

Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes
October 11, 2013

The following individuals were in attendance:

Commission Members – Tourism Commission Chair and Council Secretary Mary Knight, Mayor Rick Meehan, Councilman Dennis Dare, Councilman Joe Mitrecic, Buck Mann, Chamber of Commerce; 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 Melanie Pursel, Chamber of Commerce; Susan Jones, HMRA; Greg Shockley, MTDB; Andy Malis and Alison Fiorelli, MGH. Media representatives present were Zach Hoopes, Ocean City Today, and Joanne Shriner, Maryland Coast Dispatch.

Mary Knight called the meeting to order at 3 p.m. She announced that we would go into a closed session at the end of the meeting to discuss next year's campaign strategies, which are proprietary at this time.

Approval of Minutes for the September meeting

Minutes of the September 9 meeting were approved.

Banner Ads / Enhanced Listings on ococean.com

Donna Abbott announced that MGH was in attendance to present the proposed ococean enhanced listings design for CVB members, which will be made possible as the website is moved to a new content management system. The new CMS is currently in testing and will be made available soon. Following discussion with Susan and Melanie regarding a previously discussed concept to offer a tiered membership structure to CVB members as an opportunity to pay an additional fee for enhanced or premium listings on ococean, Donna reported back that both HMRA and Chamber boards were opposed to a tiered structure and the Tourism Commission agreed not to seek a survey to determine interest. The enhanced listings design brought forth at the meeting could be made available to all CVB members, allowing them the opportunity to add photo and video content to their listings along with other content.

Alison Fiorelli also presented a potential layout of the website with banner ads. Susan Jones stated that the HMRA Board is not in favor of the banner ads. They think that the ads make the website look cluttered, and that it would be unfair to the members. Todd Ferrante stated that he likes the website and the banner ad potential. He does not think it makes the website look cluttered and said that the ads would generate revenue. Andy Malis said he thought the banner ads could be offered to major sponsors of town special events as part of a sponsorship package.

Donna reiterated that we have two topics: banner ads and enhanced listings. Melanie Pursel asked where the monies would go from the banner ads. The Mayor and Mary Knight both stated that the monies would go back into the Tourism budget for marketing.

Melanie explained that the Chamber has a standard membership and an upgraded membership. The upgraded membership offers members the opportunity to add videos and Google maps for an additional cost. Susan and Melanie will report back to their respective boards about the banner ad potential. The Tourism Commission recommended enhanced listings be offered to all CVB members at no additional cost and remanded to the Mayor and Council.

Strategic Plan

Donna asked the Tourism Commission for input on the focus of a strategic plan for tourism as that will determine the cost of such a plan. The Mayor suggested that we review the state's strategic plan to use as a guide. David Recor stated that we need to identify the stakeholders and get an RFP together. The Mayor stated that most of the stakeholders were here in the room. Tourism Commission voted to go to RFP and remanded to the Mayor and Council.

Updates from other Departments & Organizations

Susan Jones, HMRA, announced that there will be a ribbon cutting for HMRA's new office on 57th Street being held on Tuesday, October 15, from 4-5 p.m. She collected zip codes from her members and most were from Maryland. The Mayor stated that we need to maximize our efforts and open Restaurant Week to all OC restaurants in the future, as only 17 restaurants are participating in the Fall Restaurant Week.

Michael James, EDC, announced that there will be a supervisory program being offered to grads to become hotel managers for a three-month period from UMES.

Frank Miller, Special Events, stated that Recreation and Parks is busy setting up for Winterfest.

Todd Ferrante, OCDC, stated that he just completed grant writing for the state. Their golf tournament, a major fund-raising event for OCDC, went well.

Melanie Pursel stated that the Chamber's crab feast was very successful. She announced that Trevor Jones from Wor-Wic Community College is planning a grant for training in the hospitality industry. The Chamber is busy working on the next vacation guide publication.

Larry Noccolino announced that the Convention Center will host Starpower on July 5-10, 2014. He also announced that he is looking into a Dine Around or Pub Crawl, which will offer discounts/specials to conference attendees when they show their conference badge.

Donna announced that the August Metrics Report is complete and available on ococean.

Regular meeting was adjourned and closed session began.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 4 at 3 p.m. in Room 214 at the Convention Center.