

Maryland Tourism Development Board Business Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 11, 2014 @ 12:00 p.m.
Maryland Science Center
Baltimore, MD 21230

Call to Order/Roll Call

MTDB: Delegate Pamela Beidle, Judy Bixler, Adolph Ebersberger, John Fieseler, Jim Grube, Rick Howarth, Alice Lloyd, Dave Meloy, Matt Neitzey, Heather Renz, Wini Roche, Vira Safai, Greg Shockley, Victor Sulin EDC: Kevin Atticks, Terry Hasseltine MDMO: Rachelina Bonacci, Cassandra Vanhooser DBED: Margot Amelia, Hannah Byron, Diana Chen, Lucy Chittenden, Kat Evans, Liz Fitzsimmons, Rich Gilbert, Chanda Miller

Welcome – Greg Shockley

Board chair Greg Shockley welcomed everyone then introduced the board's two new members-Rick Howarth, President of Six Flags America and Judy Bixler, Captain/Owner, Oxford-Bellevue Ferry.

Greg mentioned that Rick Howarth has been very involved with the Post Labor Day school start initiative and that he is taking Kathy Sher's Attractions seat on the board, and that Captain Judy Bixler is replacing Raymond Nelson as a Transportation board slot. Greg then asked everyone in the room to introduce themselves and to give an update as is typically done.

Board Member Comments/Highlights (not all inclusive)

John Fieseler- This year has been busy with commemorations with the anniversary of the Civil War Battle of Monocacy in a month or so, as well as his region's part in the Star Spangled Bicentennial. Hotels have been busy throughout the entire calendar year.

Vira Safai- A lot is going on in Montgomery County and the staff at the Montgomery County Visitor's Bureau is doing a great job.

Delegate Pamela Beidle-Things have been busy in her district and it is an election year.

Heather Renz-Things have been pretty good. They've seen an uptick in sales which is good. Weather has been terrific and they're excited about events happening this summer.

Rick Howarth –So far they are off to a decent summer start, but attendance has been flat in large part due to the winter weather and schools having to shift their field trips plus a later Spring break. They are opening their ninth roller coaster next week-The Ragin Cajun.

Alice Lloyd – They are coming up on Eat in Easton where small groups of 16 people will walk around town and go to 5 or 6 different restaurants. They'll get little bites and a cocktail and will then go to the next place. Tidewater Inn and Hampton Inn on Route 50 as well as all of the B&B's in town are booked through the summer for weekends at least. Plein Air is also coming up July 12-20 for the 10th year. The first place winner will receive \$10,000. A professor with Morgan State University is conducting tours each Friday from June 20-August 22 of an area of land in Easton called The Hill which is believed by scholars to be the nation's earliest settlement of free African-Americans. There are also archeological digs being performed at the site in two different spots this summer.

Victor Sulin- Business is really popping in Anne Arundel County. Roadways have been backed up with traffic which seems to be a great sign of success.

Wini Roche- Things are lively in Harford County. It is restaurant week for the next two weeks -- part of a food and wine celebration. One of the things being offered are farmers markets and they have been focusing on strawberries and have created a self-guided strawberry trail. Wini mentioned to Hannah that they would be putting together a *House of Cards* tour. The CVB has launched and there is a local information desk at Maryland House staffed by volunteers on Saturdays.

Dave Meloy – Kent Manor Inn has added a second wedding venue as they were limited in terms of capacity. The new facility is up and booking and seats up to 500.

Judy Bixler- Judy introduced herself to the group as Captain of the Oxford-Bellevue Ferry which is the oldest ferry in the country, and chair of the Talbot County Tourism Advisory Board. They are launching a new website and Facebook page. There was a golf outing and introduction to travel and tourism week in May which was very successful.

Jim Grube- They will soon introduce a farm brew. Woodlawn Slack Winery is primarily a destination winery and brewery. The *Raiders and Invaders* Chesapeake Campaign event this past weekend was the culmination of a lot of hard work by the St. Mary's Tourism Office. Jim mentioned that it would be interesting to measure the event and that it all comes down to metrics.

Margot added that the firm Forward Analytics was at the event and will be doing the economic impact study which will provide a great snapshot into the Raiders and Invaders event.

Adolph Ebersberger- Maryland Live is doing very well. Horseshoe Casino's focus seems to be high rollers and that focus may in turn help tourism in that they'll be hotels, restaurants, and entertainment available. They've agreed to free parking and a parking vendor for stadium events which should help alleviate some of the issues with gridlock.

Matt Neitzey- The Capital Wheel opened at National Harbor last month to great reviews. Thinks it will become a must-see attraction for people coming into the DC area. Thanked OTD and the Governor's Office for the kick-off of the Chesapeake Campaign Bicentennial in Bladensburg Waterfront Park last week. The annual Jehovah's Witness convention will be held August 1-3 at FedEx Field. Expecting 55,000 people to attend who will be staying all over the Washington metropolitan area. An international convention will be held in August as well. They are working on getting visitor guides and a visitor app which will be unveiled just prior. David Hillman is in talks with University of MD College Park to build a new hotel and conference center off Route 1. There may be close to 300 rooms at the hotel and will be a similar property to the Arundel Preserve.

Greg Shockley-The season is off to a great start. They had a tremendous Memorial Day and the Dew Tour will be in OC in a couple of weeks. There are two new hotels being built and a bunch of new restaurants. People are optimistic about the future of the town. *Ping Pong Summer* opened on Friday and it is a great movie.

Chairman's Report

The school start date taskforce voted approximately three weeks ago and overwhelmingly approved recommending that schools start after Labor Day, and educators also came to the side of starting post Labor Day. Comptroller Peter Franchot's office prepared a report that was helpful in showing that tax dollars would be generated as a result of a post Labor Day start date. Lt. Governor Anthony Brown spoke about the school start date and Greg met with him to discuss adding funding. Greg added that Wini Roche and Ross Peddicord prepared questions for legislators submitted by the Maryland Tourism Council and asked that people ask those who are running how they feel about tourism. Greg stated that if people can be educated and understand tourism from the start, then the board's job will be much easier. Greg asked for the approval of minutes from the previous board meeting held April 30, 2014. The motion was approved unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

Margot thanked the Maryland Tourism Council for the three questions they submitted to gubernatorial candidates and which are included in the board binders for everyone to review. Frank Boston, the MTC lobbyist, put forward the questions to candidates asking that they be returned yesterday and Frank will prepare a report summary so that people are aware before the primary election where candidates stand on the issues presented. Margot announced the 2013 visitor numbers which have gotten lots of positive press. D.K. Shifflett provided visitor numbers that showed more than a 2% increase in 2013 up from 2012. We stand at 36.1 million visitors which is up 33% from 2007 when there were 27.4 million visitors. Well outperforming the 17.2% increase that the U.S saw during that time period and every mid-Atlantic state. There was also growth in both business and leisure travel. Union Station in Washington, D.C. has been dominated with four-sided kiosks and forty-six banners which will be up through the end of the month. At the Smithsonian Metro Station there are eleven banners including escalator banners, platform runners, and entrance banners which posted Monday. There is also ad placement in seven bus shelters around the National Museum of American History. Margot provided a presentation on the FY 15 budget and projections for allocations, and also mentioned that the grants process would be reviewed and discussed in full at the board's one-day retreat in September. She is presently awaiting a recommendation from MDMO on the grants issue.

Staff updates:

Liz Fitzsimmons-Liz introduced Kat Evans from OTD who was in attendance at the meeting and proceeded to discuss the "Star-Spangled Selfie". Governor O'Malley posted the first Star-Spangled Selfie last night. Liz asked if all in attendance could post their selfies before the end of the meeting. Three awards will be given for best selfie-the first award will be on Flag Day-June 14th, July 14th and during Star-Spangled Spectacular on September 16th. Rates for the official visitor guide, Destination Maryland, were reduced after the new publications partner, Miles Marketing Destinations, reviewed them versus competitive products. Miles is a great partner and has been challenging OTD to do things a bit differently. Liz asked that if anyone is an attraction, accommodation or service to get in touch with Kat Evans to be placed in the destination database which drives our website and listings in OTD publications. The Public Relations team has been working hard to get coverage of our positive visitor numbers, the Star-Spangled selfie campaign and trying to create buzz in business journals about the station domination ad campaign. The team recently attended the Public Relations Society of America Tourism Conference to help us develop even more innovative ways to generate earned media.

Lucy Chittenden-We are finally gearing up for a new website with Miles Marketing Destinations as our partner in this endeavor. The visitmaryland site had 200,000 unique users visit within the past month – and that is just the desktop version and doesn't include visits to the mobile site or the four Star-Spangled sites. The current contest focuses on National Harbor in PG County. There will be a re-engagement campaign for subscribers to the e-newsletter database in the fall.

Diana Chen-The information regarding visitors is very positive and we are seeing an increase in most of the tax codes. According to Smith Travel, lodging numbers are increasing in terms of number of rooms sold and room revenue.

Margot -- on behalf of Marci Ross -- reminded and invited everyone to the launch of the Monocacy "Attack on Washington" Civil War Trail. John Fieseler added that the ribbon will be cut on June 25th at Monocacy Battlefield where the battlefield touches the Monocacy River and simultaneously the ribbon will be cut on The Monocacy River Scenic Water Trail. OTD's Civil War Trails App will also be updated that day, unveiling the Monocacy "apptter". Another initiative Marci has been engaged with is the Sportsmen's Marketing Initiative. OTD was tasked with developing a program with the Sportsmen in the FY '14 budget and it has been an interesting process working with various stakeholders, including strong support from DMO's. Sandy Turner of Cecil County and Sarah Duck from Garrett County are the two DMO reps on the committee made up of stakeholders such as charter boat captains, guides, retailers and others involved in hunting and fishing from a tourism perspective.

Hannah Byron-Hannah gave insight on the amateur sports pilot program and stated that Marci will be working closely with Terry Hasseltine on the statewide program. There will be a committee formed and DMO's will be asked for input as it is rolled out. With regard to the Sportsmen's Marketing Initiative, the board will be updated as the committee wraps up their work. Hannah thinks that there will be some interesting creative and there is a need to develop a website, itinerary, goals and objectives-all a huge undertaking. Hannah also mentioned that there will be many events during Spectacular, and that while we can't guarantee that we can get seats for the September 13th event, as POTUS might attend and the Yankees will be in town, we will try to get information out to everyone about what will be happening and she asked everyone to watch for that information.

Rich-His efforts have been focused on helping to develop itineraries for tour operators and planning for 2015. He is now getting a lot of last minute requests from group leaders who want to come to Star-Spangled Spectacular. Also attended a German sales mission as a Capital Region USA representative. He went to three cities and met with 10 major tour operators, trained more than 100 travel counselors who advise people on coming to the capital region and hosted a Chesapeake celebration event.

Executive Directors Council and DMOs (brief summary – not all-inclusive)

Matt Neitzey-Matt discussed the \$2.5 million county co-operative grant program which he stated is about close to 30 percent of the Maryland Tourism Development Board's budget. Matt sees the 30 percent as a partnership between the board and OTD which administers the program and the DMO's who spend the money. Matt gave an overview and input regarding the grant committee which works with OTD staff- specifically Margot and Marci – who administer the grants for OTD. Highlighting discussions from recent grants committee meetings, Matt stated that OTD's budget is not based on growth so it doesn't make sense to base the DMO grant pools on growth only. The general consensus among DMO's is to return to the FY 12 model. Matt doesn't think the pool should be based upon growth but should be based on expenditures and revenue.

Vira Safai added that while thoughts were focused on grants between now and the board meeting in September, that he believed the goal of the board and OTD is to promote Maryland through its different jurisdictions. There needs to be a better understanding of criteria and making sure dollars are spread out through all counties appropriately rather than rewarding for growth.

Kevin Atticks- There was an article in the Harrisburg Patriot News regarding the nature of wine and beer events this morning and it focused on what they're doing in the Maryland wine industry. It talked about not just having an event anymore-it has to be an experience, built out and with a theme. Friday begins Maryland Wine week. Kevin thanked OTD and the Dept of Agriculture and Maryland's Best for sponsoring the event and helping to promote it. A new winery will be opening in Caroline County-the first one in that county. They've just received a grant from the USDA to take the Governor's Cup Wine Competition and turn it into something a lot more exciting and to create and promote the winners through a Governor's case. The top twelve best wines will be shipped to all of the top wine writers and publications around the nation. Lastly, every event that a winery held or that a winery attended in the last 90 days has been up at least thirty percent in attendance.

Terry Hasseltine-Last year prior to the legislative session, Wicomico County discussed their need for more awareness of what they were doing in the sports area as part of their tourism product. At the time, Terry's office was commissioned to do an Amateur Sports Study and there was a sports grant pilot program created to inform how a statewide program could be measured.

Rachelina Bonacci- The DMO's always thank the Office of Tourism and the Maryland Tourism Council for their friendship and partnership. There have been several meetings about grants and she appreciates Margot, Liz and Marci being there. Things are marvelous in Howard County. Meriwether Post Pavilion had five sold out nights, including three nights of Capital Jazz Fest. Wine in The Woods was record- breaking and was the biggest ever this year. The Sheep and Wool festival was the biggest ever as well and they also had the largest ever Memorial Day Soccer Tournament. This weekend is the Columbia Festival of the Arts.

Cassandra Vanhooser-The board is lucky to have Captain Judy Bixler on the team as well as Alice Lloyd from the Bartlett Pear Inn. Captain Judy has one of the best, most beloved attractions in Talbot County and Cassandra believes she will serve the board well. Alice and her husband have one of the best restaurants in the entire mid-Atlantic region so Talbot County can host properly. Things are going extremely well in Talbot County.

Vira suggested incorporating a small scholarship amount of \$5,000-\$10,000 to the budget for hospitality programs for jurisdictions which have colleges and universities that specialize in hospitality programs. He would like to perhaps revisit this option at the next meeting. Hannah stated that a update may be given at the next meeting on The Maryland Tourism Education Foundation which may have already have a small scholarship amount in place.

Margot asked for suggestions on a location for the next board meeting to which Matt Neitzey offered to reach out to National Harbor to arrange. The group was then escorted to a showing of the IMAX film *Star-Spangled Banner: Anthem of Liberty*.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, upon a motion duly made, seconded and unanimously approved, the meeting was declared adjourned.