MARYLAND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BOARD BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, March 13, 2013 @ 11:30a.m.
The Hotel at Arundel Preserve, Hanover, MD

Call to Order/Roll Call


Board chair Greg Shockley welcomed everyone then introduced Paul Wiedefeld, Executive Director, Maryland Aviation Administration, for an update on BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport.

Guest Speaker – Paul Wiedefeld, Executive Director, MD Aviation Administration

Mr. Wiedefeld’s presentation highlighted the major terminal enhancement program currently underway at BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport. Included in the Board binders was a recent press release detailing this program along with other flight and construction updates. The press release also highlighted the fact that international passenger traffic grew by 20% in 2012.

Board Member Comments/Highlights (not all inclusive)

Anthony Cohen – reported on the Tubman Centennial weekend and groundbreaking for new State Park. He suggested that everyone try to get out and explore the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway.

Khaled Said – great first quarter – business was excellent…much better than last year.

John Fieseler – Fiscal Year has been going well. Waiting to see how sequestration affects business.

Trish Heffelfinger – something going on every weekend from now until Thanksgiving. New women’s professional team, the Washington Spirit, just starting practicing on Monday. The Soccerplex is bidding on the US Soccer National Championships for 2014….should hear something in April.

Chris Schardt – retail properties in Baltimore and Howard counties have seen moderate increases for first quarter. Baltimore City properties have been relatively flat. Starting to see a little more retail interest downtown – signed three new leases.

Kathy Sher – Flat first quarter. Looking forward to opening of renovated shark exhibit in late June or early July.

Wini Roche – Still working on hotel tax issue – hearing tomorrow for House Bill 1395 which would levy a 6% hotel tax in Harford county. Cautiously optimistic – strong proponent in Mary-Dulaney James.
Ray Nelson – Super Shuttle 12% increase at BWI – 8% decrease at Dulles. Looking to provide transportation for Grand Prix this year.

Jim Grube – Patuxent Air Station plays a huge role in growth in St. Mary’s County. Sequestration issue will result in scaling back/significant slowdown of growth.

Victor Sulin – update on session in Annapolis. Good news in AA County – watching Ft Meade to see what impact sequestration will have. Lots of development.


Matt Neitzey – Colonial Athletic Association of Women’s Basketball tournament in Upper Marlboro this weekend. Men coming to Baltimore next year. Next week U.S. Track and Field Masters indoor championships – sports events generating lots of hotel rooms for the area. MGM applying for sixth casino site at National Harbor. County budget meeting tomorrow, expecting some reductions. County has a $152 million budget deficit for next year. Completing their branding study – hope to have press event in another month.

Greg Shockley – very quiet winter. Both hotels/condos are reporting their advance reservations for summer are good. St. Patrick’s weekend was a great success.

Bunkie Ebersberger – April 11th table games at Maryland Live.

Approval of Strategic Planning Documents

Strategic Planning Documents from the September 2012 Worksession were discussed and included in the December 5, 2012 Board binder for board members to review at their leisure. A motion was made and seconded to approve those Strategic Planning documents.

Chairman’s Report

To date, the MTDB budget is still intact. It is now scheduled to go to the Senate. We will wait and see what happens there. Greg reiterated to all in attendance to please make sure they contact their local officials and request their support of the OTD and MTDB budget. Hearing is scheduled tomorrow for the Post-Labor Day School start day study. Constituents representing Ocean City, Western Maryland, and a contingent from Six Flags plan to attend and testify in support of the study. He also mentioned that the State Education Board plans to oppose this study. Tourism Day was a great success for all. Margot proceeded to play the Tourism Day video for those at the meeting who were unable to attend.

Executive Director’s Report

Since Marci had another commitment, Margot called on her first to give her report/presentation. Marci referred to the Tourism Development report in the binders/folders and highlighted recent Harriet Tubman activity. There is a new driving guide, audio guide, and the Harriet Tubman website has been live for several months now. Two comprehensive workforce
development training activities were recently conducted. The first was training for 16 new tour guides. The training was rigorous and the trainees were tested and graded. In addition to the tourism guides, there were lots of students also involved in the training. Second workforce development activity was certified byway training, which was opened up to the industry with attendees representing businesses from all industry sectors along with representatives from churches and community organizations. Everyone left with working knowledge of what the byway is, new information to share with visitors, and guidance on how they can direct visitors to the website and visitors centers for more information.

Harriet Tubman event was two parts - ribbon cutting groundbreaking for byway at state park site and a Join the Journey tour that took people up the byway into Caroline County where a Harriet Tubman reenactor was featured. Currently legislation is in Congress to establish Harriet Tubman Historical Parks, both in New York and Maryland, and efforts will continue to get those parks authorized. Lots of interest in Harriet Tubman right now, especially in the media. Marci expressed thanks to the OTD staff, staff from sister agency DNR and partners who volunteered their time to staff/work this event. Bryan proceeded to play a slideshow from the event. Marci then touched on a few other current projects, details of which are included in the binders.

Margot then continued with her Executive Director’s Report referring to some of the documents included in the binders. OTD is currently developing new television creative that will drive visitation through the Commemoration time-period: Harriet Tubman television, and Star Spangled Banner National Historic Trail and the upcoming Chesapeake Campaign television spots. OTD is working with a representative in Canada to continue the growth Maryland has seen from Canada. Margot has made an offer to a new research staff person who will join us at the next Board meeting. The Mason Dixon Welcome Center, which was re-opened in June, is also being used as a fulfillment center, and we are seeing increased visitation to that Welcome Center making it the third busiest Welcome Center out of five.

Margot referred to backup in folders and discussed our relationship with the US Travel Association and Brand USA – the international marketing group currently marketing the United States as a travel destination. Margot stressed that, with sequestration, we really need our national travel associations. If anyone would like to come to Washington and meet with delegation members – we can make that happen through our national travel associations. Margot referred to the Smith Travel research information included in binders. She went over some of the information indicating that Maryland did relatively well in 2012 from a hotel standpoint, not having some of the declines that many parts of the country saw. Occupancy is about on par with the rest of the U.S. Most jurisdictions performed well in some category in 2012. Highlights include: Maryland and Baltimore had the same percent increase in room supply which impacts the occupancy rate. Frederick County had a particularly good year with major increase in room rates and nice occupancy rate compared to the state and national numbers. St. Mary’s had a great year with room revenue/supply. Washington County had a big increase in occupancy. Worcester County room revenue up and average room rate had a nice increase. Western region had a four percent increase in room revenue. Upper and lower eastern shore did well in room revenue growth. In closing, be sure to look over your March consumer newsletter in the binder - lots going on.
Staff updates:

Catherine – Maryland Green Travel is doing well. Catherine recently conducted site visits with our consultant Tom Griffin in Queen Anne’s County and Southern Maryland. They talked about greening your property and managed to get a few more applicants including two more wineries. Maryland Green Travel currently has 154 partners. Catherine indicated that they are really trying to boost attractions and restaurants so, if anyone can help out with that, please contact her. They are also working with DNR to get the State Parks to come onboard. Our partner, Trip Advisor is launching their Green Leader program which will go live in about two months. Their program is very similar to ours and it will be interesting to see how that affects consumer decision making in the future.

Rich is currently with Camila Clark at CRUSA in Washington, D.C. Margot referred to his section of the status report showing that he has been traveling a great deal (i.e., trade shows for ABA, NTA, etc.). One of the largest shows is the Eastern Sport Travel and Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, historically held over 14 days/two weekends each year. Our office and many of the DMOs and recreational partners would go to Harrisburg and get quite a bit of their business from this show. Because of a decision made by the trade show operator, Reed Exposition, the show was boycotted by the NRA and the show was cancelled.

Bill – Referred to and discussed the grant summary sheet in binders. He also referred to the Star-Spangled/War of 1812 sheet in the binders relating to the Chesapeake Campaign events and gave a summary of all upcoming events. Many of the grants that were made help support all of these activities. Will be a busy spring launching Chesapeake Campaign in June. He then referred to/summarized the e-newsletter also included in the binders.

Liz – Harriet Tubman – we had 56 press placements so far as a result of the event. In addition to the local regional placements, we also got hits from the Chicago Tribune, New York Times and Washington Post. Liz and Margot are working on developing creative for Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, along with spots to promote Chesapeake Campaign events, and touting the Civil War Trails mobile app. Destination Maryland is on the way to the printer. New database is working well. Also working with Rich to develop a group tour database. Will be combining Destination Maryland and Calendar of Events into one annual publication. In the process of securing new vendors for media placement, advertising creative and digital marketing.

Bryan – referred to and summarized the tourism day stat document included in the binders. He has been using social media to post green travel information (Twitter, Pinterest, etc.). Will be presenting to Winery Associations and other businesses – discussing ways they can use social media to promote their businesses.

Lucy – January/February are quiet months for website so we are taking advantage of this time to update/cleanup site. It looks better but we really need a new website, and are working on putting together RFP for that. Check out new Maryland.gov site when you get a chance. Maryland State Arts Council is also getting a new website – Lucy is assisting with that. We have been doing a great deal of web marketing – we also do web marketing for the Arts Council. The Trip Advisor reviews for attractions and restaurants will be coming online very soon.
Executive Directors Council and DMOs (brief summary – not all-inclusive)

Tom Riford – MTC Report on behalf of Sandy Turner and MDMO Report on behalf of Rachelina. Hosted very successful Tourism Day in Annapolis with many special guests including Dominick Murray, legislators, Greg Shockley, etc. Special thanks to Wini Roche for all of her efforts. MTTS will be November 6 thru 8, 2013 at The Hotel at Arundel Preserve. MTC is supporting Post-Labor Day School Start date study. MDMO: 2013 meeting schedule is set.

Karyn Riley – Visit Baltimore – getting ready to kick off their busiest season of the year. Many museums in area are offering special deals and discounts. Launching a new pocket restaurant guide distributed to all of the hotels. Preakness, Artscape, Grand Prix, etc. all coming up.

Jordan Fish – Baltimore County – new website should be live in about two weeks. Launching a new newsletter.

Lori Paddy, Howard County tourism - Got a great response from their date nights campaign this month. You can download a “parker” app for historic Ellicott City from their website. She detailed several other upcoming events in the county.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the December 5, 2012 Meeting Minutes.

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.