



## **MARYLAND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

### **QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES** **UNAPPROVED**

**June 13, 2025 | 10:00 AM- 12:00 PM**

Rod N' Reel Resort | 4165 Mears Ave, Chesapeake Beach, MD 20732

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Todd Burbage, Blue Water  
Ashley Chenault, Charles County Tourism  
Dave Ferraro, Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park  
Del. Wayne Hartman, Maryland House of Delegates  
Melonie Johnson, MGM National Harbor  
Gerardo Martinez, Wild Kid Acres, LLC  
James Mathias, University of MD Eastern Shore  
Chris Riehl, Rent-A-Tour  
Sandy Turner, Cecil County Tourism  
Cassandra Vanhooser, Talbot County Department of  
Economic Development and Tourism  
Leverne McElveen, Leverne McElveen & Associates,  
LLC  
Ben Seidel, Real Hospitality Group

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Robert Arthur, The Ivy Hotel  
Tonya Fitzpatrick, Esq., World Footprints, LLC  
Andrew Frank, Cap Advisory  
Senator Nancy King, Maryland State Senate  
Juan Carlos Linares, Federal Realty Investment  
Trust  
Senator Johnny Mautz, Maryland State Senate  
Al Spence, A.S. Midway Tours  
Shelonda Stokes, Downtown Partnership  
Del. Melissa Wells, Maryland House of Delegates

#### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE/EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Kelly Dudeck, Brewers Association of Maryland  
Janna Howley, Maryland Wineries Association

Amy Rohrer, Maryland Hotel & Lodging  
Association  
Ruth Toomey, Maryland Tourism Coalition

#### **DESTINATION MARYLAND ORGANIZATIONS (DMO)**

Dan Cook, Visit Annapolis and Anne Arundel  
County  
Kristen Goller, Talbot County Department of  
Economic Development and Tourism  
Kelly Groff, Visit Montgomery  
Amanda Hoff, Howard County Tourism &  
Promotion  
Jodi Marschhauser, Harford County Department of  
Economic Development

Dan Spedden, Visit Hagerstown, Washington County  
CVB  
Trish McCean, Visit Baltimore  
Hilary Dailey, Calvert County Department of  
Economic Development  
April Plummer, Queen Anne's County Economic &  
Tourism Development  
Tom Yorke, Baltimore County Tourism and  
Promotion Office of Communications  
Dave Ziedelis, Visit Frederick

#### **COMMERCE STAFF**

Greg Bird, Advertising and Content  
Lisa Hansen Terhune, Destination Development  
Brian Lawrence, Advertising and Content

Marci Ross, Acting Managing Director  
Rianna Wan, Research

## **GUESTS**

Lou Fields, BAATC

Towanda Chambers, Cleveland Horton, Yolonda F. Sonnier, and Glenora C. Hughes – Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

## **II. Welcome and Call Meeting to Order**

Board Chair Ben Seidel called the meeting of Friday, June 13, 2025, to order and noted that the meeting is being recorded. Seidel welcomed everyone and introduced Hilary Dailey with Calvert County Department of Economic Development who in turn welcomed all to Calvert County and the newly remodeled Rod N Reel Resort. Director of Sales, Ms. Lori Kirby-Medlin also welcomed the board to the resort.

Seidel facilitated introductions of the board members and read the Open Meetings Act.

## **II. Maryland Commission on Civil Rights Presentation**

Seidel introduced Ms. Towanda Chambers, Assistant General Counsel, Maryland Commission on Civil Rights. Ms. Chambers thanked Marci and Lisa for the quick response to their meeting request and thanked the board for allowing them the time. It was shared that the commission has received an influx of age discrimination requirements from individuals aged 18 through 20 against hotel and lodging establishments across the state so here to start a discussion with the board regarding this issue. Ms. Chambers introduced Mr. Cleveland Horton, Executive Director, who introduced the commission's mission, which is centered around enforcement, improving and promoting civil rights in Maryland. Additionally, Ms. Yolonda F. Sonnier, Deputy Director and Glenora C. Hughes, General Counsel participated in the presentation. 100 inquiries have been received. The commission seeks to better understand the lodging industry.

Ms. Chambers offered time for questions and conversation. A few captured:

- A hotelier commented that hotels generally will not rent to an underage because of the alcohol that they could order.
- The issue does not seem to be brand specific.
- Asked if the commission is planning on offering education on this topic to reach the industry.
- Asked if the board has policy authority; response was no, MTDB does not.
- Amy Rohrer Hotel Motel Lodging Association indicated they are not an organization that dictates regulations to hotels, nor do they communicate policy information.

Board members asked for Ms. Chambers' contact information -- Towanda Chambers, 410-767-3457, Towanda.chambers@maryland.gov

## **III. Approval of January 9, 2025 Minutes**

Seidel called for a motion to approve the minutes of 01/09/25. Ms. Vanhooser requested an edit to move her from absent to present as she was on the phone and reported on a topic on page 10 in the minutes.

A motion to approve was made and seconded; the motion to approve with amendment was made and roll call for approval was: "For" - Chenault, Ferraro, Johnson, Mathias, Mcelveen, Riehl, Seidel, Turner, Vanhooser; "Abstain" - Burbage, Hartman; (Martinez had not yet arrived)

## **IV. Chair and Acting Managing Director's Updates**

Seidel reminded all the importance of attending so the board has a quorum (which takes 1/3 of members) and members must attend 50% of the meetings in statute (2 of the 4 meetings each year.) He stated the important work of the board in relation to marketing activities and critical funding needs. He reminded all the difference between Maryland's low budget and those of surrounding states/competitors. He stated that all meetings for FY26 have been scheduled and were printed on the agenda. He asked the room if anyone had any major conflicts with these dates and there were no responses.

### Marci Ross, Acting Managing Director, Offices of Tourism & Film

Ms. Ross shared the following slides, which were also presented to the Marketing Committee on May 19:

## More visitors staying multiple nights in accommodations paying state and local hotel taxes.

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2023 Growth	% relative to 2019
<b>Total visitors</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>45.1</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>107.1%</b>
Day	22.3	13.2	19.8	25.9	26.8	3.4%	120.1%
Overnight	19.8	11.5	15.3	17.6	18.3	4.0%	92.4%
<b>Total visitor spending</b>	<b>\$18,590</b>	<b>\$11,619</b>	<b>\$16,391</b>	<b>\$19,402</b>	<b>\$20,507</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>110.3%</b>
Day	\$3,071	\$1,758	\$3,667	\$4,695	\$4,967	5.8%	161.7%
Overnight	\$15,519	\$9,861	\$12,725	\$14,707	\$15,540	5.7%	100.1%
<b>Per visitor spending</b>	<b>\$441</b>	<b>\$470</b>	<b>\$466</b>	<b>\$446</b>	<b>\$455</b>	<b>2.0%</b>	<b>103.0%</b>
Day	\$138	\$133	\$185	\$181	\$185	2.3%	134.6%
Overnight	\$784	\$855	\$830	\$836	\$850	1.6%	108.4%

Source: D.K. Shifflet, Tourism Economics

Ross reminded everyone that at June board meetings, we look at the next fiscal year budget. She stressed that everything we do is with a strategic approach and our goal is to get more visitors staying multiple nights paying accommodation, state and local taxes. Looking at this chart of per visitor spending, it is noted that overnight trips generate about 75% of the total spending (less people but more spending).

### III. FY26 Marketing & Sales Portfolio

#### A. Federal Funds being spent in FY26

1. Economic Development Administration - \$2.4M, no match required
  - a. Canada – Brand USA
  - b. Domestic – DC, Philadelphia, Ohio
  - c. Multiple platforms
  - d. Must be spent by 9/30/25, Final Report due 11/30/25
2. National Scenic Byways Program - \$566K + \$141,500 required match
  - a. Exterior exhibit replacement at I70 Welcome Centers
  - b. Sideling Hill Rest Areas Walking Trail & Accessibility
  - c. Multi-form Video
  - d. Photography
  - e. Writing, design, printing, delivery of New Guidebook & Map

There are two sources of Federal funds in the MTDB budget.

We are currently wrapping up the Economic Development Administration (EDA), which has \$2.4 million remaining and it must be spent by 11/30/25. She commented it is serendipitous to have these funds in a year that the MTDB budget was cut by over \$3 million. The EDA funds will allow us to stay active in target markets – DC, Philadelphia and Ohio and fund Maryland's Canada Brand USA efforts on multiple platforms. These activities pick up when the spring/summer seasonal advertising and it can focus on the Scenic Byways which inspires multiple nights.

The National Scenic Byways multi-year federal grant program will spend \$566K of the grant funds with our required match of \$141,500. Ross reminded all the federal funds - their acquisition and utilization - augment the board funds and allow for doing programs that we may not be able to afford otherwise.

### III. FY26 Marketing & Sales Portfolio

#### 3. FY25 OTD Funds being spent in FY26

1. Meet in Maryland 2.0 - \$300K + \$64K DMO Match = \$364K (pending approval)
2. Maryland International Marketing Partnership replaces CRUSA investment - \$700K + \$140K DMO Match = \$840K (pending approval)
3. Domestic Trade & Consumer Sales = \$100K
4. Welcome Center Sales = \$700K

There are FY25 funds out of the Office of Tourism, which is different from the MTDB funds, proposed to be allocated in FY26 marketing and sales programs.

#### FY26 Marketing & Sales Portfolio

- “Meet in Maryland 2.0” program to enhance our presence in the meetings market as meetings/conferences generate multi-night stays. If approved by the Secretary, the MiM will be led by Visit Montgomery and matched by DMO participants.
- Maryland International Marketing Partnership program with several county DMOs to continue in international marketing for Maryland since Capitol Region USA (CRUSA) is sunseting June 30<sup>th</sup> after 30 years and partners have indicated they want to continue activity. Ross said across the country, most state tourism offices are staying in the market despite what’s happening on an international level. Currently feeder market are UK, Germany and Canada. If approved by the Secretary, the IMP will be led by Visit Annapolis and matched by DMO participants.
- Seidel commented that at the Marketing Committee meeting he was enlightened with the staff and DMOs sharing knowledge of international marketing status and that if we held back now, trying to get back into the market after a year’s long hiatus would be very expensive if not completely prohibitive to reestablish relationships with the travel trade.
- Consumer Sales efforts - Domestic Trade and Consumer Sales \$100K and Welcome Center Sales \$700K

#### FY26 MTDB - State Budget Process

**Q1** – In July, Department of Budget & Management provides Commerce budget and releases funds, OTD requests vendor estimates & develops annual budget projections

**Q2** – Budget projections are reviewed to determine if spending is on target; funds may be “shifted” based on actual costs and programmatic changes

**Q3** – Budget review focuses on how much funding is left; funds may be “shifted” based on actual costs and programmatic changes

**Q4** – Budget is closed out; MTDB can be carried over but will likely be reclaimed; OTD funds can not be carried over and unspent funds are reclaimed

Ross shared an update on how OTD receives its funding and the MTDB funding.

PURPOSE: This document is confidential. It is the proposed FY26 MTDB Budget as approved by the Marketing Committee on 5/19/25. Red numbers are non-discretionary deductions and their amounts cannot be changed. Yellow highlighted cells are fully or partially discretionary. Their amounts can be changed.

BUDGET ITEM:	FY25	FY26	FY26 NOTES:
<b>Total Budget:</b>	<b>\$15,493,600</b>	<b>\$15,493,600</b>	
Dept. of Legislative Services Budget Reduction		(\$3,183,300)	Legislatively mandated budget reduction
Winery and Vineyard Economic Development Grant Program	(\$1,000,000)	(\$1,000,000)	Legislatively mandated; Staffed by OTD
MD Alcohol Promotion Fund Grant Program	(\$1,600,000)	(\$1,600,000)	Legislatively mandated; Staffed by OTD
Motor Vehicle Operation	(\$1,500)	(\$1,500)	Department of Budget & Management (DBM) set this amount; it is unchangeable
<b>Subtotal after Regulatory Deductions:</b>	<b>\$12,892,100</b>	<b>\$9,708,800</b>	
DMO Grant Program	(\$2,500,000)	(\$2,500,000)	Legislatively mandated; Staffed by OTD
<b>Subtotal after DMO Grant Program Regulatory Deduction:</b>	<b>\$10,392,100</b>	<b>\$7,208,800</b>	
Research	(\$315,000)	(\$72,000)	OK Shiftlet research contract; Other contracts being pre-paid with FY25 funds
Fulfillment	(\$90,000)	(\$115,100)	DBM set this amount; unspent amount can be reassigned
Digital Development/Database Services	(\$350,000)	(\$200,000)	Technical support contract for industry database
Marketing Maryland Scenic Byways (Match)	(\$140,000)	(\$141,500)	Leverages \$566,000 in federal funds per the grant agreement
Domestic/International Sales	(\$599,460)		Transfer to OTD budget
PR & Social Media	(\$200,000)	(\$200,000)	\$50K in Contracts, \$150K in Content Creation and SM advertising placement
Special Funds allocated to offset Ad Sales	(\$400,000)	(\$400,000)	DBM set this amount; unspent amount can be reassigned
MTDB Strategic Plan		(\$75,000)	Hiring the facilitator and logistics
Contingency Funds		(\$100,000)	Recommended; discretionary
<b>Subtotal:</b>	<b>(\$2,094,460)</b>	<b>(\$1,303,600)</b>	
<b>Print &amp; Digital Media (Placement &amp; Production)</b>	<b>\$8,297,640</b>	<b>\$5,905,200</b>	NY, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Washington, D.C. and Baltimore
Marriner			Estimates for FY26 costs are due in late July 2026; includes Canadian PR costs
Miles			Estimates for FY26 costs are due in late July 2026
Mojo			Estimates for FY26 costs are due in late July 2026
Video Agency			Estimates for FY26 costs are due in late July 2026

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, the MTDB Marketing Committee met and the FY26 Proposed Budget was reviewed and approved to bring it forward to the full board. Seidel asked for comments from a few who attended the May 19 meeting:

- Ms. McClean said she was extremely pleased with the meeting as it provided a good look at what we are doing and the transparency indicating we need to be prepared for moving ahead and the information is good prep for the year.
- Ms. Groff said it's good to get this so DMOs can align better.
- Ms. Vanhooser said, "forewarned is for-armed" and its important information to have as we go forward to advocate for tourism

Ross then presented the FY26 Proposed Budget which shows FY25 and FY26 comparison and each fiscal year started with the \$15.5m (comes from the Department of Budget of Management.) In FY26, legislative mandated reduction shown - \$3.2m deduction. Ross said red indicates deductions and yellow highlighted items are somewhat discretionary. She stated all else is obligated, such as legislatively mandated and/or contractual obligations in FY26. Ross ran through each line.

Seidel asked for a motion to approve, Reihl made the motion and Hartman seconded the motion. The motion passed. Roll call: "For" - Burbage, Ferraro, Hartman, Johnson, Martinez, Mathias, Mcelveen, Riehl, Seidel; Abstain: Chenault, Vanhooser, Turner

## Strategic Planning Committee New!

### \*Objectives [suggested]

- Establish scope for request for proposals for a facilitator
- Set timeline to endeavor the 2026-2031 strategic plan
- Once published, annual check alignment to board budget and marketing plan

### Members

- New volunteers - Liz Mildenstein / Amanda Hof

### Call to Action

- Schedule meeting - July/August?
- \*establish objectives, deadlines and deliverables

Ross presented the HB1590 mandate that indicates the Board shall draft and implement a 5-year strategic plan for the promotion and development of tourism in the State. She said it is time to endeavor this project in FY26 and that a Strategic Planning Committee needs to be formed. Further, she commented that she presented this at the Maryland Destination Marketing Organizations (MDMO) meeting a week prior and two DMOs have volunteered to be on the committee. At today's meeting, Martinez, Mathias, Mcelveen volunteered.

Discussion ensued regarding scope, planning and facilitation, all of which will be outlined by the committee. Hansen Terhune indicated she is collecting RFP samples and subsequently, Vanhooser offered to share samples used recently. The first meeting will be scheduled in July or August, if possible.

## Marketing Committee Established April 2024

### \*Objectives [suggested]

- Participate in review and approval of budget/marketing plan
- Encourage and participate in tourism activities promoting Maryland's tourism products
- Additional goals and objectives to be determined by committee

### Members

- Rob Arthur / Ashley Chenault / David Ferraro / Tonya Fitzpatrick, Esq. / Kelly Groff / Juan Carlos Linares / Trish McClean / Chris Riehl / Ben Seidel / Sandy Turner /Cassandra Vanhooser

### Call to Action

- Plans to convene in fall 2025 to review campaign report recaps (spring/summer advertising, social media); review plans for holiday & 2026
- Recommended three (3) additional members
- \*establish objectives, deadlines and deliverables

As mentioned earlier, the Marketing Committee met on May 19. Committee members already in place from April 2024. Today, draft objectives and calls to action were presented. In addition, Seidel recommended the committee study the STAR report to analyze hotel impact and determine the case for budget increase. The committee will proceed with meetings in FY26.

## Education – Legislative Committee Established April 2024

### \*Objectives [suggested]

- Educate and advocate for competitive funding for tourism marketing
- review legislation, fees and taxes to assess impact on the economic viability of tourism
- identify new funding sources

### Members

- Current members - Chris Riehl / Gerardo Martinez / Del Wayne Hartman
- New volunteers - Sandy Turner / Dan Spedden / Ruth Toomey

### Call to Action

- Schedule meeting – July/August?
- \*establish objectives, deadlines and deliverable

Ross presented a new committee yet to be activated, which recently received renewed interest due to the FY26 MTDB budget cut. She also shared this committee at the MDMO meeting and new members volunteered. Mr. Riehl suggested the group's first meeting be a brainstorming session.

## Elections – Nominations Committee Established April 2024

### \*Objectives [suggested]

- Review procedures, identify candidates
- Determine when and how nominations will be accepted

### Members

- Current members – Sandy Turner
- New volunteers –

### Call to Action

- Schedule meeting – September
- Propose officers remain in place for FY26 to get cycle on a FY track
- \*establish objectives, deadlines and deliverable

Ross acknowledged work by Ms. Turner last year on the nominations process and her willingness to take this role again. She suggested the need for one additional member on this committee and summarized the proposed concept of having current officers remain in place this fiscal year to get the cycle on track with the fiscal cycle (instead of November.) Hansen Terhune indicated we are confirming the statute and will possibly convene the committee in September, if needed. Vanhooser requested a communication to board members not in attendance asking for their participation on committees.

#### 2026 Destination Maryland Magazine Covers



Finally, Ross shared the 2026 Destination Magazine covers (interior content is the same in both).

#### V. Reports from the Industry

In the interest of time at a minute before noon, no reports from the industry were requested.

#### VI. Adjournment

Seidel requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Delegate Hartman made the motion, and it was seconded by Mr. Ferraro. The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.