

Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes
May 12, 2014

The following individuals were in attendance:

Commission Members – Mayor Rick Meehan, Tourism Commission Chair and Council Secretary Mary Knight, Council Member Dennis Dare, Todd Ferrante, OCDC; G. Hale Harrison, HMRA and Michael James, EDC. Staff members present were City Manager David Recor, Donna Abbott, Tourism Director; Larry Noccolino, Convention Center Director; Frank Miller, Special Events; Lisa Osman, Tourism. Also present were Melanie Pursel, Chamber and Susan Jones, HMRA. Media representatives present were Zach Hoopes, Ocean City Today; and Joanne Shriner, Maryland Coast Dispatch.

Council Secretary and Tourism Commission Chair Mary Knight called the meeting to order at 3 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mary Knight made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 14 meeting. The vote was unanimous.

Tiered Approach to the CVB Membership

Several months ago, the Tourism Commission discussed the possibility of having a tiered membership for the CVB. The Council feels there is a potential for revenue to be generated and wanted to revisit this issue. Currently, all CVB members pay a flat rate of \$200, which gets them a listing on the www.ococean.com website and the ability to have their brochures in the Visitor Center, along with other member benefits. There are currently 320 members in the CVB. The tiered membership could possibly offer larger print, colored borders, etc., so the property would stand out from other listings on the ococean website. This would be similar to the Yellow Pages, where some listings stand out from others. The Mayor stated that this is such an inexpensive way to advertise your business. Council Member Dare made a motion for Donna Abbott to provide a mock-up of an enhanced listing and develop some potential pricing. Todd Ferrante seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. Donna will provide a mock-up enhanced listing at the next meeting.

Promotional Video of Ocean City

Frank Miller suggested putting together a promotional video of Ocean City and its history. He said that the video would be more for the Tourism Department than the Special Events Department. He has spoken to Dave Messick about working together with the Town to put the video together. Melanie Pursel mentioned that while the 30-second commercials are great, many people would love to see a more expanded video of what Ocean City offers. Mary Knight mentioned that we could possibly post the video on www.ococean.com, so visitors would be able to view it when planning their vacation. Donna Abbott will contact Dave Messick to possibly put together a 2-3 minute video about Ocean City.

Tourism Strategic Plan Update

Donna shared a copy of the Springfest survey results with everyone. The Tourism Department did a trial run of the visitor profile survey during Springfest, with almost 100 respondents. The Tourism Department will start the official survey for the Tourism Strategic Plan during Memorial Day weekend at various locations around town. We are using the iCapture application to collect all data, which is very user-friendly. The consultant, Lyle Sumek, provided the 11 questions to be used for the survey. The iCapture application provides charts for the information collected. Some people taking the survey thought that question 11 was a bit cumbersome, with too many choices. Donna will speak with the consultant about streamlining that question. David Recor clarified that in discussions with the consultant, there will be a schedule of activities, locations, and times that are designed to cover an entire week. Donna announced that the Tourism Department will be scheduling phone interviews with the consultant for each of the members of the Tourism Commission along with other stakeholders on a range of topics related to this process.

Updates from other Departments & Organizations:

Convention Center

Larry Noccolino reported that the Convention Center is in its seventh month of construction, with an additional eight more months to go before completion. There has been no to very little disruption in business.

Chamber of Commerce

The Legislative EDC meeting was held on May 2 at the Carousel. The Chamber is working on their next big event, which is their golf tournament being held on May 20. Melanie said the Chamber has many ribbon-cutting ceremonies coming up for new businesses. The Seasonal Workforce Committee is working to enhance the experiential things for seasonal workers that we have to offer in Ocean City. They have several Safety Nights on the beach planned, as well as some Shorebirds games.

EDC

Michael James reported about the recent legislative meeting held by the EDC. Elected officials provided updates on the legislative session in Annapolis.

HMRA

HMRA's installation of officers was held on April 24 at the Harborwatch and G. Hale Harrison is the incoming president. We are in the middle of Restaurant Week, May 4-18; there are currently 15 restaurants participating. Susan announced that the new Barn 34 restaurant will be holding their ribbon cutting this Thursday.

OCDC

Todd Ferrante reported that the OCDC is working on a dolphin sculpture project on 60th street. Their annual meeting was held on April 30 at Shenanigan's and was well attended.

Special Events

Frank announced that Springfest went very well with over 102,000 visitors, which is up from last year.

The Tourism Commission then went into a closed session to discuss contractual matters. The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, June 9 at 3 p.m.