

**Water/Ways Local Exhibit Visioning Workshop**  
**November 27, 2018 - Notes**

**Present:** Consultant Rob Forloney

**Steering Committee Members** Amanda Fenstermaker (Dorchester Tourism), Cheryl Hannan (Cambridge Yacht Club), Julie Gilberto-Brady (Heart of Chesapeake Country Heritage Area), Katie Clendaniel (Downtown Cambridge), Ruth Clendaniel (Retired Educators), Stephyn Butcher (Dorchester Center for the Arts)

**Partners** Amber McGinnis (Chesapeake College), Ann Phillips (Dorchester Historical Society), Bill Christopher (Dorchester Chamber of Commerce), Brandon Hesson (Cambridge Economic Development), Carin Starr (UM Center for Environmental Science), Dana Pattera (MD-DNR – Harriet Tubman Visitor Center), Jermaine Anderson (Alpha Genesis Community Development Corp.), Jim Duffy (Choptank River Lighthouse), Linda Starling (Main Street Gallery), Matt Pluta (Shore Rivers), Johnny Shockley (Hoopers Island Oyster Aquaculture), Ray Pattera (Blackwater national Wildlife Refuge), Shirley Jackson (Nanticoke Historic Preservation Alliance)

The workshop was held as a follow-up to the brainstorming session held on Nov. 1, building on the ideas generated at that meeting. The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss interpretive concepts and themes and the best way to convey them through local stories, artifacts, images and interactive elements. Rob Forloney, a consultant with Maryland Humanities who has extensive experience in museum and exhibit planning, led the discussion. The meeting was held in the space that will house the exhibit at the Dorchester Center for the Arts – the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, which is about 2400 square feet. The Smithsonian exhibit requires about 850 square feet so the remaining space can be used for the local exhibit, as well as programming.

**Intros & summary of what attendees said they would like to accomplish:**

Amanda – hear what all participants and partners have to say  
Shirley – discuss Vienna and how historically people could only access certain areas through the water  
Linda – companion exhibit at Main Street Gallery  
Dana – desired outcomes and how they weave different stories together  
Amber – how can College can help support this effort  
Katie – what everyone has to say and ideas for programming  
Ruth – lead a group of retired educators – trying to figure out how they can be engaged  
Ann – collaborating and seeing what the Historical Society can do  
Ray – educate and bring in new audiences  
Matt – emphasis on clean & healthy water in our community  
Jermaine – diverse presentation  
Brandon – attention to working waterfronts; what types of shared resources can be engaged  
Carin – understand how the sciences play into the cultural changes and looking forward to cleaner, healthier, more resilient community  
Hillary – types of programming to be thinking about  
Jim – how be a productive partner in this effort  
Julie – concrete stories to engage attendees

**Identifying target audiences:**

- On whom do we want to focus? Exhibit should be designed with a two to three main target audiences in mind. Exhibits are more successful when they focus on a particular group or groups rather than a broad group. The Smithsonian Water/Ways exhibit is national and includes archetypal stories so that people are able to identify with them wherever the exhibit goes. The Smithsonian exhibit targets adults, but the interactive pieces make it multi-generational.

- For the local exhibit, we have the opportunity to tell a variety of stories as a hook to get people into the exhibit and as a way to engage new audiences, introducing people to new ideas.
- Local exhibit audience brainstorming: school groups, heritage tourists, recreational tourists, birders/eco-tourists, artists, cruise ship visitors.
- **Three main audiences that arose from the discussion:**
  - **School Groups**
  - **Tourists (eco, heritage and recreational)**
  - **Locals (artists)**

## Themes

Three main themes already have been set:

- Economic
- Environmental
- Social/Culture

Each includes many sub themes. Discussion continued on prioritizing the sub themes under the main themes, available resources from participating organization, aligning resources based on the stories we want to tell.

**Successful exhibits are about storytelling and creating personal meaning between the visitors and the objects on display.** People come to exhibits because they want to find a way how they fit into their lives.

Participants were asked to note some of the things that come to mind when they think about water in Dorchester. What makes this county distinct or different compared to other areas in the state? Ideas focused on resiliency, transformation, innovation, tradition, and the link between people and place. These might be combined into three areas:

1. **Resiliency and transformation**
2. **Innovation**
3. **Tradition (sense of place)**

Ideas shared included:

- Deepwater port
- **Waterwomen** – Amber’s story: The first in her family to break the tradition of crab-picking; grew up in south Dorchester; family from 1600s. Her mom chose to go out on the water and could take her children with her (higher compensation, childcare). A theme related to the women’s movement. Introducing new terminology: *waterwomen*. Economics and culture. (Also the story of Laura Ayres.)
- Next Generation - Johnny story: Grew up on a boat. Mom steered boat. Dad pulled the crab pots. Johnny pulled the crabs. He spent a lot of life in Phillips picking house. He would sleep in can boxes as a 3-6 year old. Today’s watermen continue to convey that work ethic and pride in new ways. Oyster aquaculture. Modern, state-of-the-art technology and equipment.
- Change and resilience theme; telling stories of change and resilience. With resilience as a section, you can tell the stories of watermen and of sea level rise all at the same time. The evolution of the adaptation is a story theme.
- Answering the many questions from people on cruise ships and tours – about oystering, crabbing, Deadrise boats, etc.
- Family issues, include the women here from Mexico who are trying to make a living for their families and their need for H-2B Visas. Also, packing houses that depend on these H-2B visas and how they are affected too.
- Native Americans were the first watermen; then the African-Americans who needed to find ways to supplement their food (take in Harriet Tubman and Underground Railroad)
- Kermit Travers – telling his story as last black skipjack.

- Saltwater intrusion into the county and sea-level rise. Striking images of the dying pines in the lower part of the county; images showing water 6-7 inches above roadway; stands of trees that are dying; Ironman images of the arch on Water Street and all the athletes running through 6-7 inches of water; image overlay of what marshes used to look like compared to now.
- Intersection of economics and politics. Five governors came from Dorchester County. Related to the status of Dorchester County. Blackbeard the pirate used to come here.
- Industry and innovation: Cambridge was right behind Baltimore in status because of the deep water ports and railroad. What changed?
- Water as a highway rather than a barrier.
- Small communities.
- Economy, life, love and passion – key words.
- Underground Railroad:
  - Escapes and life of John Bayley as a free black man.
  - Souls at Sea – commemorating lives of slaves lost in transport to wherever they were going.
- Bake, learn and earn – an educational tool. Baking a simple cupcake and wrapping education and stories into it. A community-building tool for families.
- Historical elements related to resilience – clearcutting forests, overharvesting oysters, storms.
- Call to action. What can people do that will make them feel good? Show people that they can help preserve this place and be part of the solution. Present positive examples of resiliency.
- Oyster Aquaculture declared a Best Management Practice (BMP) and can receive environmental EPA credits; which will accelerate oyster aquaculture.
- Shipbuilding
- Timber industry

### Artifacts and Resources

- “Water Moves Us” – Dorchester County tagline
- Historical Society - dugout canoe, family genealogies, old photos, quilts
- Find other artifacts – oyster tongs
- Architecture – could be a separate program
- *High Tide in Dorchester* and *Beautiful Swimmers* – show the trailer or documentary
- Gallery in Dorchester Center for the Arts could have an exhibit – river themes, local plein air artists
- Quilts – historical – women from crab house would meet to create quilts in the off season
- Aquaculture exhibit – “behind the scenes”
- Piles of oysters & crab pots
- Maps – to give visitors a sense of place: satellite view, topography, projection of sea level rise, Blackwater now and then, steamboat routes
- Demonstrate the positive effect of oysters: comparisons of fish tanks with and without oysters
- Decoy carver and other people demonstrating different traditions
- Hands-on items and activities:
  - flip book of pictures of historic steamboats
  - oyster tongs for children to tong for oysters
  - replica of a pilot house from a buy boat; real or replica duck blind
  - lighthouse uniform that kids can try on for selfies
  - interactive waterfront software from the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center
- Videos: Oral histories. 2-3 minute snippets of people explaining their relationship to the water.
- Affiliated programming:
  - Book club with weekly discussions
  - Local watermen and experts to tell their stories

- Bookstore selling relevant local books