

Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes
April 8, 2013

The following individuals were in attendance:

Commission Members – Mayor Rick Meehan, Council Secretary and Tourism Commission Chair Mary Knight, Councilman Dennis Dare; Todd Ferrante, OCDC Representative; Michael James, EDC Representative. Also present were: Greg Shockley, State Tourism Commission Chair; David Recor, City Manager; Donna Abbott, Tourism Director; Larry Noccolino, Convention Center Director; Susan Petito, Recreation & Parks; Lisa Osman, Tourism; John Gehrig and Melanie Pursel, Chamber Representatives; Susan Jones, HMRA Representative.

Discussion of marketing message relating to Hurricane Sandy

Mary Knight opened the meeting by relaying a suggestion from Councilman Brent Ashley to encourage people to visit hard-hit areas to our north to help in their recovery, and that in turn will cast Ocean City in a positive light. Business organization representatives pointed out that there were numerous relief efforts carried out by Ocean City organizations to help those communities in the storm's aftermath and that some of the communities may not be ready to host visitors in the coming months, therefore we might be doing a disservice by encouraging them to visit.

Continued discussion of Tourism Metrics

Tourism Director Donna Abbott relayed that State Tourism Director Margot Amelia could not be in attendance today after the meeting schedule of the Tourism Commission was switched from Thursday to Monday, however, Margot will be in attendance at the May meeting to discuss tourism metrics the state uses to evaluate its tourism efforts. Mary Knight shared an analysis proposed by Nobi, a consulting business that provided a preliminary proposal to do a study at a minimum of \$75,000. Mary also handed out a tourism report prepared by the Jackson Hole, Wyoming Chamber and recounted they publish hotel occupancy numbers weekly in their local newspaper. Donna also handed out copies of the state's tourism sales and use tax codes for 2012, along with the most recent Smith Travel Report for February and an Ocean City tourism impact report prepared in 2011 by the state as part of their annual reporting. Michael James suggested a comp set of hotel properties be established and evaluated. There was consensus for Mary to work with the Tourism Director and Susan Jones of HMRA and Melanie Pursel from the Chamber to form a subcommittee to further explore metrics methods and how to compile.

OC Experience

Tourism Director Donna Abbott, presented data collected at four travel shows the Tourism Department participated in this year as part of the OC Experience project. Data was collected by persons attending shows in Philadelphia; Columbus, Ohio; Baltimore and Washington. Donna reported that the Washington show, a two-day travel show held in March, was the best attended. A total of 827 email addresses were collected from

attendees who entered information on an Ipad to win a hotel stay in Ocean City. Also 3,600 visitor guide books were distributed at the four shows, although Donna reported they could have used more guide books at Washington and Baltimore. The majority of respondents was female, age 35-64 and married. Survey respondents have primarily visited Ocean City one to five times (31 percent) or 6-20 times (32 percent), although 43 percent have never visited Ocean City. For the trip being researched at the show, 40 percent plan to travel as a couple while 35 percent plan to travel as a family with children.

Photos were also taken at the shows, including two where Rodney made appearances (Philly and Baltimore) and posted on Facebook. Posts and albums received 420,000 plus impressions.

At the conclusion of the four shows, MGH, the town's advertising agency sent out a survey to those who submitted their email addresses to find out if the information presented at the travel shows helped them make a decision to go on vacation.

Approximately 10 percent of the 800 plus people responded to the survey, with the following reported:

72 people said that the show helped them make a decision on where to vacation; 28 said it did not. 92 people said the Ocean City booth made them more likely to plan a trip to Ocean City; 6 said it made them less likely. 8 visitors had already planned or booked an OC trip this year; 48 had not. 56 planned to visit OC this year; 45 people did not. Respondents to the survey were in the following age divisions: 14 were under 30; 11 were 31-39; 29 were 40-49; 27 were 50-59 and 17 were 60 or older.

The next meeting will be held on May 13, at 1:00, in Room 214 at the Convention Center.