Call to Order/Roll Call

MTDB: Donna Abbott, Judy Bixler, Senator Katie Fry-Hester, Carmen Gonzales, Monroe Harrison, Rick Howarth, Michael James, Casey Jenkins, Cara Joyce, Pat Nutter, Dan Spedden MDMO: Lisa Challenger, Amanda Hof, John Fieseler, Kelly Groff, Greg Pizzuto EDC: Terry Hasseltine, Amy Rohrer, Rosanne Souza COMMERCE: Liz Fitzsimmons, Brian Lawrence, Chanda Miller, Marci Ross, Matt Scales, Leslie Troy

Guests: Lou Fields, Becky Bickerton

Welcome – Rick Howarth, President, Six Flags America

Rick welcomed everyone to the board meeting and announced that he will be stepping down as MTDB Chair. Judy Bixler will succeed. Rick mentioned new board members Pat Nutter, Senators Katie Fry-Hester and Bill Ferguson and the re-appointment of Jim Mathias.

Board Member Comments/Highlights (not all inclusive)

Pat Nutter– newly appointed to the board, Pat introduced himself and discussed his former role as Calvert County Commissioner.

Michael James- trying to determine whether to increase room taxes in OC and trying to combat the $15 minimum wage proposal and monitoring the school start date legislation. After a round robin of reports Michael asked about how much input and action was wanted from the board in terms of the strategic plan and advertising initiatives. He added that his personal opinion on the scenic byways videos is that they don’t seem to have the substance to move the needle in terms of tourism dollars and he would like to see something more aggressive in key feeder markets. Time and energy spent vs the amount of business actually being generated. He believes more prioritization should be given on where dollars are spent to generate more bang for the buck.

Dan Spedden-Washington County will be hosting the USA National Cycling Championships for the second year. Next week the Maryland Stadium Authority delivers a site feasibility study to them. Will be presented with three sites from eight and they will choose one. National Parks Service HQ is moving to Williamsport. A Home 2 Hotel will open in April-first new hotel in a long time. Dan asked about SB 628 which he just found out about today and stated it would change what they do.

Much further discussion among board members focused on SB 628 continued with many asking for additional information about the bill and where it originated from. DMOs discussed potential strategies to fight the bill.

Donna Abbott- A lot of hotels coming on board and they’ve already started their ad campaign for the year. Three weeks of radio and digital ads in all of their key feeder markets just started last Monday. Spring campaign will start in April and a new music festival will be coming to Ocean City June 21-23 called the Jellyfish Festival. It will be on the beach and will feature extreme sports. They were just notified that Ocean City was identified as one of the top 25 family beach vacation in America.

Carmen Gonzales- this is Carmen’s first board meeting and first Tourism Day. MD Live spent the past year and a half opening their hotel and spa. The grand opening was this past summer. Would love to
host anyone who would like to tour. Phase two of expansion is happening now. Current event center and meeting space holds 1500 for concerts and 800 for banquet seating and they are doubling the sizes of that. Hopefully opening by the end of the year. The Live brand has a license to open a new property in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Carmen is on those projects which will take more of her attention.

Judy Bixler-Restaurant week will be in early April in Talbot County. The Smithsonian Museum will be having an exhibit in Oxford this summer called Waterways. The county will be having many events leading up to it. Judy thanked Rick for his tenure with the board and offered her thanks for being selected as chair.

Monroe Harrison- National Harbor will see approximately 5,000 visitors attending a Katsucon conference. Following week will be a large cheerleading conference. Then later in the month a Conservative Political Action Committee conference. There is a short-term rental legislation hearing coming up which they are proponents of.

Casey Jenkins- currently with the Radisson Cross Keys as the food & beverage director. Will be turning into a Marriott. Asked if anyone from Visit Baltimore was in the room and announced the exciting news that the CIAA would be coming to Baltimore. Casey thanked Rick for his service. Casey asked for an explanation of where the funds came from for overnight stays so new board members have this information and what were the four grant pools specifically used for and who received awards.

Marci provided some insight on who received grants and Donna Abbott provided insight on how she used the grant monies her office received.

Jim Mathias- will do all he can to be of assistance to the board’s efforts and is happy to continue to serve on the board.

Senator Katie Fry-Hester- Senator Fry-Hester introduced herself as one of the new board members and gave some background and her experience in tourism. She particularly noted her time spent in Zambia.

**Executive Director’s Council members and DMOs**

Amy Rohrer- discussed short-term rental bill, Monroe is also on MH&LA board and is a great resource. Feb 26th and Feb 27th are hearing dates. Bill clarifies that tax should be collected at the point of sale by the various platforms.

Roseanne Souza-Roseanne discussed the Maryland Tourism Education Fund’s initiatives and scholarship programs including one through Visit Annapolis and Maryland State Brewery and MH&LA. They have also created Maryland Smiles program and Hospitality Maryland Style.

Amanda Hof- Merriweather will be expanding with new seating and arts and cultural energy surrounds the Pavilion. A Residence Inn will be opening. Howard County saw a very strong Restaurant Week this year. Running 40 days of wellness in March/April and a new art campaign called Art for All running April-May. There will be an Eat Local event in April and a minority business resource fair. The tourism office has 2.5 open positions currently.

John Fieseler-Frederick County saw a very successful First Saturday, their Restaurant Week is March 4—10.
Chairman’s Report

Six Flags will introduce a new hybrid rollercoaster opening the first part of May and they are hoping for better weather for the season. Monitoring school start and minimum wage legislations.

Executive Update

Liz gave an update on efforts to bring board membership to a more robust force. Cara Joyce, Casey Jenkins, Michael James, Ali von Paris as Vice-Chairs, Judy in dual roles as Transportation Vice-Chair and Chair. Need Secretary/Treasurer position filled. Liz asked for board to present nominees or volunteers. Marci Ross will manage staff reports due to Liz’s meeting conflict. Coraggio leadership training will be working with the office to assist with strategic planning process and leadership training. A stakeholder survey will be sent out soon. OTD will engage in a Coraggio-led staff meeting next week over two days.

Staff updates:

Brian Lawrence- Brian gave an update on two projects- Home for the Holidays, and the Open for It campaign which will launch in the beginning of March for print ads. Brian gave information about when and where campaign will run and presented guests and board members with visuals of ads.

Marci Ross-currently running three grant programs with MTDB funds. Grants will now be run on a Fiscal Year cycle to be more effective. Two days ago the Open for It grants were launched which focuses on cross-cultural marketing. We are working as a team to elevate differentiating themes throughout the state.

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.