

Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes
June 10, 2013

The following individuals were in attendance:

Commission Members – Tourism Commission Chair and Council Secretary Mary Knight, Councilman Dennis Dare; Tom Perlozzo, Chamber; Todd Ferrante, OCDC; and Michael James, EDC. 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. Also present were Sheila Dodson, Executive Director of Coastal Association of Realtors; Melanie Pursel, Chamber; and Susan Jones, HMRA. Media representatives present were Zach Hoopes, Ocean City Today and Joanne Shriner, Maryland Coast Dispatch.

The meeting was called to order by Mary Knight at 3 p.m.

Discussion on Advertising in Canada

Mary reported Council Member Brent Ashley suggested Ocean City should be advertising in Canada and Mary brought this topic from the Council to the Tourism Commission for further discussion. Tourism Director Donna Abbott recounted the department has been doing some advertising in Canada through golf marketing. The department has sponsored bags at the Toronto golf show in recent years and supported golf shows attended by Golf Getaway in Canadian markets with a \$1,000 contribution as did all Golf Getaway members. The department also took out a print ad in a suburban Toronto publication earlier this year. The Golf Magazine advertising currently co-oped by the Tourism Department and Golf Getaway also reaches into Canada. Susan reported HMRA entered a co-op agreement to have their brochures distributed in Canada. Council Member Dare stated golf marketing in New York saw golfers coming to the area first and then returning with their families after they saw Ocean City as a family-friendly destination.

Action: Mary will report back to Council that the Tourism Commission recommended this year's marketing plan be evaluated at the conclusion of the season to see if adjustments should be made on markets we advertise in.

Discussion on having advertising on ococean.com

Todd Ferrante spoke about advertising on the ococean.com website. He suggested that the listings on the website be expanded. He also suggested that there be more pictures of Things To Do (dining, shopping) on the website to show what Ocean City has to offer. Tom Perlozzo spoke about possibly mailing out a digital magazine about Ocean City that could include advertising. Donna reported that there had been a discussion about advertising on ococean about three years ago, but was not pursued at the time.

Action: Mary will report back to Council that the Tourism Department will work with MGH to look into digital magazine as well as evaluate a tiered CVB membership system and enhanced listings. This information will be brought back to the Council.

Coastal Association of Realtors overview – Sheila Dodson

Mary introduced Sheila Dodson, Executive Director of the Coastal Association of Realtors. Sheila said that condo rentals are up 18-20% from last year. She also expressed interest in establishing metrics to gain better understanding of where visitors are coming from in the vacation rental business. Not all vacation rental businesses are members of C.A.R., but a sampling of those who are would be helpful.

Action: Mary suggested that Donna and Sheila meet to further discuss and that Donna attend a C.A.R meeting with Sheila in the future.

Dennis spoke briefly about Book-It Direct. Mary asked if there could be a memo sent to the group when the tourism website has the Book-It Direct graphics in place.

Frank reported that the Air Show went well. There was a one and a half hour delay on Saturday due to the rain. Sunday was better attended than expected.

Melanie Pursel spoke about the Summer Work Travel Program and how Ocean City is a model city for the program. The Chamber is working on this matter as they feel the proposed immigration law will impact tourism businesses dependent on the international students who work here.

Melanie also shared that Bryan Lilley, promoter of the OC Air Show, is looking into having a tall ship visit Ocean City as a future special event.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on July 8 at 3 p.m., in Room 214 at the Convention Center.