

**St. Michaels Tourism Board**

**Public Meeting Minutes**

**September 22, 2009**

**Present:**

Chairman Jon Mason, Bonnie Booth, Stuart Parnes, April Dean Whitacre, Debbi Dodson, Advisor, Talbot County Office of Tourism, Helen Van Fleet, Angela Eade-Spence, Administrative Clerk Sabrenia Yohn, and one member of the public (John Booth). Member Rosemary Fasolo was absent.

**Call to Order:**

Chairman Mason called to order the meeting of the St. Michaels Tourism Board at 8:35 a.m. in the meeting room of the Edgar M. Bosley, Jr. Municipal Building (Town Office), 300 Mill Street, St. Michaels, MD.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Member Helen Van Fleet made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 11, 2009 meeting. Member Bonnie Booth seconded the motion which passed on a vote of 6-0 in favor.

**Board Appointment:**

Chairman Mason welcomed new member April Dean Whitacre to the Tourism Board who is replacing Ilene Morgan.

**Request for Proposal (RFP) - Photographer:**

Chairman Mason opened the discussion of the photography proposal and reviewed his proposed changes to timelines in the proposal. After some additional discussion, Chairman Mason said he would hand deliver his changes to Pixel Post for Rosemary Fasolo to review. Member Parnes asked if the Tourism Board had a budget for a photographer. Debbi Dodson responded that the budget did not specifically include a photographer but from past experience, the costs are usually approximately \$1,000 to \$1,500 for 10 photos. Member Booth proposed having Member Whitacre speaking to the owner of Claire Murray (Annie) if she might be interested in being considered by the Board to do promotional photography.

**Advertising Update:**

Debbi Dodson opened the discussion, noting that photographs had been sent to the publications for upcoming advertisements to run. After some discussion regarding the stock photographs being used in the advertisements, Ms. Dodson said she would check on the timing of deadlines for future publications and see if other photos could be submitted. Ms. Dodson said one deadline was yesterday, September 21, 2009 and that one probably could not be changed at this point. Chairman Mason proposed a special session of the Tourism Board to develop ideas for advertising and photographs to be used going forward. Ms. Dodson said she would contact the remaining publications to see if images can be changed out. Board members agreed to allow Ms. Dodson to choose a new photograph where appropriate.

**Old Business:**

- **Passport Program Update** - Chairman Mason opened the discussion on the Passport Program, noting that he had exchanged emails with T.J. Pecorak, who indicated that all the lodging giveaways had been used but that passes were available to the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. Chairman Mason offered a certificate to the Town Dock Restaurant and Member Booth offered overnight accommodations at the Five Gables Inn and Spa for future

drawings. Member Angela Eade-Spence said the Board needed to determine the date of the next giveaway drawing. Member Booth proposed quarterly drawings. Member Eade-Spence proposed having the drawings three times per year – around the 1st of January 2010; the end of May 2010; and the end of September 2010. Member Eade-Spence also noted that the Board had allocated \$1,000 for holders and posters. It was noted that there were approximately 125 cards still remaining but that additional cards were needed. Member Eade-Spence asked for \$90 to order an additional 2,000 cards. Member Bonnie Booth made a motion to allocate \$90 to order 2000 additional passport cards to be used through the end of December 2009. Chairman Mason seconded the motion which passed on a vote of 6-0 in favor. It was also noted that approximately one-third of the cards leaving shops were being returned.

- **Banner Program Proposal to the Commissioners** - Member Parnes opened the discussion, noting that the program was a dead issue at this point. Sabrenia Yohn indicated that there were ongoing conversations between Choptank Electric and the Town in hopes of resolving insurance issues. Ms. Yohn advised that she would obtain the status of the discussions and provide an update as soon as she was able.
- **Review/Approval of Invoices from Pixel Post** - Chairman Mason said he would print invoices and bring to the next meeting.
- **Zylka National TV Opportunity** - Chairman Mason opened the discussion, noting that he was contacted by Kristyn Zylka, a PR person based in Annapolis who has connections at the Food Network. Ms. Zylka offered to get a celebrity chef for the Food & Wine Festival, who would then possibly film a half-hour segment in St. Michaels for the Food Network. Chairman Mason said Ms. Zylka would want to be paid for the contact with the Food Network. Chairman Mason indicated to Ms. Zylka that he would pass the information on to the St. Michaels Business Association however Chairman Mason advised the Board that he had no commitment to the idea of the pending discussions regarding the future of the Food & Wine Festival.
- **Food and Wine Festival** - Chairman Mason opened the discussion and announced that the Food and Wine Festival has been cancelled for the coming year due to loss of a high-dollar sponsor and staffing issues. Chairman Mason said he has proposed to his restaurant partners a smaller version of the festival featuring celebrity chefs. Debbi Dodson suggested for next year a "restaurant week" during off-season to bring people to the Town. Chairman Mason said he would be working on this over the next couple of weeks. Member Booth shared how this type of event is handled in New York City. Chairman Mason suggested holding an event of this nature in April 2010.

**Comments from the Public:**

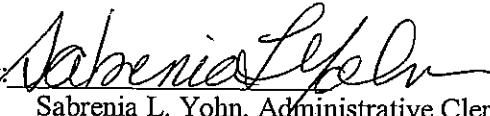
John Booth of the Five Gables Inn & Spa commented that townspeople are upset about the Food and Wine Festival being cancelled, but that the locals usually did not attend. Member Eade-Spence thanked Jon Mason for all of his hard work on the Festival and Debbi Dodson said all of those who were committed to the Festival should be thanked, and suggested that perhaps the Town would do a proclamation. Ms. Dodson said she thought that the shift to a smaller function could be an opportunity to build a first-class culinary event. Ms. Dodson said that the Talbot County Office of Tourism was building a campaign in February to bring people in for Valentine's Day, and also in March for museums. Ms. Dodson is looking for volunteers to serve on committees.

**Announcement of Next Meeting:**

The members agreed to set the next meeting of the Tourism Board for October 20, 2009 at 8:30 a.m. Debbi Dodson proposed a brainstorming session for new advertising and Members Whitacre, Booth and Eade-Spence along with Ms. Dodson agreed to meet. Chairman Mason commented on a New York Times article about some "quirky" advertising. Ms Dodson noted that she had a DVD that reviews various advertisements and promotions that have been done companies, such as Tommy Hilfiger. Ms. Dodson offered the DVD for viewing and the members agreed to meet at Member Whitacre's house on September 23, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. to view the DVD.

**Adjournment:**

Member Parnes made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Helen Van Fleet seconded the motion which passed on a vote of 6-0 in favor at 9:55 a.m.

Submitted by:   
Sabrenia L. Yohn, Administrative Clerk

Date: 11/19/09