Call to Order/Roll Call


Board chair Greg Shockley welcomed everyone then introduced Wini Roche.

Guest Speaker – Wini Roche, Harford County Tourism

Wini welcomed everyone and gave them some background on the Bulle Rock facility/golf course. Rated #1 public golf course in state and among top 10 public courses in the country. Summer in full swing in Harford County, currently Restaurant Week. Baseball starts June 7th, celebrating 10 year anniversary this year. Opening an event center in the early fall with 30,000 sq. ft. of meeting space. Senator Nancy Jacobs also encouraged everyone, if they haven’t yet been there, to visit Havre de Grace in Harford County.

Board Member Comments/Highlights (not all inclusive)

Patricia Heffelfinger – Just found out that they won the bid to host the USC Soccer National Championships, which will be held July 21 through 27, 2014. Event accounts for 10,000 room nights, which provides a huge economic impact. The opening event is a 3,000 seat lunch which will be held at the Baltimore Convention Center. She added that the Soccerplex will be renaming their stadium the “Maureen Hendricks Field” in the near future.

Bunkie Ebersberger – Casino tax revenue up.

John Fieseler – Continue to feel the sting of sequestration/room nights lost. On the positive side, getting visitors from the northern border with the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg. Manuscript of Frances Scott Key’s Star Spangled Banner is coming to Frederick for the first time ever. Cutting the ribbon for the Mason-Dixon Welcome Center on US-15 at end of the month. The Welcome Center is located just a couple of minutes south of the Gettysburg Battlefield.

Victor Sulin – Anne Arundel County business and development is booming due to the impact of BRAC. Lots of new development (commercial and residential) in the area and traffic has greatly increased. New A.A. County Executive Laura Neumann has taken office and is doing a commendable job to date.

Linda Westgate – Has noticed continued improvement in attendance for conventions and house meetings which is encouraging. They have also been impacted by the sequestration and seen some cancellations as a result. Attended the Horseshoe Casino groundbreaking in Baltimore City, expected to open late summer of 2014. Grand Prix is returning and Hilton is seeing uptick in room nights for the event.

Kathy Sher – Aquarium in D.C. located on the Terrace Level of the Commerce Building is closing and most of animals will move back to Baltimore. Having serious conversations with Smithsonian and other facilities to see if they can locate space to bring the Aquarium back to the nation’s capital. July
10th aquarium in Baltimore is opening a new exhibit called Blacktip Reef which is stunning featuring beautiful corals and blacktip sharks.

Heather Renz – business has been flat through May. Private dining (groups) business has declined. Next Tuesday having an event at their Pier 5 location at 5:30 – everyone is invited.

Khaled Said – Business has been up during the past 5 months – the best first 5 months in the past 8 years. Starting work on their Four Points Sheraton in 2014.

Wini Roche – kicked off the Chesapeake Campaign in Havre de Grace – the 200th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Havre de Grace. Tourism office in Havre de Grace and others pulled everything together and it was a great event.

Matt Neitzey – Three submissions for casino in PG County. Will be making a decision in the fall. MGM’s bid includes 300 hotel rooms and would be slated to open in 2016 (if selected). Looking into possibility of lacrosse/multi-sport facility in Bowie. Some new hotels have opened in area with a few more hotels being proposed along Route 1. They have War of 1812 related activity in the county including the Battle of Williamsburg re-enactment this summer. Tanger Outlets in National Harbor scheduled to open in November 2013.

Greg – Ocean City has started slow due to inclement weather. Air Show being held this weekend is in its 5th year. It has also been affected by sequestration due to cancellation of Blue Angels, which decreases attendance. Dew Tour is scheduled for June 22nd.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the March 13, 2013 meeting minutes.

Chairman’s Report

MTDB budget of $7.5 million has been approved and is our highest mark in years. If you see the Governor, be sure to thank him. He funded it fully and understands Tourism and its impact. Greg encouraged everyone to introduce themselves to new elected officials in their districts, educating them on the economic impact tourism has in the state. Hannah interjected, applauding Greg for all of his efforts supporting our budget and thanking everyone who comes to Annapolis and sits through the hearings during the budget process. School Start date study has been approved. David Reel has taken the lead on this initiative -- arranging conference calls, sending letters, etc. Hannah reported that tourism stakeholders spent a lot of time last year meeting with groups, school administrators, etc. After conversations with Greg Shockley, Senator Mathias introduced the bill which received a tremendous amount of support from the General Assembly. It is going to be staffed by the Maryland Department of Education and the MTDB will have a representative at the table - Greg has been recommended for that slot. 2013 MACO is focusing on Tourism and Economic Development. Margot will be speaking on a tourism panel during this year’s MACO.

Executive Director’s Report

Margot thanked Wini Roche and Senator Jacobs for hosting the board meeting in their county. Margot introduced two new team members who were in attendance at the meeting. First intro was Research Manager, Diana Chen. Diana has the Office back on schedule with the monthly tourism monitor. Just a few of her many duties include tracking tourism tax codes and providing research information for State Stat. She then introduced Chanda Miller, OTD’s new assistant replacing Denise Reed, who is now reporting directly to Hannah Byron. Chanda comes to us from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene where she held a similar position. She starts next Wednesday and will be working with the Board moving forward.
Office of Tourism has two open positions. The Social Media Coordinator position (to replace Bryan Barnes who left for a position at the Aquarium) interviews will be conducted over the next month. OTD is also awaiting approval to hire a Communications Manager (to replace Camila Clark, who is now working at Brand USA).

Margot referenced the FY 13 Priority Projects document in binders. She summarized the information in that document as an update of where we are at the end of FY13. Pleased to be through the process of hiring a new advertising agency consisting of a three-part contract for advertising creative, media planning and digital. Looking forward to getting started with new firm, Sisquis, starting July 1. Sisquis is a Baltimore-based advertising agency and currently handles the Maryland Transportation Authority and Spirit Airlines. Now that Diana is on board, in FY 14 OTD will be going back and revisiting doing Maryland’s image and awareness study again– to see what has changed over the past 5 years and see how the perception of Maryland and travel in the U.S. has changed. One of our goals with social media is to feature more content on Maryland Tourism’s You Tube channel. OTD’s TV commercials are posted there and are getting a lot of play online as well as on TV. We will be auditing the VisitMaryland website. Want to make sure operators and meeting planners can access the info they need for group travel. OTD transitioned part of its fulfillment center to the Mason/Dixon welcome center which has been a cost saving. All fulfillment will move to Mason/Dixon in November. Launched Harriett Tubman Underground Byway and will be launching Gettysburg Trail as part of the Civil War Trails mobile app. Margot also referred to the FY 14 Action Plan in the binders and proceeded to give a FY14 budget power point presentation, a copy of which was included in all binders. Just a few items mentioned: Allowance of $7.5 million in general funds for the Maryland Tourism Development Board; $300,000 in “special funds” which is money generated from OTD’s publications, calendar of events, etc. Reimbursable funds $613,000 from State Highway Administration from federal highways scenic byways grant and any other grants received from Federal Government. General Funds to OTD were a little less than $3.5 million. Marketing plan was developed so OTD can focus its human and fiscal resources on programs that deliver the greatest return on investment. She summarized budget allocations included in the binders and noted that the County Cooperative grants, mandated at 2.5 million, increased to 2.7 million for FY14. There is approximately $3.3 million in FY 14 for domestic advertising, media and production. Plan to develop new collateral for Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail in FY 14. The trail will be fully launched by the end of FY14. Over 118,000 people now receive OTD’s consumer monthly newsletter. OTD continues to package authentic Maryland experiences in its seasonal sweepstakes online. Margot referred to/summarized information contained in the Tourism Monitor document included in binders. She provided a summary of information in that document and also summarized/explained the tourism tax codes.

Staff updates:

Kelly Palich – War of 1812 update: referred to brochure provided that lists the Chesapeake Campaign events through 2013 and 2014. Additions will be featured on StarSpangled200.com. She referred to the May edition of Keynotes in the binders and encouraged everyone to go on their website and sign up to get that publication. Star Spangled 200 has (to date) funded $3.6 million in grant projects throughout the state of Maryland and work is underway to fund additional projects throughout the summer.

Marci Ross – Product Development: Harriett Tubman initiative: President has proclaimed the Harriett Tubman National Monument in Maryland, which will have a very positive impact. National Park Services is moving its national headquarters for its UGRR program to the Monument which makes the eastern shore of Maryland a must-see destination for UGRR. Driving tours/culinary: office met with the wineries association and the byways program to discuss how we can combine more of the driving tour experience and wineries/scenic byways program in a more unified fashion. Hosted travel information workshop last month. Rich, Liz, Marci and Margot have been very engaged with Capital Region USA and Marci, Liz and Rich will be attending PowWow next week.

Catherine Batavick - Maryland Green Travel: Holding informational help desk workshops in Southern, MD/eastern shore locales which have been going very well and have resulted in several one on one
appointments with attractions and accommodation venues. Catherine then pointed out, in case some were not aware, that the House of Cards set is located in Harford County.

Liz Fitzsimmons - played the new TV Spots but had some technical difficulty. Looking forward to International PowWow to see what is going on in international market. Busy getting ready for publications RFP.

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

Rachelina Bonacci – gave update on Howard County events and ongoing renovations at her tourism office.

Tom Riford – Washington County hotel occupancy/revenue was up for the first 5 months of the year.

Several Civil War events going on in the county. Movie crew from A&E network was in Hagerstown today filming episode of “Panic 911”. Washington County is also feeling the effects of sequestration. Hours have decreased at their 5 national parks and fees have increased.

Kevin Atticks – Antietam Highlands wine trail launched in May. Currently 64 wineries throughout the state. Still missing wineries in Caroline, Charles and Howard Counties. There is a new event debuting in Havre de Grace in October called “Harvest” which will focus on local farms, arts and crafts and wine. It will be held at Swan Harbor Farm. Next week is the start of Maryland Wine week. Go to Marylandwineweek.com for list of events. Conducted a “Drink Local Wine” conference, which involved a day of seminars and tours for high profile media, wine writers and bloggers.

Debbie Birch – Q.A. County – received their first Arts and Entertainment district designation. Planning to host the 2014 Bay Bridge run – expecting 25,000-30,000 people for that event.

Eileen Winer (Delegate Rudolph’s rep) – mentioned that the film tax credit that was passed is great for the Maryland film industry. Hannah indicated that it consisted of $25 million dollars in tax credits. In first 15 minutes after it was opened, all the tax credits were gone. Expect $140 million dollars in economic impact.

Greg recognized outgoing board members Khaled Said and Linda Westgate, thanking them for their service during the past 6 years.

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.