested that we could still use the “Taste of the Narrows” brand but reformulate the event.

ADJOURNMENT
Mike Harris moved to adjourn the meeting; Sheryl Jaros seconded. The motion was approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

The next meeting of the Foundation is scheduled for 9 a.m. Tuesday, July 16, 2019, at the Chesapeake Heritage and Visitors Center. This meeting is one week earlier than normal.

Respectfully submitted,
Georgeanna (Gigi) Windley, Executive Director
Kent Narrows Development Foundation

Certification
I hereby certify that these are a true and correct copy of the Minutes that were adopted by the Directors of this Foundation on 7/16/2019.

[Signature]
7/16/2019