

## **Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes May 13, 2013**

The following individuals were in attendance:

Commission Members – Tourism Commission Chair and Council Secretary Mary Knight, Councilman Dennis Dare, Councilman Joe Mitrecic, Chris Trimper, HMRA representative, John Gehrig, Chamber representative. Staff members present were David Recor, City Manager; Donna Abbott, Tourism Director; Larry Noccolino, Convention Center Director; Lisa Osman, Tourism Department; Frank Miller, Special Events; and Tom Shuster, Recreation & Parks Director. Also present were Margot Amelia, Executive Director of the Maryland Office of Tourism Development, Melanie Pursel, Chamber of Commerce and Susan Jones, HMRA. Media representatives present were Joanne Shriner, Maryland Coast Dispatch and Zach Hoopes, Ocean City Today.

### **Update on State's Tourism Marketing Plans**

Mary Knight opened the meeting by introducing Margot Amelia. Margot gave a presentation on the Maryland Office of Tourism and discussed their strategic planning, success measurements, current and future strategies. Leisure travel to Maryland is on the upswing. Leisure travel grew 8 percent in 2011, 30 percent since 2007. The economic impact of Tourism in Maryland was \$14.3 billion in 2011. Margot can provide a breakdown of Ocean City's numbers. Margot mentioned the state would like to expand its marketing in the New York/New Jersey area. It is necessary to target larger, and more distant metropolitan areas such as these. The state also has plans to increase outreach in Canada. Margot suggested that Ocean City have a seminar on Canadian money conversion in the future.

### **Update from Tourism Commission Metrics Subcommittee**

Mary reported the metrics subcommittee, consisting of herself, Donna Abbott, Melanie Pursel, Susan Jones and John Gehrig met the previous week to discuss ways to measure tourism success. It was agreed to use a range of metrics currently available including room and food tax, sales tax, Smith Travel Report data, solid waste volume, bus ridership and revenue, Inlet Lot revenue, demoflush, website traffic, social media stats and other items, to compile in monthly and annual reports. Susan Jones reported her board believed Smith Travel Report, while only reporting on chains, fell in line with what smaller properties were experiencing and would be a good metric to include. Mary mentioned gathering zip codes from hotels to see where our visitors are traveling from. Susan said her board was agreeable to sharing zip code and length of stay information. Margot shared copies the state tourism office's monthly recap of Maryland's travel and tourism trends, which Donna said her office would be able to reformat using Ocean City statistics.

### **"Book It Direct" campaign discussion**

John Gehrig gave a presentation on On-Line Travel Agents (OTAs). He suggested possibly adding a banner to ococean.com to "Book-It Direct" or Rodney says "Book-It Direct," to make consumers aware they can book their rooms directly with the hotels on the ococean website. While it is an individual choice by lodging businesses to participate

in these OTAs, there could be an impact on metrics such as room tax, if the commissions paid out are not reporting room tax.

The next meeting will be held on June 10, at 1:00, in Room 214 at the Convention Center.