

St. Michaels Tourism Board

Public Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2009

Present:

Chairman, Jon Mason; Vice Chairman, Bonnie Booth; Helen Van Fleet; Stuart Parnes; and Debbi Dodson, Advisor, Talbot County Office of Tourism; Administrative Clerk Sabrenia Yohn; and 7 members of the public. Robert Richardson, Rosemary Fasolo and Ilene Morgan were absent.

Call to Order:

Mr. Mason called the meeting of the St. Michaels Tourism Board to order at 8:35 a.m. in the meeting room of the Edgar M. Bosley, Jr. Municipal Building.

Approval of Minutes:

Mr. Mason called for a motion to approve minutes for February 10, 2009 meeting. Mrs. Booth made the motion to approve the minutes with the amendment that Mrs. Booth, not Mr. Booth, had adjourned the meeting. Mr. Mason seconded the motion which passed on a vote of 4-0 in favor.

Maryland Municipal League Convention:

Mrs. Yohn advised that the Town had reserved a booth at the Main Street event in Ocean City in June and the next steps would be to start planning the display, booth contents and give away items. Mr. Parnes again offered to build the display.

Ordinance 402 - Community Enhancement Events (Farmer's Market) and Ordinance 399 - Bed and Breakfast Inn Proposal:

Mr. Mason opened a discussion on Ordinance 402 which was referred to the Tourism Board by the Commissioners of St. Michaels for their review. Mr. Mason read into the record a letter from David Lighty of the Village Shoppe to the Commissioners dated February 18, 2009 regarding the farmers' market. Mr. Mason also summarized comments into the record from Ilene Morgan, noting that Ms. Morgan did not want to rush into a decision on this legislation since the Commissioners had already enacted emergency legislation to keep the farmers' market operating for the upcoming season.

Mr. Parnes said he was reluctant to offer an opinion on this matter as the Tourism Board did not represent the Business Association. He noted that the Tourism Board promotes all tourism in the town and that the farmers' market was not a large tourism draw. Mr. Parnes felt that it was premature to act so quickly on this legislation without looking at the business implications and potential fees that the Town could collect from the farmers' market. He preferred to defer a vote at this time, waiting to see how the Commissioners will proceed following their public hearing on March 11, 2009. Mrs. Booth and Mrs. Van Fleet agreed. Mr. Parnes said he felt the same way about the Bed and Breakfast Inn proposal (Ordinance 399), preferring to wait to see the outcome of the Commissioners' public hearing on this topic on March 11, 2009. Mrs. Booth agreed. Mr. Parnes made a motion that the Tourism Board would not put forth a formal opinion at this time on the pending Ordinance 402 or Ordinance 399 due to concerns that both matters are not Tourism issues. Mrs. Booth seconded the motion which passed on a voice vote of 4-0 in favor.

St. Michaels Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes 3/10/09

Mr. Mason asked if there were any comments from the public:

- Tad DuPont of Locust Street said he agreed with the Tourism Board, noting that tourists don't come to the farmers' market specifically, that they come to visit the Town, the Museum, and the shops.
- Ted Doyle of Perry Cabin Drive, said that Ordinance 402 was flawed by not requiring the market to be in a commercial area. Referencing the empty storefronts on the main street, Mr. Doyle said that the current location of the market does not promote business in the Town. Mr. Doyle suggested that the Tourism Board ask the Commissioners to defer the action on Ordinance 402 because the issue is currently so controversial, possibly for a period of three months, and that a commercial location for the market be seriously considered, such as Fremont Street by the Library. Mr. Doyle reiterated his call for a commercial location for the market, and noted that the FRESHFARM Market appears to be setting the rules, rather than the Town.
- Jim Gallagher of Perry Cabin Drive said he would like to see it encouraged that the farmers' market include local businesses so that there can be some money coming into the Town.
- Susan Leonard, owner of Sugar Buns Bakery, said she was denied participation in the farmers' market because there was already a baker in the market. Ms. Leonard said she was rethinking staying in the community due to financial issues and lack of support for local businesses.
- Joan Caulfield expressed concerns for the local businesses in Town.
- Carol Parlett, President of the St. Michaels Business Association, said the Business Association had conducted a survey, the results of which would be presented to the Commissioners at their March 11, 2009 meeting. She noted that FRESHFARM Markets pays \$25.00 a year to be a Business Association member. Mrs. Parlett said she agreed that this matter should be tabled for a while.

Mrs. Booth expressed concerns that there is no money coming into the Town from the farmers' market. Mr. Mason made a motion that the Tourism Board recommend Ordinance 402 be tabled at the Commissioners' level. Mrs. Booth seconded the motion which passed on a consensus of 4-0 in favor. Mrs. Booth also noted that weddings and the farmers' market add flavor to the Town, but don't foster tourism, and she noted that the Tourism Board should not be involved in the business of the Town.

Tourism Board Replacement for Richard Richardson:

Mrs. Parlett said that the Business Association would be recommending a replacement for Mr. Richardson on the Tourism Board, but that it would not be refilling Mr. Richardson's position as Executive Director at this time for budgetary reasons. She stated that Angela Eade-Spence would fill in for Mr. Richardson with the Business Association for now.

Event Funding Form:

The members were agreed on with respect to the form content and that events can be supported by the Tourism Board with advertising money. Mr. Mason will draft a cover letter to explain the form and its use.

URL Usage:

Mr. Mason opened the discussion and asked how URL information would be harvested and given to Debbi Dodson now that Mr. Richardson was no longer with the Business Association. Ms. Dodson advised there had been discussion about tracking information but there have been no reports generated to date. Mr. Parnes offered to contact Brent Stock at Internet Connections

St. Michaels Tourism Board
Meeting Minutes 3/10/09

about the URL reporting and any costs associated with setting up the tracking. Debbi Dodson gave an overview of ads that have appeared in Philadelphia Magazine, Washington Times, Washington Finest Magazine, AAA, MainLine Today, NJ Lifestyle, and Chesapeake Life. She also noted that the Bicycle maps have been completed and the US top cycle teams are coming May 19 through May 21, 2009 to cycle.

New Business -

- Mr. Mason opened the discussion regarding annual reports due to the Commissioners from the Tourism Board regarding advertising, etc. and that this would be a topic on the should be on the Board's next agenda for discussion. Mrs. Yohn will confirm the due date for the Board.
- With respect to the Business Association letter regarding a nomination to replace Mr. Richardson on the Tourism Board, Mr. Parnes suggested that Carol Parlett be the interim person until the Business Association makes a final determination regarding their replacing Mr. Richardson's Executive Director position. Mrs. Booth made a motion for the Tourism Board to ask the Commissioners to wait to appoint a replacement for Mr. Richardson and have Carol Parlett sit on the Tourism Board in the interim. Mr. Parnes seconded the motion which passed on a vote of 4-0 in favor, with no opposition. Mr. Mason said he would write documents for the Commissioners regarding Ordinance 402, Ordinance 399 and the SMBA/Tourism Board nomination recommendation.
- Stories of the Chesapeake – "Heritage Area". Mr. Parnes opened the discussion of the Heritage Area and said that he had spoken with Town Manager Cheril Thomas and suggested that the Commissioners revisit the issue regarding participation in the Heritage Area program and possible modification of the St. Michaels Comprehensive Plan as appropriate. Mr. Parnes said the benefit for the town would be funding support for festivals and historic preservation. Ms. Dodson talked about target zones and how money could benefit the town. Mr. Parnes supplied copies of material to be duplicated for board members and for attachment to the minutes.
- Distribution of Brochures – Debbi Dodson opened the discussion and gave a summary of costs. The board members reviewed and discussed other materials and Ms. Dodson advised that she will review the documentation further to determine if there is any benefit in the program and would also get information regarding CTM. There was public comment from John Booth who asked how many brochures had been sent and the costs for distribution and Mr. Parnes asked if the cost was based on the number of units. Ms. Dodson responded to their inquiries regarding number sent and costs per unit.

Next Meeting Date:

The board members agreed that their next meeting would be April 14, 2009 at 8:30 a.m. at the Town Office.

Adjournment:

Mr. Mason made the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Booth, and passed on a vote of 4-0 in favor at 10:45 a.m.

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____
Sabrenia L. Yohn, Administrative Clerk