

Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes
June 12, 2014

The following individuals were in attendance:

Commission Members – Tourism Commission Chair and Council Secretary Mary Knight, Council Member Dennis Dare, Council Member Joe Mitrecic, Mayor Rick Meehan, Todd Ferrante, OCDC; Buck Mann, Chamber; Greg Shockley, MTDB, and G. Hale Harrison, HMRA. Staff members present were City Manager David Recor, Donna Abbott, Tourism Director; Larry Noccolino, Convention Center Director; Susan Petito, Recreation and Parks 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 May 12 meeting. The vote was unanimous.

New Ococean.com Website

Donna Abbott spoke about the new www.ococean.com website and mobile site, which went live right before Memorial Day weekend. There have been a few glitches, but that was to be expected due to the large amount of content on the website. Donna said MGH has done a tremendous job and she welcomes any feedback about the website and mobile site. Mary mentioned that she was very impressed with the new look of the Events page. She finds it much easier to see the upcoming events. The Tourism Department has encouraged all CVB members to submit new or additional pictures for their page on the website.

Tourism Strategic Plan Update

Donna is in the process of scheduling phone interviews with each of the Tourism Commission members with consultant Lyle Sumek for the Tourism Strategic Plan. She is still waiting to hear back from several members. Donna announced that the Tourism Surveys on the iPad are going well. This week, we have taken surveys in our Visitors Center, at the Boardwalk Cottage and at the MML Convention, and we will have someone at the Air Show doing surveys as well. Donna has hired an intern to assist with the surveys and plans to have the intern at many upcoming special events throughout the summer.

Updates from other Departments & Organizations:

Chamber of Commerce

Melanie announced that the Chamber is having their website updated as well. She has met with several local photographers as they gear up for the 2015 Vacation Guide. Melanie distributed copies of the Chamber Newsletter. The Chamber received a grant from the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulations (DLLR) in the amount of \$178,000, which they will be able to use to implement their Hospitality Manager Training Program, Hospitality Bootcamp. The Chamber will also be working the Information Booth at the Air Show this year. Melanie said the Chamber has many ribbon-cutting ceremonies coming up for new businesses. She also announced that a new tourism-related activity will be a trolley ride transit service from West Ocean City to Ocean Downs, Ocean Pines, Downtown Berlin, and points in between. It takes approximately one hour to visit all the points of interest, and it runs from 10am to 10pm. The Chamber has received calls from other businesses asking how they can become a stop along the trolley ride. This effort has been spear-headed by Shore Transit. Susan Jones announced that HMRA and the Chamber had a meeting with Shore Transit regarding an express route between Ocean City and Salisbury for workers. What would have taken workers 2+ hours to get to work from Salisbury to Ocean City will now take them approximately 40 minutes.

HMRA

Susan announced that another joint effort between HMRA, the Chamber, and the OC Tourism Department is the regional Tourism Alliance meetings that Senator Mathias is chairing. This is a tri-county effort. The point of contact from Wallops Island, who spoke at a previous Tourism Commission meeting, attended the last Tourism Alliance meeting and spoke about how to make their partnership work with the Town. Susan distributed HMRA's summer calendar of events. She announced that the HMRA dining guide was also being distributed throughout the Town. Susan also stated that HMRA has distributed brochures in Canada, at the Quebec Information Center and at the Montreal and Ottawa Travel Shows at their Maryland kiosk.

OCDC

Todd Ferrante reported that the Lt. Governor helped OCDC celebrate their 150th façade project. There have been 440 façades done in the state of Maryland, and 150 of those were done in Ocean City. OCDC is working on the dolphin sculpture project on 60th Street. They have an intern working with them for the summer. Sunset Park Party Nights will start on Thursday, June 26, at 7 p.m., and will continue every Thursday night until August 28.

MTDB

Greg Shockley attended the Maryland Tourism Development Board Meeting this week. The state's tourism budget was increased this year. Mary Knight mentioned that when the Comptroller was in town for the MML Convention this week, every time that he spoke to anyone, he mentioned that Worcester County was starting school after Labor Day and that he hoped all counties would follow suit. The Comptroller also mentioned that the teachers in the state of Maryland support the after-Labor Day start date.

Donna Abbott

Donna announced that she will be meeting with Terry Hasseltine and Gary Mackes in Baltimore next week to organize a marketing plan for the regional sports marketing partnership. There is a lot support in the state for that partnership. While in Baltimore, Donna will be joining Mayor Meehan on a media tour to promote our events this summer. The Mayor mentioned that the Vacation Day t-shirts were a big hit at the AAA News Conference and that they will be taking some to give out at the news stations and other media tour stops. Donna announced that we will be ordering more Vacation Day t-shirts.

Convention Center

Larry Noccolino announced that the MML Convention went well. Next year, three of MML's functions will be held in the Performing Arts Center. The Maryland State Firemen's Association Convention is next and runs through Wednesday. Larry mentioned that as they canvass their existing clients, there are about 50% of them that would be interested in using the Performing Arts Center. Construction is going well and is on schedule, although there have been some noise issues. The Beautification Committee is going to install a water fountain with lights outside of the front entrance at the Convention Center around mid-summer.

Recreation and Parks

Susan Petito stated that Northside Park will be very busy this weekend with a Fast-Pitch Girls' Softball Tournament, Arts's Alive, and Wine in the Park. Camps begin on Monday. Movies on the Beach at the Carousel have been going well. As an introduction to the Dew Tour, the Town will hold the Ocean Bowl Skate Bash on Tuesday, June 24, at the Ocean Bowl Skate Park, which will include vendors, prizes, and music.

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

The next meeting will be held on Monday, July 14.