



## **MARYLAND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BOARD (MTDB)**

### **QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES**

April 12, 2024 | 10:00 am - 12:00 pm  
Baltimore Washington International Sheraton Hotel  
1100 Old Elkridge Landing Road  
Linthicum, Maryland 21090

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Melonie Johnson, MGM National Harbor  
Ben Seidel, Real Hospitality Group  
Del. Wayne Hartman, Maryland House of Delegates  
Al Spence, A.S. Midway Tours  
Chris Riehl, Rent-A-Tour  
James Mathias, University of Maryland Eastern Shore  
Juan Carlos Linares, Federal Realty Investment Trust  
Rick Howarth, Levy Restaurants  
Robert Arthur, The Ivy Hotel  
Sandy Turner, Cecil County Tourism  
Shelonda Stokes, Downtown Partnership of Baltimore  
Tonya Fitzpatrick, Esq., World Footprints, LLC

Gerardo Martinez, Wild Kid Acres, LLC  
Cassandra Vanhooser, Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism  
Dave Ferraro, Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park  
Andrew Frank, Cap Ex Advisory Group (effective 7/1/24)

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Leverne McElveen, Leverne McElveen & Associates, LLC  
Heather Shaffer Braue, CFG Bank Arena  
Del. Melissa Wells, Maryland House of Delegates  
The Honorable Kate Frye-Hester, Maryland State Senate

#### **EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Ruth Toomey, Maryland Tourism Coalition

Rachelina Bonacci, Maryland Stadium Authority, for Ross Peddicord

**DESTINATION MARYLAND  
ORGANIZATIONS (DMO)**

April Plummer, Queen Anne's County  
Economic Tourism & Development  
Shalyn Bolden, Kent County Maryland  
Economic and Tourism Development  
Holly Gilpin, Dorchester County Tourism  
Jamie Williams, Kent County Tourism

Dan Spedden, Visit Hagerstown &  
Washington County Convention and  
Visitors Bureau  
Trish McClean, Visit Baltimore  
Abigail Vitaliono, Visit Baltimore  
Eric Rebbert, Visit Harford  
Kristen Goller, Talbot County Tourism  
Kristen Pironis, Visit Annapolis

**COMMERCE STAFF (OTD)**

Liz Fitzsimmons, Managing Director  
Marci Ross, Tourism Development  
Brian Lawrence, Advertising and Content  
Cynthia Miller, Strategic Partnerships & PR  
Rianna Wan, Research  
Rich Gilbert, Travel and Trade  
Greg Bird, IT  
Julia Bouie, Administration

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

- a. With a Board quorum present, Johnson called the meeting of Friday April 12, 2024, to order and noted that the meeting is being recorded.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- b. Johnson called for a motion to approve the minutes of 10/20/23. A motion to approve was made and seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.

**III. BOARD OPENING REMARKS**

- c. Johnson reminded the Board that Johnson and Seidel have accepted the position of co-chairs until a nominating committee has been formed and a new Board chair is elected. This Board will work proactively accepting the volunteered /appointed responsibility and commitment that comes along with being a Board member. This Board plans to have noticeable input, working with Maryland Office of Tourism (OTD) staff in developing important initiatives i.e., the FY25 marketing plan and budgeting. The Board is mandated to hold four in person meetings a year. The Board can and will have smaller, important, virtual meetings to discuss identified initiatives. Seidel asked for volunteers to join committees to strategize on various high level Board initiatives.

- d. Johnson identified the need for a Nominations committee and chair for the MTDB elections to be held in November. The members below raised their hands.

**MTDB Nominations Committee**

1. Sandy Turner
2. Dave Ferarro

**IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

e. **MARYLAND OFFICE OF TOURISM (OTD) UPDATE**

Liz Fitzsimmons, Managing Director, Office of Tourism & Film

**Francis Scott Key Bridge Collapse**

Fitzsimmons and Delegate Hartman provided updates on legislation passed to provide aid to the families and workers impacted. Hartman noted that the impact is wide and far as many different industries and persons are and will be affected by this tragedy.

**OTD initiatives**

Fitzsimmons shared the Office of Tourism mission and vision statements and defined tourism as:

**Tourism is an economic ecosystem derived from visitor spending that delivers opportunity and quality of life for Marylanders.**

Fitzsimmons opened the meeting with the Chesapeake Bay Storytellers video and introduced the latest OTD tourism development tool, the Great Chesapeake Bay General Loop 2024 General Marketing Update (GMU) Tool Kit illustrating how to work with the Maryland Office of Tourism. The GMU and toolkit are available at

<https://industry.visitmaryland.org/great-chesapeake-bay-loop-general-marketing-update-gmu>.

OTD staffs several task forces including the Maryland Alcohol and Promotion Fund (OTD has applied for funding in partnership with MDMO), the Fort to 400 Commission, and the Convention Center task force going forward. The Board will have the opportunity for economic development input. The OTD FY25 budget was passed. The overall budget is \$13,566,000 with the investment set

aside of \$2.5 million for the Maryland County Destination Marketing Organizations as set for in the Tourism Promotion Act of 2008. This presents a final budget of \$11,066,000.

All OTD efforts are driven by the many research tools that are owned by or sourced by OTD and are viewed collectively and include:

- Maryland Pre and Post Campaign Awareness Study
- Visitation to the C&O Canal National Historical Park
- Voice of the Visitor Comprehensive Study of Visitation to Maryland's Chesapeake Bay Region
- AWARENESS STUDY
- Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C, New York Metro represent OTD top markets with personal automobiles as the top method of transportation.

The collective research reveals the following important information that drives marketing and development.

### **Demographics**

- 80 percent of visitors are White
- 11 percent of visitors are Black
- 6 percent of visitors are Hispanic/Latino
- 40 - 55 Years Old/Split evenly Male and Female

### **Hispanic Travelers - What the Research Tells Us**

- When visiting Maryland, they stay longer – 2.5 nights vs. 1.3 nights
- Skew younger. Majority of trips by Hispanic visitors to the state are made by visitors ages 18 to 34 (60%) and 35 to 49 (27%)
- Book direct. Majority of Hispanic travelers to the state book their trips directly on accommodation websites (35.3%), attraction websites (16.6%) and transportation websites (18.8%)
- Last-minute spontaneous travelers. 59 percent of Hispanic travelers to the state visit/book their trip within the same day or one week, and 27.4 percent visit/book within two to four weeks
- Hispanic representation in visuals is important. 52% of Hispanic travelers prefer destinations with Hispanic representation

### **Niche Market: Fish & Hunt (F&H) Maryland - Follow the Trails**

Experiential niche products built through partnership sites selected to maximize Maryland's natural resources provide the ability to move tourism dollars

throughout the state, serve as a gateway to surrounding assets and multi-platform marketing. The new Catfish Trail (<https://fishandhuntmaryland.com/marylands-catfish-trail>) officially launched today to direct-to-consumers at the Bay Bridge Boat Show April 12-14, 2024. This is the third trail created by Fish & Hunt. Please remember to share any exciting news happening in your area with us for sharing on our social media channels.

**f. BRIAN LAWRENCE, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ADVERTISING AND CONTENT**

Lawrence informed the Board of the direction of the OTD FY25 marketing plan. The plan serves as a template for partners, and OTD will ensure that the plan serves the interests of the Board and stakeholders. Outlined below are important plan parameters to be considered.

- How to address measurables
- How to make it more aspirational
- How to make it relevant and useful to partners
- How much research to include
- Driving traffic back to our industry site

Lawrence reported that research has shown that advertising garners an awareness ratio of \$32:1 for dollars spent. OTD will continue to build upon “You’re Welcome” messaging. The following committees were formed with members as indicated below.

**MTDB Marketing Committee**

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Robert Arthur       | 5. Sandy Turner      |
| 2. Cassandra Vanhooser | 6. Ashley Chenault   |
| 3. Dave Ferraro        | 7. Tonya Fitzpatrick |
| 4. Chris Riehl         | 8. Trish McClean     |

**MTDB Education (Legislative Committee)**

1. Chris Riehl
2. Gerardo Martinez
3. Delegate Wayne Hartman

A poll will be conducted to determine the best times for all recently formed committees to meet.

**g. RIANNA WAN, RESEARCH**

Wan reported that OTD and DMOs are currently working to complete a three year agreement with Tourism Economics, a significant source for travel and data forecasts.

- For the first quarter of 2024, Maryland tourism generated a total of \$463.6 million in tax revenue, a 6.4% increase
- For FYTD July-November, Maryland tourism generated a total of \$746.9 million in tax revenue, a 9.2% increase.
- Tourism Q1 & Q2 reports will be created after receipt of the detailed tourism report with the monthly county data

**h. MARCI ROSS, SENIOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

Ross remarked that the OTD Civil Rights Initiative, a series of projects and products inspiring multi-night travel to help convey Maryland as a welcoming destination for all, will run in three phases. OTD will work with the Governor's Office, Maryland Commission of African American History and Culture, DMO's, Heritage Areas, Main Streets, 50-70 sites and programs statewide, and the private sector. All are welcome!

- *Phase I - 2024 Year of Civil Rights (Content Creation)*
- *Phase II - 2025 (Recruitment Into National Park Service African American Civil Rights Network)*
- *Phase III - (Assess and Advance Projects and Products)*

**i. CYNTHIA MILLER, DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

Miller provided an update on National Travel and Tourism Week - 5/19 - 5/25, 2024 Theme - *TRAVEL. Powering the Economy. Connecting America.* There will be a Governor's Proclamation event on May 20, 10:00 am at the Baltimore Convention Center. Stay tuned for more details.

**j. RICH GILBERT- TRAVEL AND TRADE**

Gilbert advised that preparation is underway for two events:

- IPW 2024 Maryland & Capital Region USA May 3-7 in Los Angeles, California
- Global Travel Exchange- September 16-18, 2024 in Charlottesville, VA

**V. ADJOURNMENT AND UPCOMING MEETINGS**

A motion was made and seconded for adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 12:00 pm.

**Friday, June 7, 2024 -Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

*Agenda: Marketing Plan presentation / Chair Nomination Committee forms*

*Location: Meritus Park*

50 W. Baltimore Street, Hagerstown, MD 21740

*Note: Same day and location as MDMO meeting.*

**Friday, September 13, 2024 -Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

Agenda: Regular Update Meeting

**Friday, November 1 , 2024 Time: 10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

Agenda: Annual Meeting with Chair/Executive Committee Elections