

Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes
July 8, 2013

The following individuals were in attendance:

Commission Members – Tourism Commission Chair and Council Secretary Mary Knight, Mayor Rick Meehan, Councilman Dennis Dare, Michael James, EDC; and Greg Shockley, Maryland Tourism Commission Chairman. Staff members present were David Recor, City Manager; Donna Abbott, Tourism Director; Larry Noccolino, Convention Center Director; Lisa Osman, Tourism Department; and Tom Shuster, Recreation and Parks Director. Also present were Melanie Pursel, Chamber of Commerce; 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.

Boardwalk Attire Ordinance Consideration

A copy of an ordinance recently adopted by Wildwood, NJ was handed out for review and discussion. Susan Jones stated the HMRA Board had not discussed. Melanie Pursel said she had not heard anything from her members about the need for an ordinance of this type. She felt increased security at certain times would be a better way to address any issues on the Boardwalk. Mayor Meehan said the city attorney believes the town would be challenged legally if an ordinance of this type were to be adopted and that the town would lose. Michael James said he would agree with the city attorney and feels it would be a waste of time and money. It was the consensus of the Tourism Commission that this not be pursued. Action to be taken: Mary Knight will report this back to the Mayor and Council.

Tourism Metrics Update

Donna Abbott handed out a new metrics report she had put together for May 2013, which includes various statistics including requests for guides, calls, website traffic, hotel occupancy, weather and public works statistics. Donna stated she included Salisbury weather stats from the National Weather Service, but is still seeking weather stats for Ocean City as there can be considerable differences between the weather of the two locations. Everyone agreed that the report looked great and that we should decline offers from Nobi and Beacon at this time for metrics studies. There was a suggestion to add police calls and fire calls to the report.

Action: Schedule Donna Abbott for a Work Session in August to present the reports to the Mayor and Council.

Summer Advertising

Ratings are up again this year on MASN in both Baltimore and Washington markets due to the Orioles and Nationals doing so well this season. The MASN ad spots will end this week, but television ads are continuing in all markets on cable through July and mid-August, along with spot tv through July. Spot tv programming includes morning and evening news slots, along with shows like Ellen, Dr. Oz, Jeopardy and Wheel of Fortune.

Markets include Baltimore, Washington/Northern Virginia, HLLY, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and New York/New Jersey. Radio will run for two weeks in many markets the first two weeks of August and will include two new spots promoting Hotel Week and Lucky 13 deals and events. Online advertising also runs through the summer.

Larry Noccolino announced that the Convention Center microsite is now up and running. Mayor Meehan said that it looks great.

Organization Updates

Melanie Pursel announced that the Chamber of Commerce is distributing new maps throughout town. She also said that the Chamber has vacation guide rack cards for those people who would like to look at the Vacation Guide online.

Susan Jones stated that she, Melanie Pursel, and Donna Abbott attended the Lower Shore Tourism Alliance Tri-County Council recently, and that they will meet quarterly. The group is being chaired by Senator Mathias. She has been busy moving into the HMRA's new office space and they are already at work on their next trade show. Powerboat races are being scheduled for October 6. She and Melanie both reported Harbor Day at the Docks has been postponed until 2014 and is being completely revamped to be bigger and better with Martin Seafood taking it over.

Tom Shuster reported July 4th events were very successful. He handed out rack cards for Sundaes in the Park and Concerts on the Beach. He stated that the summer camps are going very well.

Greg Shockley reported the school calendar study task force is being organized. He said the state legislative season went very well with the budget for the Office of Tourism Development coming out with increases to market the state.

Michael James said the EDC's next meeting in September will focus on tourism.

Donna mentioned that Rodney the Lifeguard will be in town on Tuesday, July 9, visiting businesses in town. He will be making stops at City Hall, Fisher's Popcorn on the Boardwalk, the ferris wheel on the pier, the paddleboards at Fager's Island, and the Canoe Races at BJ's on the Water.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on August 12 in Room 214 at the Convention Center.