

For Immediate Release
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**Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce
Presents DRIVE Tourism Grant Money to Town of Chincoteague**

Chincoteague, VA—February 29, 2016: The Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce was pleased to present the Town of Chincoteague with a check for \$10,000 at its Annual General Membership Meeting on February 25, 2016. Accepting was Town Manager Rob Ritter.

In May of 2015, the chamber completed the DRIVE Tourism Workshop training initiated by Virginia Tourism Corporation in an effort to provide participants a thorough understanding of the State Tourism Plan and our role in it. Partners with the chamber included, the Town of Chincoteague, USFWS, NPS, NASA, leaders from the Museum of Chincoteague Island, Chincoteague Cultural Alliance, Chincoteague Center, hotels and restaurants. The group identified ways to enhance existing tourism products; two-year growth product ideas focusing on Space Tourism, motor coach packages and shoulder season festivals; and the five-year game changer product idea which encompassed a wastewater sewer system that will aid in the development of the downtown business corridor and Maddox Boulevard. More restaurants, especially along the waterfront of the Chincoteague Bay, brew pubs, and raw bars were repeatedly noted throughout the day as needs to sustain the growing influx of visitors that bring added revenue to the town. Necessary wastewater disposal is a key element for this future growth. Mr. Ritter informed attendees that this grant money will be used, along with town funding sources, to hire a consultant to move the town's Wastewater Plan forward.

Tommy Clark, Donna Leonard, and Jeannie Rose were elected to the Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors for another 3 year term. Sue Steward begins her first term with fresh ideas and a variety of marketing experiences. Mary Alice Birch, Chris Bott, Brian Domino, Kim Granger, Dale Holston, Jimmy Vasiliou and Benjy Holloway make up the remaining eleven member board. Outgoing Board Member Kelly Conklin was thanked for his years of dedication to the chamber board.

Staci Martin, Development Specialist with VTC, enlightened the group on marketing and funding opportunities through the state tourism office. She stressed the importance of Social Media and how Chincoteague's stories can be told through various marketing platforms. Executive Director, Evelyn Shotwell, spoke of higher tourism numbers over the past two years and a significant increase in January 2016 visitation. "Strategically placed international advertising and Chincoteague Island's long list of recent accolades position us well for the coming tourism season" says Shotwell. "The farm-to-table story is one we will be telling this year in many advertising campaigns beginning with our own Visitor Guide and website, www.chincoteaguechamber.com."

Event sponsors Virginia Tourism Corporation and Highway Information Media LLC provided delicious refreshments for the occasion and a cooler of goodies won by Kelly Conklin. The event was held at The Chincoteague Center.

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