

Maryland Tourism Development Board Business Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 10, 2015 @ 11:30a.m.
B&O Railroad Museum
901 W. Pratt Street, Baltimore, MD 21223

Call to Order/Roll Call

MTDB: John Fieseler, Alice Lloyd, Greg Shockley, Victor Sulin, Vira Safai, Judy Bixler, Anthony Cohen, Rick Howarth, Matt Neitzey, Heather Renz, Dave Meloy MDMO: Sandy Turner, Dan Spedden, Amanda Fenstermaker, Lisa Challenger, Marjorie Hampson, Rachelina Bonnacci EDC: Kevin Atticks, Patrick Donoho DBED: Chanda Miller, Marci Ross, Liz Fitzsimmons, Lucy Chittenden, Bill Pencek

Welcome – Dave Shackelford, B & O Railroad Museum

Dave Shackelford, Chief Curator of the B & O Railroad Museum, welcomed everyone to the B&O Railroad Museum and gave a bit of history about the museum and its affiliates and gave insight on upcoming key events.

Meeting minutes approval

The board unanimously approved meeting minutes from the April 29, 2015 board meeting.

Board Member Comments/Highlights (not all inclusive)

Heather Renz – business at the downtown location is declining significantly over last year. Pikesville and Annapolis locations have seen positive business growth and they have been approved for expansion in the Odenton area in March 2016.

Judy Bixler – Talbot County will present 4th of July fireworks for 2-3 nights in a row. Things are looking good in the County and the Ferry has been doing well.

Matt Neitzey- MGM National Harbor is under construction and is scheduled to open late 2016 or early 2017. Prince George's County will host a three-on-three basketball tournament and several upcoming events this summer. The County Executive proposed a 50 percent increase in property tax and a 4 percent increase in phone tax to go towards investment in public schools and to be more on par with Montgomery and Howard County Public School systems. The County Council decided not to approve those increases but increased the Park and Planning tax which the County Executive then vetoed.

Dave Meloy- Easton is doing very well and they are looking forward to a good season.

John Fieseler-The Frederick Festival of the Arts was this past weekend. Fox 5 was in attendance— the news outlets' interviews of various merchants and restaurateurs in the area appeared on television very quickly.

Vira Safai- All is going well in Montgomery County.

Rick Howarth- Business has been pretty good and is slightly up. The Grand Opening of Six Flags America's 10th roller coaster-Bourbon Street Fireball- is tomorrow. Firefighters from Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties are scheduled to donate smoke detectors and ride the roller coaster for a PR stunt. A VFP event is the following Thursday, next weekend gospel festival, and a Hispanic festival on June 21st

Greg Shockley-This weekend is the air show which is one of Ocean City's marquee events and will feature the Blue Angels. This is the first year with Blue Angels and the schedule of events is the best thus far. Ocean City is entertaining high school students from Pennsylvania and New Jersey and groups from Northern VA arrive next week. Through May, Ocean City had a good start but then slowed due to the weather. Everyone is hoping for good weather for a good summer.

Chairman's Report

Greg gave an update on the status of the recruitment process for OTD's executive director and advised that Bill has been filling in during the interim as acting assistant secretary of DTFA. The job announcement for the OTD executive director has been published. A search committee whittled applicants down to the top five-interviews are June 24th.

Greg reminded board members about board term information and ethics commission filings for this year. In board binders is related information on members and term status.

Greg thanked those whose terms are expired but are still serving. Greg discussed the formation of an Advisory Committee on Multi-Cultural Diversity and gave an overview of what it would entail. Greg noted successful prior years with legislators, through lobbying and assistance with fundraising efforts, and encouraged everyone to continue to tell the tourism story and engage legislators to keep the budget moving forward.

Greg is pleased with the outcome of the legislative session-the board was fully funded as was requested. He thanked everyone who testified during session and stated that Secretary Gill and Governor Hogan seem very enthusiastic about tourism. Greg asked attendees to continue working to pushing the agenda forward, and to continue educating legislators. There is still opportunity to find new friends to support tourism. School start date didn't take off-the sense is it will be tried again next year-Comptroller Franchot will be back on board. Dave Reel deserves recognition for his work with the initiative.

Executive Update

Bill discussed the draft resolution in binders related to the Advisory Committee on Multi-Cultural Diversity and explained that it proposed that a minimum of 7 people would study findings and report back to give suggestions on what direction to take. Bill added that this would be an exploration on what we might, can, and should do moving forward as we go into the development of a new strategic plan, and what the scope of work for the new strategic plan should include. The initiative unless extended, would expire in 2018 and is strongly encouraged by Secretary Gill. A motion was made, and unanimously approved to adopt the resolution.

Bill advised that all levels of staff at DBED have been in regular communication with Visit Baltimore following the civil unrest. Bill attended last two Visit Baltimore board meetings, and the news from yesterday's meeting is that safety is of number one concern of the public in the tourism market. The good news on the convention side is that they have lost little business. Hoteliers took an immediate hit after the riots but business is reportedly bouncing back. A more lingering hit seems to be on the restaurant and small business side.

The next big event is Light City-an outdoor light insulation in March 2016.

Bill discussed DBED reorganization and Augustine Commission suggestions, and gave a presentation on FY 2016 budget allocations. Bill remarked that he is hoping to implement marketing partnership grants with the arrival of a new executive director and mentioned that the March 2015 Tourism Monitor shows that tourism tax codes through March are up 7.3 percent.

Staff updates:

Lucy Chittenden- continuing to enhance the website and working on adding more subscribers to the newsletter and obtaining more in-depth analytics for website. Lucy gave presentation on websites and their features and advised of the development of a scenic byways microsite.

Liz Fitzsimmons- Looking forward to co-op advertising program due to the outcome of a meeting with DMO's. Ideas from the meeting included out of the box and new markets. Looking forward to showcasing those ideas. Excited about M3 principle which will provide better opportunity to strategically evaluate PR efforts. Working on more robust YouTube channel and other marketing and advertising efforts. Blogger Bash is June 25 at the Annapolis Maritime Museum. Kevin Atticks will help showcase distilleries, wineries and breweries in MD. Looking forward to presenting co-op marketing opportunities to DMO's. Working on Destination MD and towards it becoming an annual publication in January. The African American Heritage Travel Guide is nearing end stages of proofing and should be out within the next month. Liz played one of the television spots for the group and stated they will air the next week. Three spots will run and culinary spots are being finished.

Marci Ross- the current grant cycle runs through the end of the calendar year and a new program won't be rolled out until the first of the new calendar year. There will be a six month window to have conversation when a new executive director is hired to have a discussion and to implement what makes the most sense to grow tourism sales taxes. The reduction in product development funds stems from being out of the commemoration period. New initiatives focus on outdoor recreation and culinary. The green travel program remains, and Marci has been working with two DMO's and some federal and state agencies on bringing the Harriett Tubman Experience to the Eastern Shore. The opening has been pushed to March 2017 due to more time needed for interior exhibits. Marci asked to provide ideas on what should be included in byways videos when as soon as possible. Advised of an outreach and partnership program Heather Ersts is also involved with.

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

Kevin Atticks-as MTC Chair-looking forward to Summer Soiree being held in PG County on June 18. MTTS will be held at Turf Valley in Ellicott City October 28-30. In the world of wineries, breweries and distilleries-75 wineries and more are opening. The trend is smaller wineries growing their own grapes using MD fruit. Four wines in MD have won awards for National Best in Show. Breweries have had two major success in the legislature. There are seven licensed distilleries throughout the state- by end of year there will be 12-15.

Amanda Fenstermaker- Eagle Man is this weekend, and progress being made with the Harriett Tubman Underground State Park. Office is working on several re-development projects in Cambridge.

Dan Spedden- the GeoWoodstock XIII event over the Memorial Day weekend brought people from all over the world. Approximately 4,000-6,000 people were in town over a four-day period. Dan reported his office is developing new website and he toured Antietam and South Mountain with the new DNR Secretary last Thursday to promote tourism. Eight weeks of softball tournaments just started in Washington County. There is potential for 7500 hotel rooms sold but experience tells him that it will likely be closer to 4500.

Lisa Challenger-Just wrapped up a TV filming with a Budget Travel correspondent for four days. They filmed in Berlin, Ocean City, and Assateague and then went to St. Michaels and Kent Narrows. Set to air in the Fall on over 400 PBS stations and will reach a huge audience. They took over a state welcome center in 2011 and turned it into a 7-day operation year-round. Visitation has continued to rise year after year.

Sandy Turner- Cecil County has gotten popular as a wedding destination. People call from DC, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Lancaster looking for beautiful scenery, waterfronts and barns and they have an overabundance of all three. Started working with wedding destination venue partners to

create a guide. Bass Master Elite will be coming to Cecil County-they started experiencing the economic impact of the event last August. It will be held August 13-16.

Marjorie Hampson-just finished a visitor's guide and didn't spend a penny-production crew sold enough ads. Gearing up for rest week up to about 64 participants. They will run a small tourism welcome center at Hampton National Historic Site 2 days a week.

Rachelina Bonnacci-Howard County Tourism's budget request was fully funded with a 14% increase, and hotel tax continues to out-perform projections. Not too happy about the veto of HB 209 hopefully will be able to do something about it in January. Upcoming events include the 60th anniversary of the Enchanted Forest, Iron Girl Triathlon and Geocache for Patapsco Valley. Still planning for Columbia's 50th in 2017 and Howard County Office of Tourism will be operating a third Welcome Center.

Patrick Donoho-retailers in MD are finally seeing an uptick in sales. Tax free week will occur on the second Sunday in August again.

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.