

Howard County Tourism Council, Inc.  
Board Meeting Minutes  
March 28, 2017

**Attendance**

| <b>Term Ends EOFY</b> |            | <b>First</b> | <b>Last</b>    | <b>Present</b> |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|
|                       |            | Parker       | Jean           |                |
|                       | ex-officio | Bates        | Gail           |                |
|                       |            | Cochran      | Mary Catherine | Y              |
|                       | ex-officio | Guzzone      | Guy            |                |
|                       |            | Harden       | Al             | Y              |
|                       |            | Hasseltine   | Terry          |                |
|                       | ex-officio | Wilson       | Diane          |                |
|                       |            | Johnson      | Kathy          | Y              |
|                       |            | Richardson   | Donna          | Y              |
|                       |            | Besson       | Karen          | Y              |
| 2019                  | Executive  | Libber       | Mike           |                |
| 2017                  | Executive  | Mangione     | Pete           | Y              |
| 2017                  | Executive  | Mangus       | Becky          |                |
| 2019                  | voting     | Mattis       | Julia          |                |
| 2018                  | voting     | Barnard      | Valerie        | Y              |
| 2017                  | voting     | Kilby        | Ellen          |                |
| 2017                  | voting     | Yetso        | Brock          | Y              |
| 2017                  | voting     | Baker        | Matt           | Y              |
| 2020                  | voting     | Nicklas      | Barbara        | Y              |
| 2017                  | Executive  | Balderson    | David          | Y              |
| 2020                  | Executive  | Chandler     | Chuck          |                |
| 2017                  | Executive  | Clark        | Martha         | Y              |
| 2017                  | voting     | Kelehan      | Kevin          |                |
| 2021                  | voting     | Buscher      | Tori           |                |
| 2017                  | voting     | Winer        | Jay            |                |

7 of 15 voting/Executive needed for quorum.

## Minutes

- 8:43-Meeting called to order
- ED opens meeting
- Board of Directors nominations
  - New members must be nominated and voted onto the board
  - Pete has agreed to be in charge of financials for next year
  - Michael Anderson will be joining the board in July-is here today to get acquainted
  - Ian Kennedy will be joining the board
  - Katie Turner from HCC will be joining the board
  - Terry Hasseltine will switch from non-voting to voting board member
  - Balderson-"Does anyone else have a suggestion for people to add to the board"
- Blossoms of Hope
  - Presentation given by Becky Mangus during Executive meeting
  - Blossoms used to be a branch of Visit Howard County, but separated themselves a few years ago, they have gotten funding from VHC for several years
  - Blossoms has asked the County Executive for \$50,000 this year
  - Executive Committee is proposing \$35,000, with this being the last year of blanket funds
- Business/Marketing Plan
  - Drive new and current demand
    - Create annual business plan-this will happen every Fiscal Year
    - AC-invites questions on any point we bring up
  - Drive new destination brand strategy
    - Brand Howard County with many County agencies/groups
  - Sales
    - Increased awareness for group travel/meetings/sports
    - New marketing materials
    - Update sales tools--website information
    - Add pay per click advertising
    - Barb Nicklas: What are we looking for when we say sales?
      - AC: conventio groups/sports groups
      - SK: Weddings/Family Reunions
      - AC: Target Market--meeting planner
      - AC: Our biggest market now is the sports
      - BN: Do you go after movies in town?
      - SK: we do not go out and actively pursue it?
      - BN: Are we looking for new events?
      - SK/AC: We are looking for new events all the time
      - BN: Do you look throughout the county to find an event a space in Howard County?
      - SK/AC: We provide the leads to all appropriate partners, and leave the booking process to the partner organization
    - Direct Sales
      - Maintain Simpleview--keep us up to date
        - Matt Baker: Can an outsider use Simpleview?
        - SK; Yes, each partner has an extranet access point
        - AC: all of our website information is fed from Simpleview

- Regional sales co-op--investigating partnering with some surrounding counties to pool resources for sales
    - Going after local groups to keep business in Howard County
  - Group services-will move to Visitor Services
    - BN: does this service happen after booking?
    - AC: Yes, get them to spend more money while here
- Marketing
  - AC: We did have a great question from Exec Committee--a hole in our process is going to now link to our major events calendar, so all partners know.
    - MB: how far in advance will we get this information?
    - AC: It will depend on how quickly we get it--we will work to update our calendar as soon as we get the information
    - AH: we're looking at events throughout surrounding destinations too
    - SK: The goal is to be able to predict the flow of people through the County
    - AC: This will tie in with our classes, and Social Media in general to drive business
  - Snapchat filters for girls groups are a good way to get in front of the visitors
  - Awareness of HoCo's assets as a leisure destination from visitors and residents
    - Utilize Longwoods data to know who we need to be marketing to
    - Barb Nicklas: Is this data for us?
    - AC: no, this is an example--we're awaiting results that should come in July
  - Be HoCo's expert on innovative marketing
    - We want to give the board lots to brag about
    - Maximize ROI for marketing buys
    - AC: we're always asking how can we do more for less
    - We are always making sure that the HoCo region is covered in our advertising
    - 75% of our marketing covers this region
  - 9:09 quorum achieved
  - Matt Baker: When does our reach circle become an overnight stay?
    - AC: too soon to say, the data we're using right now is state based, and not HoCo Specific
  - Major Marketing Editorial Calendar
  - Develop content for online properties--we added a blog component for the website, which gives us more freedom to create content
    - This allows us to showcase more partners
  - Continue co-op opportunities for partners
  - Create some video marketing
  - MB: Do you know how many people are accessing mobile/desktop?
    - SK: we do have those numbers, not off the top of her head
  - Create a better user experience for event submittals
  - Continue with a visitor guide
    - Mary Catherine: What time frame is this plan?
    - AC: This is FY18
    - MCC: Do you feel like you have the staff capacity to do all this?
    - AC: we'll make do with what we've got
  - PR firm will be contracted again next year, to get stories in front of writers who want our stories
  - Planning a travel writer/influencer FAM in June
  - Continue to participate in MATPRA & tradeshow-specific to mid atlantic

- Donna Richardson: Who are you working with in PR?
      - SK: Wierick Communications
    - Matt Baker: Are we looking to work with local travel writers too? DC/Baltimore based
      - AC/SK: Yes we are, we're working with as many locals as we can in addition to larger reach
      - AC: This is why it's important for our partners to come to the PR workshop to get guidance and ideas for PR
      - Barb Nicklas: When is this?
      - AC: Make sure you're checking e-news
      - AH: May 11th
  - Crisis Plan
    - We're not fully prepped for another crisis
    - We need to figure out how to best work operationally and ask our partners/well wishers for the help we need
    - MCC: Horizon Foundation is working with organizations to create plans for local groups-maybe coordinating with multiple organizations to create plans
  - Pre/Post marketing research
    - Visitor profile analysis
    - Economic impact study-looks at our various efforts and assigns a \$ amount-are you actually improving ROI?
    - We want to be able to show our value to the community
      - MCC will this data be separated by location, visitor groups, demographics?
      - AC: There will be some specifics, but the deep dive can get very expensive
      - MCC: Can we partner to get specialized information for our regions to work at getting more specific \$ from the state--others may be willing to pay into a large research buy
      - AC: We can talk about a co-op with our partners to contract the research we need
      - Kathy Johnson: EDA is doing an Ag research set now, and we may be able to get access to that data
  - Niche Market
    - New initiative: Korean Food Trail-capitalize on Rt 40 population and restaurants
    - Cross promote our niches
    - Leverage HowardOnTap-make sure our breweries are brand champions
    - Brew tour bus is one goal
    - Utilize Untapp'd
    - AG tourism is one of our focuses
  - Barb Nicklas: Well done, I like to see the breakdown of what's coming--I'm impressed
  - AC: We intend to keep the board updated throughout the year
  - Michael Anderson: Why Korean?
    - AH: population, interest, low hanging fruit, unique
    - AC: we're trying to find what we have to capitalize upon, not necessarily to build anything
  - MCC: I didn't see long term strategic planning
    - AC: this is a few portions of our 3 year strategic plan
    - We will get involved closer to events/attractions as they can fit into the marketing plan
    - MCC: you want to promote an event that is already happening?
  - MCC: How to respond to things that pop up
    - Guinness: we'll be working with them in some capacity

- Trail from Sykesville to Baltimore City
  - AC: There are some things/events that won't fit directly into a category, but there is a MISC category that will cover all other products
  - SK: we are annexing the Guinness brewery for HoCo
  - AC: we want to get ahead of the messaging and correlate Guinness with HoCo
- Product development
  - We'll be utilizing DMAI event impact calculator to estimate economic impact of our special events
  - We'll be replacing our current grant program with Tourism Incubation Investment Program
    - Replacing the program was a plan last year, but the funding pool was low, and the new program will be able to have more to give
    - Got inspiration from Galveston, TX and Greater Williamsburg grant programs
    - Barb Nicklas: How do you do this?
    - AC: The whole July meeting will be a deep dive into the TIIP, looking at what we need, and when we need it.
- Pause for a quick vote on financials
  - Motion to approve YTD financials
  - Second- Donna Richardson
  - Unanimously approved
- Motion to approve meeting minutes
  - Matt Baker
  - Martha Clark
  - Unanimously Approved
- Motion to approve Ballot measures
  - Barb Nicklas
  - Valerie Bernard
  - Unanimously Approved
- Product Development Continued
  - TIIP
    - The board will vote in May on how much to start the TIIP fund with
    - We intend to grow the fund every year by increasing room nights to increase our budget
    - This new program will be presented in May,
    - Team will review applications, and submit to the board for funding approval
    - We will have many more requests than we have funds to give
    - David Balderson: How does the word get out about this?
    - AH: all past recipients will get notice as well as partnership
  - Membership
    - 92% retention rate
    - 40% increase in membership in FY17
    - Brought on 41 new, paid members, 36 new free members (OEC businesses)
    - Barb Nicklas: individual retailers would be of interest? Would you like them as members? Should I be telling you?
    - AC: in the past we've gone very aggressive in getting members, but at the current rate, we can't prioritize selling

- AH: when we're effective in marketing, we get more members--18 new restaurants joined during Winter RWs
- BN: we have many new restaurants coming, and we'll let you know
- AH: the new rate has helped some, as did the flood--we're hoping all renew next year
- AC: is the board content with this \$50 passive model?
- David Balderson: Do you have the staff to go and sell more?
- AC/AH: no, the focus has shifted to the TIIP
- BN: This makes sense as long as the metrics hold up the plan
- AC: We do have the option to change our IRS designation so we wouldn't be required to have members
- We'll be reviewing the visibility of membership and try to make it easier for businesses to find how to join
- We are successful when our members are successful
- Compression Calendar
  - Showing what happens in and around HoCo
  - Lists a year's worth of events that have the potential to drive room nights and mass attendance
  - Hotels Only: will be able to see ADR for previous year to plan and price accordingly
  - This will help all our partners to provide lead time and a general idea of when people are coming
  - Visit Howard County will be able to see when our occupancy rates are down, and we can apply those weekends to our TIIP planning to fill vacancies
  - BM: Room nights are important, but there is lots of activity that is day trip, how do we measure that ROI?
    - AC: Our marketing is focused on those day trippers. Arrivalist is a program we're invested in to show us who has come for the day
    - AC: we do have a large focus on room nights because that's where our funding comes from
- Added benefits:
  - Networking/educational events
  - Farm Expo was a success
  - Upcoming educational series is focused on partner success
  - David Balderson: This is very exciting, and a great thing for our members
- We will be looking for some Alliance Partners to invest with larger dollar amounts
- BN: keeping non tourism partners out of the general benefits is probably a good idea
- MD Sports Study
  - We'll see what the research has to say about us as a sports destination
- Board position in developing our destination with the new hotel product
- Bridget
  - Visitor services working with sales dept service groups
  - Explore viability of welcome center on the go concept:
    - Mobile

- Examples of mobile / digital displays that interface with smartphones
        - Inspirations / aspirations future years
          - Presence at events and festivals
  - Maintains level of service with Visitors services
    - Training
    - Services
    - Maintain hours / staffing
  - Mary C. Question - When and are we doing apps to help get info out
    - Goal is to create long term plan
    - Discussion on apps to effectiveness and mention of popular / national apps
- Budget Priorities
  - Annual Budget will be presented at next board meeting
  - We need to continue to educate the staff--make sure we have the resources to interact with our counterparts across the country
- Board of Directors
  - What do we want the board make up to be?
  - Who do we want to join?
  - What responsibilities will they have?
  - MCC: Add diversity to board development
- Engage the community
  - Brand Howard County
  - Strengthen community perception
  - Strengthen relationships with elected officials
- Make sure staff is active in other organizations in the community
- Bi Quarterly report will continue to be released
- Annual Meeting will be upcoming
  - We then need to decide what it will look like going forward from here
- Keep strong relationships with advocacy groups that we're a part of
- Inform our members of relevant legislation to tourism, provide contacts and updates
- MCC: Lots of value for relationship building in MACCO and MML (Maryland Municipal League)
  - AC: thinks having one on one meetings with our electeds
  - Can we use the board to leverage our legislators better than the staff?
  - MCC: Legislative luncheon? Make sure you have a plan, especially when we need something
  - AC: We do need to work with our partners to create a more long term goal for our legislative agenda, not be reactionary
  - MCC/Donna Richardson: This is a good idea to have a better plan
  - AC: Michael, do you see the reaction more than planning
  - MA: MHLA will usually defer to the organization that will benefit most from specific piece of legislation
  - DR: Start talking in September to make sure that they're thinking about our issues before session
  - MCC: we have to find out what is controversial for our organization to back, do we need to be cautious on our positions
  - BN: Totally agrees with the caution, they've had some push back on issues that they've brought up

- AC: This seems perfect for a committee to sort out and have more Board support/direction
- Brock Yetso: Did we go out and speak about any legislation this year?
- AC: Some, but we need to get ahead of it more
- MB: We need to work with Chamber, EDA for more bargaining power in Annapolis
- AC: This is why we'd want to get our statewide groups involved more to make sure that the right legislators are being spoken to
- MB: Key effort is educating the legislators on how their bills will affect the businesses
- MCC: Project Open Space is the group that can lobby on PHG behalf, do we have an organization like this?
- AC: MTC is supposed to be our statewide voice on issues relating to Tourism
- 10:25 meeting ended