



**Queen
Anne's
County**

MARYLAND

Economic & Tourism Development

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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 July 12, 2022

I. Call to Order and Determination of Quorum:

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

Eric Hoffman
Jody Schulz
Katherine Bonner
Michelle Brink-Pringle
John Anderes

Not Present:
Gail Owings
Brian Truitt
Derek Janes
Dolores Jones

Staff Present:
Heather Tinelli, Director, Economic & Tourism Development
April Plummer, Marketing Destination Dev. Specialist
Lisa Gallow, Office Coordinator (Zoom)

Supporting Members Present:
Nancy Scozzari, Chief of Parks & Resource Planning, Dept. of Parks & Recreation
Linda Friday, President, QAC Chamber of Commerce
Gigi Windley, Exec. Director, Kent Narrows Dev. Foundation

II. Approval of Agenda and Minutes:

On a motion made by John Anderes and seconded by Ms. Brink-Pringle, the July meeting agenda was approved by a unanimous vote of all members present.

On a motion made by Eric Hoffman and seconded by all members present, the April meeting minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

- 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 introduced April Plummer, the new Marketing & Destination Development Specialist. Ms. Plummer has a marketing background in manufacturing and is excited to make the switch to Tourism. April was born and raised in Queen Anne's County and very familiar with the region.
 - B.** Ms. Tinelli stated that the grant application for the Ferry Feasibility Study has moved forward to the final stages of approval. Visit Annapolis is the main applicant with QAC, and others listed as co-applicants. They did request that counties update their matching funds letters due to the additional counties that have now joined the grant.
 - C.** QAC Tourism is collaborating with Visit Annapolis and other counties that are located on the Chesapeake Bay to apply for EDA funds allocated to the Commerce specifically for tourism. The Regional Destination Assessment Project will be studying those counties that touch the bay waters to explore their "Bay Ways" and how they provide additional access to their residents and visitors and connecting current trails.
 - D.** The department was awarded grant funds from MHAA to implement a Self-Guided Tour App. Ms. Gallow completed the first tour which was for the Stevensville Historic Sites. The department is currently working with The Town of Centreville as well as the local breweries and wineries to create tours. This app allows for up to 25 different tours and is an exciting opportunity for our local tourism partners and assets to be promoted and explored.
 - E.** Chesapeake Bay Media came to the region to produce a video of the Kent Narrows. The department has also paid Chesapeake Bay Media to create a region wide video as well. The video is scheduled to be released next month and Tourism plans to use the footage to create small videos to be utilized for marketing purposes.
 - F.** The Tourism Department has a 2-day photo shoot planned with the goal of replacing outdated photos currently used for marketing. This shoot will focus on outdoor activities, walking, biking, and running on trails, waterfront dining, eating crabs, farmers market and sunset cruises. This is the first of what will be several photo shoots planned through next spring.
 - G.** The Tourism Department continues to work with the Stevensville Arts & Entertainment District as they prepare for their 10-year designated A&E District renewal with MD State Arts Council. They received an Organizational

Development Grant that was used to secure a consultant that helped them through the process of creating their own By-Laws and MOU with the county.

- H. The department recently received a lead from Rich Gilbert with MD Tourism regarding a 35-person retreat in our region. This would include hotel stay for 4 days and visits to local restaurants and tourism assets. Ms. Tinelli is forwarding the details to local partners.

V. Old Business

- A. **Budget-** Ms. Tinelli provided an update for the Advisory Board.
 - a. QAC Commissioners approved additional funds for the FY23 Marketing Budget. Funds will be increased from 105,000 to 150,000 for FY23.
 - b. The annual marketing funds allocated from MD Tourism was increased to 72,000 for FY23.
 - c. QACC Tourism applied for additional grant funding from USDA to be utilized for continued re-branding efforts and projects. Funds would offset the costs associated with switching other departments to new branding as well as updating regional signs, literature, forms, and marketing.
- B. **Metrics-** Ms. Tinelli provided statistics shared on the monthly Metrics form prepared by the department.
 - a. Ms. Tinelli shared the Hotel Tax chart on the overhead monitor. The chart reflects the annual comparison of hotel taxes collected from 2018 to current. It was suggested by several board members that QAC Tourism should receive a percentage of the hotel tax collected each year.
 - b. Ms. Tinelli went over the details shared on the department monthly Metrics page and noted that the top search areas continue to be Baltimore, DC, Salisbury, and Philadelphia.
- C. **Digital Marketing Analytics-** Ms. Tinelli shared statistics compromised from their current Media One digital marketing campaign.
 - a. She reported 235 visitors saw ads and stayed at our hotels in the month of June.
 - b. There were 78,000 potentially exposed visits to the county which were visitors that saw the ad and were in the region for longer than an hour. This could include day trippers, travelers stopping to eat, shop or utilize trails and parks.
 - c. The top areas in which visitors view are DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Salisbury, New York, Richmond, and Pittsburgh.
 - d. The department is negotiating a new contract with Media One that will now include the new Hyatt as well as the Kent Island Resort.

IV. New Business

A. Symphony Dashboard- Ms. Plummer shared that the State of Maryland has implemented a Symphony Dashboard using Tableau data visualization tool. The dashboard pulls all data sources together to report more clearly as opposed to many separate reports. Some examples are hotel forecasts, hotel trends and employment charts. It also offers specific tabs for counties that covers year over year comparisons, impact summary and visitor spending by county. A link to the dashboard will be shared with committee members.

VII. Member Reports:

A. Eric Hoffman- Mr. Hoffman, owner of Holiday Inn Kent Island, shared that they have seen a slight decrease in bookings since inflation and fuel prices issues have increased. However, it also said that 2021 was the best year for sales they have ever experienced. Recently, the Holiday Inn was fully booked for 8 days straight due to a lacrosse tournament that was hosted in the region. Mr. Hoffman stated it would be very helpful for the local hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-based businesses to have prior knowledge of these tournaments to prepare and promote. The committee discussed and is going to ask Mr. Woods, with QAC Parks and Recreation to attend the next meeting and see if they can introduce a cohesive plan to communicate. Ms. Tinelli brought up the previous discussion at April meeting regarding communication between the departments and Tourism partners. Mr. Schulz expressed his interest and idea for a calendar being utilized for this purpose. The committee agreed to spend some more time at the next meeting creating a plan that works for everyone.

B. Jody Schulz- Mr. Schulz expressed his concern for the continued issues with parks, ramps and beaches being overrun with visitors and the effect it is having on businesses, residents, and the county as a whole. He stated that it continues to be an issue with trash, old bait, fishhooks, debris left behind and illegal fishing. He stated QAC Parks and Recreation is not able to keep up with the demand required to keep the issue under control and he would like for this committee to discuss this further.

VIII. Adjournment-The July Travel & Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting was adjourned at 9:15am.