

Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2014

The following individuals were in attendance:

Commission Members – Tourism Commission Chair and Council Secretary Mary Knight, Councilman Dennis Dare, Councilman Joe Mitrecic; Greg Shockley, Maryland Tourism Development Board; G. Hale Harrison, HMRA; and Todd Ferrante, OCDC. Staff members present were City Manager David Recor, 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; and Bill Badger and Merry Mears, Worcester County Economic Development. 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.

Approval of Minutes

The vote was unanimous to approve the minutes from the August meeting.

Enhanced Website Listings

Donna Abbott presented a tiered membership proposal for CVB members to bring additional revenue to the Town. Donna was asked at a previous Tourism Commission meeting to bring back a mock-up of a potential enhanced listing with some potential prices. Currently, the CVB has 335 members and the cost to join is a \$200 flat rate annually. This gives the member a listing on www.ococean.com, as well as the ability to put rack cards/brochures in the Visitors Center, and receive leads from the CVB. At this rate, it brings in \$67,000 annually. Donna presented two tiers plus a property spotlight. Tier 2 is what is currently offered to CVB members. It includes the member name, member image, address, a brief description, the ability for a photo gallery, expanded amenity descriptions, a list of all deals that a particular member has, a link to their website, a Map It link, a Book It button if desired, and a Read More button. The Tier 1 members would receive the same benefits as Tier 2, but they would get a yellow highlighted box and a star designating the listing as a featured property. A new category being presented is the Property Spotlight, which members would receive the same benefits as Tier 1, but their information would be displayed in larger fixed placement at the top of the list. This is a premier placement with the most visibility. Donna proposed this premier placement to be offered to members on a weekly basis to offer more members the ability to have the prime spot for a week, in conjunction with a Tier 1 membership. A member would have to purchase a Tier 1 membership, and then they would be offered the ability to have that fixed position on a weekly basis. Donna proposed that the current Tier 2 membership be offered at \$250, being that the website has been redesigned and a mobile website has been added; the Tier 1 to be offered at \$300, for those that would like to be a featured property, and the Property Spotlight be

offered at \$1,000 per week. Donna mentioned that the cost has not increased in several years. She also added that the website is very robust and she would not want to lose any members due to increasing the membership cost. Councilman Joe Mitrecic made a motion to raise the standard membership to \$250 for 2015, then \$300 in 2016, and \$350 in 2017. The motion also included offering the Property Spotlight at \$1,000 per week, and having a lottery if necessary for the properties interested in the same week. Todd Ferrante seconded the motion. The vote was five in favor and Councilman Dare opposed. This will be moved to the Council for further discussion.

Mary Knight introduced Bill Badger and Merry Mears, from the Worcester County Economic Development Committee. Bill mentioned that the Economic Development Summit will be the first official event held in the Performing Arts Center on December 10 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Updates from other Departments & Organizations

Chamber of Commerce

Melanie spoke about how well the Chamber's Annual Gala went on Friday, September 5. The Chamber's next event is the General Membership meeting on September 24 at Dunes Manor Hotel. The annual Crab Feast will be held at BLU. The 2015 Vacation Guide sales deadline is today. Melanie is excited about 300 new stunning photos that she received from a photographer.

Convention Center

Larry reported that the Realtors are in the building today. He announced that TEAM Productions will be presenting a Country Christmas Musical in the Performing Arts Center (PAC) on December 13. Larry also announced that the Jersey Boys may be coming to the PAC in the off season in 2015.

HMRA

Restaurant Week is September 12-26. Donna, Melanie and Susan are working on the Maryland Tourism Summit in November. A welcome reception will be held at Center for the Arts.

OCDC

Todd Ferrante reported that an Employee Appreciation Ceremony on the Boardwalk recognized employees of the Ocean City Public Works Department who clean the beach and boardwalk. Tony's Pizza offered pizza for employees in attendance. Sunset Park Party Nights have been well attended this year. The annual Golf Tournament will be held on October 8. They will have a booth at BikeFest.

MTDB

Greg Shockley reported that it will be a big weekend in Baltimore with the Star-Spangled Celebration. Continue to work on the post-Labor Day school start date matter. There was some good publicity with Peter Franchot and there was a good article in Forbes about the topic.

Tourism Department

The Tourism Strategic Planning Session with the Tourism Commission will be held on Wednesday, October 15, and will be all day. On August 21, Donna, the Mayor, MGH and a team of landscapers and a car detailing business went to Silver Spring to do some work for a family that won the Facebook grand prize package. The winner will also come to OC for a week's stay at the Grand Hotel. Almost 9,000 entries were received for that contest and the work at the family's home was covered by two Washington D.C. television stations. Donna and the Mayor will complete a media tour on Wednesday, September 17 in Baltimore to promote Sunfest and all of the fall activities in Ocean City.

Special Events

Frank Miller reported that they are getting prepared for Sunfest. All concerts are selling well, with some almost sold out. Fireworks will be held on Thursday, September 18, and Laser Shows will be held on Saturday, September 20.

Councilman Mitrecic made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Dare seconded and the vote was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.