

Currituck County Tourism Advisory Board

Minutes of Meeting

November 14, 2011

The Tourism Advisory Board met on Monday, November 14, 2011, 5:00 p.m. at the Historic Currituck Courthouse. The following members were present: Don Cheek, Janice Farr, Paul Robinson, Cindy Seymour, Paul O'Neal, Dan Scanlon, Diane Nordstrom, and Irina Coccetti.

REGULAR MEETING

- Item 1: **Call to Order** – Don Cheek called the meeting to order.
- Item 2: **Approval of Agenda** – Janice Farr made a motion to approve the agenda as presented; seconded by Paul Robinson. Motion approved: 4-0.
- Item 3: **Public Comment** – There was no public comment.
- Item 4: **Approval of May 9, 2011 Minutes** – Janice Farr made a motion to approve the minutes as written; seconded by Paul Robinson. Motion approved: 4-0.
- Item 5: **Discussion on Randall Travel Marketing Proposal** – Diane Nordstrom informed the Board members that the Tourism Department has contracted with Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. to conduct a comprehensive tourism marketing study and oversee the development of an updated strategic tourism plan for Currituck. She explained that the research will include an e-mail survey of past and potential visitors, a survey of attraction managers, and interviews with local accommodation providers. Board members suggested expanding the family income range responses to include higher numbers (since visitors to Currituck tend to be more affluent). They also asked if more specific questions could be asked in the survey such as: Which golf courses did you play during your vacation? Do you feel the price you paid for an attraction admission ticket was a good value? How many meals out did you eat while in Currituck? The survey will be sent to visitors in mid-January, 2012.
- Item 6: **Information on Google Case Study** – Diane Nordstrom shared news that the Currituck Tourism Department was chosen by Google for a case study on a new marketing initiative called Google TV. The campaign, which allows advertisers to purchase air time on satellite television networks, has proven successful for Currituck. The only other destination chosen for a Google TV case study was Nevada's State Division of Tourism. Diane and Steve VanLeeuwen, from Ciniva Systems, were invited by Google to attend the 2011 Travel Forward Conference held at Google headquarters in Mountain View, California. Information on the latest advertising opportunities with Google was shared with attendees.
- Item 7: **Update on Buy Local Campaign** – Board members received an update on the Buy Local Currituck Campaign. The Buy Local website (www.buylocalcurrituck.com) has launched, Diane Nordstrom explained, and staff – together with the Currituck Chamber of Commerce – is working to promote shopping in Currituck for the holidays. Stuart

Chamberlain showed the Board members the site and some of its features including testimonials and discounts/specials offered by businesses. Several prizes have been donated by local businesses for the first quarterly incentive prize drawing.

Item 8: **Tourism Director's Report / Marketing Manager's Report** – Michele Ellis gave an update on recent press coverage, including an article about destination weddings at the Currituck Outer Banks. The article was picked up by the Associated Press and appeared in several publications/websites including online in *USA Today*. Michele was also interviewed for a morning news program that aired in Richmond, Virginia.

Irina Coccetti reported on the Tourism Department's recent hosting of travel reporters from a radio broadcast network in Germany. She said the writers spent time in Corolla and on the mainland at the Weeping Radish. Irina said the Department also hosted a travel representative from Italy who was visiting several destinations in the state, including Corolla.

Diane Nordstrom announced that the Tourism Department won three awards from the Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina. The awards included: first-place for the Currituck Outer Banks Wedding Planner; first-place for wedding print ads; and second-place for the Department's website/online marketing campaign.

Diane also reported that the Department recently hosted Lynn Minges, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Tourism, and some of her staff and advertising agency representatives on September 13. She explained that they visited Corolla and went on a wild horse tour. As a result, Ms. Minges sent a photographer and film crew from the North Carolina Film Commission to come to Currituck and film the Corolla Wild Horses. Diane said the footage will more than likely be used by the State Division of Tourism to promote North Carolina.

A report was given on the increased number of events being held in Currituck County. These included the county hosting the end-of-ride celebration for the 2011 NC Amateur Sports' *Mountains to the Coast* bike ride (held in October).

Diane Nordstrom also gave an update on the Tourism Department's golf marketing partnership with area golf courses and the Outer Banks Visitor's Bureau. She said the partnership is continuing to be successful.

Don Cheek commended Dan Scanlon on how he handled post-storm issues after Hurricane Irene.

Item 9: **Board Members' Report** – Cindy Seymour commented that she heard several potential vacationers went to the mountains instead of the Outer Banks because of confusion over NC 12's closure following the hurricane.

Janice Farr echoed Don Cheek's comments regarding the county's actions following the storm. She commended the county for polling businesses regarding re-entry and cautiously making decisions.

Paul O'Neal asked that staff explore the possibility of sponsoring a Bar-be-cue event on the grounds of Currituck Heritage Park in Corolla. Diane Nordstrom said she would arrange a meeting with the Whalehead Club's new Events Coordinator, Jenn Sweigart, and Currituck's Event Coordinator, Clayton Howard, to discuss the idea.

Dan Scanlon announced that the Executive Director of the Whalehead Club resigned. He also said that the Whalehead Trust may hire a former management team from the Biltmore Estate in Asheville to help develop a strategic marketing plan for the Whalehead Club.

Item 10 **Other Business / Next Meeting Date** – Out-going board members Janice Farr and Cindy Seymour were recognized for their years of service to the Tourism Advisory Board. They were each presented with a plaque and gift basket.

The Board's next meeting was set for January 9, 2012.

Item 11: **Adjourn** – Cindy Seymour made a motion for the Board to adjourn; seconded by Janice Farr. Motion approved: 4-0.

Minutes approved May 9, 2011.

Don Cheek, Chairman

Diane Nordstrom, Secretary