



Maryland Tourism Development Board (MTDB)

Business Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 25, 2020

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

(Video Conference Meeting)

Roll Call

MTDB: Judy Bixler, Cara Joyce, Casey Jenkins, Senator Katie Fry-Hester, Bunkie Berserker, Candace Osunsade, G. Hale Harrison, Monroe Harrison, Del. Wendell Beitzel

DMO: Dan Spedden Visit Hagerstown; Ruth Toomey, MTC; Amanda Hof, Howard County; Jason Aul, St. Mary's County; Greg Pizzuto, Visit Harford.

COMMERCE: Tom Riford, Liz Fitzsimmons, Brian Lawrence, Rich Gilbert, Rianna Wan, Greg Bird, Lucy Chittenden, Julia Bouie

Call to Order/Welcome – Judy Bixler, MTDB Chair

Judy Bixler, Board Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Participants were made aware that this meeting was being recorded. A motion was made by Dan Spedden and seconded by Monroe Harrison to approve the 2/28/20 MTDB minutes.

Executive Director's Report: Liz Fitzsimmons, Managing Director, Office of Tourism and Film

Liz spoke to the Board about our new world of virtual meetings and thanked Greg and Julia for getting all the meeting preparations to work. Liz thanked OTD staff for their ability to pivot quickly in these unprecedented times. Tom Riford also relayed his enthusiasm for OTD staff, and MTDB members past and present for all that has been accomplished. The tourism industry has been the most impacted industry in the State of Maryland with 120,000 jobs lost. The importance of tourism is crystal clear. Tom also expressed his gratitude for Liz's leadership and vision.

Mission and Vision: The Board and staff worked on aligned Vision and Mission statements, which have been implemented.

- **Vision:** Maryland leads the way as one of America's most exciting, diverse and welcoming destinations, creating memories and experiences for visitors worldwide to enjoy.
- **Mission:** We stimulate and drive Maryland's thriving tourism economy, with a primary goal of creating a great place for all Marylanders to live, work and play.

Liz provided statistical data to the Board. Tourism employed more than 150,000 people in 2019, an overall increase of 1.5 percent from 2019 and is the 11th largest private sector employer in Maryland. In 2019, visitors to Maryland spent nearly **\$18.6 billion**, an increase of 3 percent from 2018.

Tourism was on the rise. In December 2019, Tourism Tax codes were up 6.7%, then February pandemic hit, and the numbers took a dramatic turn for the worse, down 38.4% through April.

MTDB composition: The Board consists of the following 24 members: (1) 11 members appointed by the Governor in consultation with the Secretary and with the advice and consent of the Senate; (2) 3 voting members appointed by the Governor who are directors or chief executive officers from among the destination marketing organizations officially recognized by the Office; (3) 5 members appointed by the President of the Senate of Maryland as follows: (i) at least 2 members of the Senate; (ii) at least 2 members from the private business community; and (4) 5 members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates as follows: (i) at least 2 members of the House of Delegates; and (ii) at least 2 members from the private business community. The Board has terms expiring and our by-laws state that we can extend terms and Liz is planning to ask for extensions. Individuals will be contacted by Liz soon.

Melonie Johnson has moved to New Jersey as President, Borgata casino in Atlantic City and is no longer on our Board. She will be missed tremendously.

Three (3) spots: Interim (soft); Open for Art/Backpackers; Integrated for Social Media (Water) were shown to participants.

MARKETING PLAN FISCAL YEAR 2021: OTD is building our marketing plan a little differently . A year ago we went to an enterprise solution-based platform focusing on four strategic objectives:

- **MARKET EXPANSION**

- Building upon promotional pushes in Cleveland, Pittsburgh and New York metro

- **LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS (Recovery Task force partnerships)**

- Working with private sector and county tourism offices on grants to generate overnight stays

- **MAXIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES**

- The opening of the Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe

- **TRANSACTIONABLE OUTCOMES (looking at more opportunities as things are different)**

- Build on the success of December 2019's "Home for the Holidays" where \$20,000 invested generated 11,922 room nights for \$1.5 million in revenue

FY 21 Budget: The budget for FY21 was presented - \$10,000,000+; nothing is certain at this point. Advertising and Communications (\$5,946,845), Domestic & International Sales (\$605,000.) Publication Printing & Production \$462,000, (offset by advertising revenue), Public Relations (\$182,030), Research (\$250,000), Matching Grant Program (\$1,000,000.), Web Site Development and Maintenance (\$338,000), County Cooperative Grants (\$2,625,000), Inquiry Fulfillment & Call Center \$73,154, Product Development \$177,971. Please remember that all our media spots are on our social media pages and you are free to use. Also, we will be reconvening the Executive Directors Council to the Maryland Tourism Development Board to have conversation about the value of tourism to Maryland and its communities.

Discussion:

1. Question: Candace Osunsade. The tourism budget presented seems flat and does not seem to reflect any additional money needed to rebuild. The industry is struggling; the pandemic hit Maryland hard, the State should be investing more and providing more grant programs and more funding. How will we gain access to the resources we need to rebuild the industry? Liz shared that we do hear you and that matching grant program money is still available and Commerce has loans and grants that can be applied for.
2. Question: Senator Katie Fry Hester. All questions come with an offer to help. If federal money became available what would be the tourism ask for Federal funds (Heroes Act)? Has the State gone after any other grants in economic development outside of that? Given the current environment are you doing anything specific to promote African American, Scenic Byways, Civil War, which are all important? Liz responded yes, with International Underground Railroad Month product and development, and through newsletters and site searches, social media. Also working with Commerce on emergency EDL money. Tom Riford indicated that he would be attending a meeting this week to talk about funding alternatives and will report back.
3. Judy Bixler asked to continue the Board Update calls as ongoing communication with the Board is very helpful. Yes, Liz and Julia will make that happen. Also, Donna Abbott who did a lot of good for our Board from "Oakland to OC" passed. Can we create some sort of memorial for her? Susan Jones shared that Donna's son and most likely the Mayor will be doing a memorial and it was agreed that the Board would be a part of that in some way when the time comes. There may be a tribute at the OC convention center where everyone could be involved. Susan will keep us informed. Greg Pizzuto added that tourism presents a Person of the Year award and that tribute will most likely be changed to the Donna Abbott award.
4. Candace Osunsade announced that after a long journey to survive, the National Aquarium will re-open on July 1. Everyone is invited.
5. Cara Joyce announced that Urban Pirates will re-open July 3 in Baltimore.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Board, Dan Spedden, seconded by Cara Joyce made motions to adjourn. The meeting was declared adjourned by Board Chair, Judy Bixler.

Next MTDB Business Meetings:

- Thursday, September 10, 2020 Time: 10:30 a.m - 12:00 pm (Video Conference call)
- Thursday, November 19, 2020 Time: 10:30 a.m - 12:00 pm (Video Conference call)