

**St. Michaels Tourism Board**

**Public Meeting Minutes**

**December 9, 2008**

Present: Jon Mason, Mr., Bonnie Booth, Vice Mr., Rosemary Fasolo, Ilene Morgan, Robert Richardson, Helen Van Fleet, Rosemary Fasolo, Debbie Dodson, Advisor, Talbot County Tourism Board, Administrative Clerk Sabrenia Yohn, and one member of the public.

Absent: Member Stuart Parnes was 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, 300 Mill Street, St. Michaels, MD.

**Review of Minutes** – Mr. Mason asked if the group would take a few minutes to read through the draft minutes from the 11/12/08 meeting of the Tourism Board and then called for a motion to approve. Ms. Ilene Morgan made the motion to approve the minutes with changes to page 2. Mr. Mason seconded the motion, which passed on a vote of 6-0.

Mr. Mason acknowledged Debbie Dodson for her achievement award and efforts on behalf of Talbot County tourism.

**Distribution of new passports to lodging & restaurant partners; Development of program poster** – Mr. Mason opened a discussion regarding new passports and volunteered to distribute them at the Business Association mixer at Perry Cabin on December 18, 2008. Mr. Richardson noted that the new passports do not require stamps and Mr. Mason noted that members would need to return to using the old passport cards in the spring which require stamps. Ms. Morgan suggested purchasing/creating “holders” for the passport cards that businesses could set on their counters. Ms. Fasolo said she could design a poster for the holders for the passport cards, but suggested waiting until spring to obtain. Members discussed doing the next drawing and Ms. Booth suggested doing the second drawing this week and the third drawing in conjunction with the next advertising in Chesapeake Life. Mr. Mason suggested a press release to announce the winner of the second drawing and doing an article in the local paper of the winner. Ms. Dodson volunteered to contact the winner of the first drawing to do an article. Members also discussed the re-branding of the Business Association home page and Mr. Richardson agreed to provide details for a later meeting as the Tourism Board would be willing to help pay costs of redevelopment. Mr. Mason also asked Debbie Dodson to send information to him regarding what prizes would be offered at for future drawings.

**Legacy Plan** - Ms. Yohn provided an update on the Legacy Plan from the Commissioners' meeting on December 3, 2008, and noted that the Plan would be eligible for a vote at the Commissioners' December 17, 2008 meeting.

**Advertising** – Ms. Dodson presented an overview of advertising plans for the coming year, highlighting an "Escape for Charity" campaign to run through the end of February 2009. Ms. Dodson noted that the Maryland Association of Counties would be visiting Talbot County on January 8, 2009 and planned a visit to the Maritime Museum and St. Michaels Shops. Mr. Mason suggested getting the word out to shop owners so shops could be open on that date. Ms. Dodson also referenced the "What's Up Calendar" and the need to get events scheduled this month to meet February deadlines, and said she would send an e-mail as a reminder. Ms. Dodson also discussed Tourism Board advertising and costs, noting that she would provide a complete report at the January meeting of the Tourism Board and offered to make a similar presentation the Business Association. Robert Richardson said he would schedule her presentation on an agenda.

Mr. Mason referenced the binder of information on the Tourism Board that is available to the Business Association. The binder outlines what the Tourism Board has accomplished on behalf of the business community. The members also discussed the content of Ms. Dodson's upcoming presentation to the Business Association on December 18, 2008.

**SMBA Website funding estimate for branding changes** - Mr. Mason said this discussion item was tabled until the January 9, 2009 meeting of the Board. He noted that branding had been approved for the Visitor's Guide. Mr. Richardson said he would confirm the costs (approximately \$8,000.00). Once costs are confirmed, the Board may possibly request funding assistance from the Commissioners. The members identified the branding and navigation issues as the most important components of the website, and that the passport page should be done first. Ms. Dodson offered funding for the passport page. Mr. Richardson said that all technical problems have been corrected.

**Additional Radio Ads for Midnight Madness in December** - Ms. Mason raised the issue of additional radio advertising for Midnight Madness on the "Duck" radio station for \$1,100.00, and noted that the Poconos trip was obtained as a giveaway. Ms. Morgan said she thought that this advertising was now concluded.

**Review of Winter Business Poll** - Mr. Mason opened a discussion of research completed by Ms. Morgan on the winter schedules of town businesses. Ms. Morgan said more retailers are staying open and suggested that the results of the poll be distributed to businesses.

Mr. Mason noted that the amount of \$47,000 was a combination of Ms. Dodson's and the Tourism Board's advertising budget, and he asked about any plans for advertising during the winter months. Ms. Fasolo suggested providing advertising as an incentive for local businesses to stay open at least 3 to 4 days per week, inclusive of weekends. The members reached a consensus on advertising in local papers, choosing Baltimore and Annapolis papers and the Star Democrat. Ms. Dodson said she would price out full and 1/2 page ads.

**Clear Channel Advertising Overview** - Mr. Mason opened a discussion on Clear Channel advertising, noting that Clear Channel owes billboards on Route 50 and in malls. He provided information for the group to review and tabled further discussion to a future meeting.

**Additional Discussion of Winter Poll** – Ms. Morgan said she wanted scripted language for businesses. Mr. Mason and Ms. Fasolo suggested sample language to go to all businesses.

**Public Comment/New Business** - Ms. Fasolo said she would send suggested new items for discussion to Mr. Mason for consideration at future meetings.

**Extra Discussion** – Ms. Dodson, Ms. Booth and Ms. Morgan discussed the Score program, which helps small businesses run their operations. Mr. Mason suggested that the Board make a presentation at an upcoming Business Association meeting.

**Adjournment** - Mr. Mason made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Ms. Booth. The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Sabrenia L. Yohn,  
Administrative Clerk