



## MARYLAND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BOARD

### QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

Approved on 01.09.26

**November 17, 2025 | 9:00 AM- 11:00 PM**

The Hotel at The University of Maryland, 7777 Baltimore Ave, College Park, MD

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Ashley Chenault, Charles County Tourism  
Dave Ferraro, Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park  
Tonya Fitzpatrick, Esq., World Footprints, LLC  
Andrew Frank, Cap Advisory  
Del. Wayne Hartman, Maryland House of Delegates  
Juan Carlos Linares, Federal Realty Investment Trust  
Gerardo Martinez, Wild Kid Acres, LLC  
Leverne McElveen, Levern McElveen & Associates, LLC  
Al Spence, A.S. Midway Tours  
Shelonda Stokes, Downtown Partnership  
Sandy Turner, Cecil County Tourism  
Cassandra Vanhooser, Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism  
Del. Melissa Wells, Maryland House of Delegates

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT**

Robert Arthur, The Ivy Hotel  
Todd Burbage, Blue Water  
Melonie Johnson, MGM National Harbor  
Senator Nancy King, Maryland State Senate

James Mathias, University of MD Eastern Shore  
Senator Johnny Mautz, Maryland State Senate  
Chris Riehl, Rent-A-Tour  
Ben Seidel, Real Hospitality Group

#### **INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS PRESENT**

Kelly Dudeck, Cultivate & Craft  
Amy Rohrer, Maryland Hotel and Lodging Association  
Graham Whaples, Maryland Sports Commission

Mary Pressley, Maryland Motorcoach Association  
Jackie Saunders, Maryland Tourism Coalition

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

Hilary Dailey, Calvert County Economic Development  
Mia Bloom, Visit Baltimore  
Shayln Boulden, Kent County Office of Tourism Development  
Kristen Goller, Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism  
Leslie Graves, Experience Prince Georges

Trish McClean, Visit Baltimore  
Liz Mildenstein, Visit St. Mary's  
Adam Riggan, Somerset County Tourism  
Dan Spedden, Visit Hagerstown, Washington County CVB  
Clint Sterling, Somerset County Tourism  
Dave Ziedelis, Visit Frederick

## **GUESTS**

Mac Campbell, Baltimore Convention Center  
Ian Fitzpatrick, Maryland Secretary of the State/Service of Process  
Sharon Harcum, Visit Annapolis and Anne Arundel County CVB  
Clemis Kaikis, Comptroller of Maryland

Rob Levine, Marriner Communications  
Matt Libber, Maryland Soccerplex  
Heather Skipper, U.S. Naval Academy  
Mallory Smith, Trip Advisor  
Carrie Tomlinson, Miles Partnership  
Ann Torregrossa, Marriner Communications

## **COMMERCE OTD STAFF PRESENT**

Peter Ayeni, Asst Manager, Tourism Development  
Brandon Chan, Visitor and Business Support Services/Mason Dixon Welcome Center  
Rich Gilbert, Travel Trade  
Lisa Hansen Terhune, Destination Development  
Anne Kyle, Product Development

Brian Lawrence, Advertising and Content  
Cindy Miller, Strategic Partnerships  
Marci Ross, Acting Managing Director, Office of Tourism and Film; Acting Executive Director, MTDB  
Connie Spindler, Public Relations  
Rianna Wan, Research

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

Vice Chair/Attractions Dave Ferraro called the meeting of Monday, November 17, 2025, to order and noted that the meeting is being recorded. Ferraro greeted every one and introduced Leslie Graves Executive Director who welcomed all to Prince Georges County and shared a few highlights such as the county being home to the Commanders, the University of Maryland, and 850K of meeting space along with 12K hotel rooms.

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

### **II. Approval of September 19, 2025 Minutes**

Vice Chair Ferraro asked if all had read the September 19, 2025, board meeting minutes and subsequently, called for a motion to accept the minutes. Turner made the motion to approve, and it was seconded by Vanhooser; Ferraro asked for discussion and hearing none, asked for a roll call for all in favor: "For" – Chenault, Ferraro, Fitzpatrick, Frank, Hartman, Linares, Martinez, McElveen, Stokes, Turner, Vanhooser. all were in favor with no abstentions, so the motion carried. Acting Executive Director, Marci Ross reminded all that the meeting was being recorded in order to capture votes, decisions made and discussion.

Note, Al Spence and Delegate Melissa Wells arrived after the vote.

### **III. Chair Updates**

Vice Chair Ferraro shared news that in FY 2025, tourism tax collection had a 4.8% increase. According to Senate Bill 458 approved in the 2008 session, once the tourism tax collected exceeds a 3% increase, we qualify for consideration of one half the amount that is greater than the 3% growth. This results in a \$5.8 million qualifying tourism tax increment.

## JUSTIFICATION FOR REQUEST

Tourism in Maryland generated nearly \$2.3 million Sales and Use Tax (SUT) revenue specifically attributed to tourism activity in total, marking a 3 percent increase over FY 2024.

The total adjusted\* tourism tax collections were \$660.1 million, as these revenues increased 4.8% for fiscal year 2025, above the 3% growth threshold, one half of the amount that is greater than 3% growth results in a tourism tax increment of \$5,815,223 (\$5.8 million).

Growth at	3%	\$648,455,550	← FY24 (\$629.6M) +3% increase
Over/ difference from actual	1.8%	\$11,630,446	Amount (\$) (1.8% over 3% increase)
Adjusted Revenue Total	\$660,085,997	\$660,085,997	← FY25
Tourism Tax Increment	50% of the (\$) from the 1.8% increase	\$5,815,223.18	\$5.8 million

\* As required by Senate bill 458 Chapter 181 of the 2008 session of the general assembly, the Comptroller's Office uses the total of adjusted tax codes to report the qualifying tourism tax increment for each fiscal year. This analysis relies on the sales tax industry codes reflecting revenue generated from tourism and tourism-related activities, as determined jointly by the Comptroller's Office and the Department of Business and Economic Development.

(2) The qualifying tourism tax increment is:

- (i) if the tourism tax increment exceeds 3% of the tourism tax revenues collected in the fiscal year 3 years before the current fiscal year, one-half of the amount of the tourism tax increment above the 3% increase; or
- (ii) if the tourism tax increment does not exceed 3%, zero.

**Request to the Bureau of Revenue Estimates division for the qualifying letter has been sent by Acting Managing Director, Marci Ross on Oct 28, 2025.**



Ferraro then turned it over to Rianna Wan who explained in more detail the justification for the request to the Bureau of Estimates.

Vice Chair Ferraro then asked for the Board Committees' reports.

### MARKETING COMMITTEE

- **Background and Objectives**
  - To help guide the direction given to our advertising agency
  - To help guide marketing budget allocation decisions
  - To work to help ensure that our marketing keeps Maryland competitive in the Tourism sector with other states
- **Activities and Next Steps**
  - August - convened in-person
  - October - asked for feedback from members on questions relating to the agency's planning brief for Spring/Summer '26
  - Early December – Virtual meeting planned for Dec. to appoint permanent chair or co-chairs and discuss Spring/Summer '26 advertising campaign

On behalf of the Marketing Committee, Interim Chair Cassandra Vanhooser provided an overview of the activities and next steps including a plan to meet virtually in early December to discuss 2026 plans and to appoint a permanent chairperson/co-chair.

## LEGISLATIVE/EDUCATION COMMITTEE

- **Activities**

- Met and discussed tax increment, changes to MTDB statute and legislative messaging with MDMO and OTD

- **Next Steps**

- Schedule December full committee meeting
- Develop final messaging
- Discuss legislative strategy at 1/9/26 board meeting

Vanhooser then introduced Matt Libber, Co-Chair of the Legislative/Education Committee and a legislative chair for the Maryland Tourism Coalition. Libber noted that while the board budget is eligible for the tax increment money, the 2008 bill states the funding "may" be given, not "shall." Libber indicated the plans to meet in December to discuss steps related to messaging and future legislative strategies for the board.

## ELECTIONS/NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

- **Objectives**

- Review procedures, identify candidates
- Determine when and how nominations will be accepted
- Review current bylaws and make recommendations for changes for FY 27

- **Action Steps**

- Committee members review Bylaws and discuss proposed changes with MTDB at March, 2026 meeting
- Determine how new members will be identified and nomination process
- Establish objectives, deadlines and deliverables for remainder of FY 26 and all FY27
- Hold elections in June 2026

- **Call to Action**

- Nominate new committee member

Libber passed the floor to Sandy Turner who reported about the Election/Nominations Committee. As co-chair with Dave Ferraro, Turner shared that they recently met with Cindy Miller, staff coordinator from OTD to discuss activating the committee with objectives and next steps.

Further, she mentioned the need for a third board member to serve on this committee as Bylaws require three board members on each committee. A request to the board will come via email after the meeting.

## Strategic Planning Committee

Chair - Andy Frank

Co-Chairs - Liz Mildenstein and Kristen Goller

OTD Support Staff - Rianna Wan

### STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

- **Background**

- The MTDB Statute states: The Board shall draft and implement a 5-year strategic plan for the promotion and development of tourism in the State
- The plan is the framework for each annual work plan that falls with five-year timeframe
- The plan will be developed based on the duties, roles and responsibilities described in statute

- **Objective**

- Deliver a plan for board approval during the 6/12/26

Turner passed the floor to Andy Frank, Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee. Andy reiterated that the statute requires a plan every five years, and it is time to start the work. Per an email from Rianna Wan, the committee is reviewing a drafted scope of work, which will be finalized before seeking proposals. Wan shared the committee plans to meet virtually in December.



#### IV. Acting Executive Director's Update

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

### Maryland Visitor Volumes, by segment

Millions of visitors, \$ millions, and spend per visitor

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2024 Growth
<b>Total visitors</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>45.1</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
Day	13.2	19.8	25.9	26.8	27.5	2.4%
Overnight	11.5	15.3	17.6	18.3	18.3	0.1%
<b>Total visitor spending</b>	<b>\$11,619</b>	<b>\$16,391</b>	<b>\$19,402</b>	<b>\$20,507</b>	<b>\$21,165</b>	<b>3.2%</b>
Day	\$1,758	\$3,667	\$4,695	\$4,967	\$5,132	3.3%
Overnight	\$9,861	\$12,725	\$14,707	\$15,540	\$16,034	3.2%
<b>Per visitor spending</b>	<b>\$470</b>	<b>\$466</b>	<b>\$446</b>	<b>\$455</b>	<b>\$463</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
Day	\$133	\$185	\$181	\$185	\$187	0.9%
Overnight	\$855	\$830	\$836	\$850	\$876	3.1%

Source: Tourism Economics

Marci Ross, Acting Executive Director of the Maryland Tourism Development Board and Acting Managing Director of the Offices of Tourism and Film, reminded all that the board's focus is on implementing the statute to bring more multi-night visitors to the state, as they significantly impact tourism tax codes.

## FY25 Annual Report

4-210. Additional Duties; Reporting Requirement.

The Board shall:

publish and submit to the Maryland Economic Development Commission and the Secretary an **annual report** and other material that the Board considers appropriate.

 [Industry.VisitMaryland.org](https://Industry.VisitMaryland.org)



Ross indicated the board's FY25 Tourism Development Board Annual Report, a statutory requirement, is in the board folder and is available in print and for download on the Maryland Office of Tourism's industry website.

## DMO Grant Program Update

**FY25:** Final close out is in process.

**FY26:**

11/1/25: Vendors begin reach-out to DMOs for sales of the spring opportunities

11/17/25: Six application kits are fully executed, 19 application kits are in the Commerce signature process.

11/20/25: Reimbursement Request and Qualifying Expenditure Report forms distributed.

12/31/25 End of the July-December spending period

01/31/26 Due date – Last day to submit reimbursement requests for July - Dec 2025

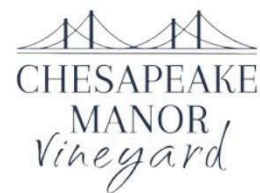


The DMO Grant Program: FY25 is nearly closed out, Ross reported. For FY26 six (6) application kits are fully executed, and 19 are in process at Commerce. Further, the FY26 advertising cooperative opportunity plan put together by Brian Lawrence and Marriner Communications was circulated recently to the DMOs' consideration.

## Winery & Vineyard Economic Development Grants - \$1M

- Provides financial assistance to individuals and corporations to establish a new winery or vineyard - or -
- Complete capital improvements at an existing winery or vineyard
- Grantee is reimbursed up to 25% of "qualified capital expenses"
- Grant application period ends 1/16/26
- More information at

<https://programs.commerce.maryland.gov/winecreditwelcome>



**FY25 Grantee - \$64,000**



Ross shared that the Winery and Vineyard Economic Development Grant Program is currently open until January 16, 2026. The \$1 million dollar line item provides financial assistance for capital improvements at wineries or vineyards.

## Maryland Alcohol Manufacturing Promotion Fund Grants - @\$1.6M

- Invest in the creation and expansion of state breweries, distilleries, and/or wineries
- Entice new visitors to state breweries, distilleries, and/or wineries
- Create incentives for special events to promote state breweries, distilleries, and/or wineries
- Educate the public about alcohol manufacturing in the state, especially the history of the industry
- Support the expansion of minority ownership and participation in the operation of state breweries, distilleries, and wineries



**FY25 Grantee - \$226,000**

## Maryland Alcohol Manufacturing Promotion Fund Grants

- Grantee must be a:
  - Nonprofit organization under 501(c)(3) or (6) of the Internal Revenue Code - or -
  - State or local government unit
- Grant application period ends 11/19/25
- Virtual Training Session held on 11/5/25
- More information at <https://commerce.maryland.gov/fund/maryland-alcohol-manufacturing-promotion-fund>

Ross also shared that the Maryland Alcohol Manufacturing Promotion Fund grant program has a FY26 budget of \$1.6 million and is accepting applications until November 19th. This grant allows government agencies and nonprofits to seek funding for events, marketing, and research.

Ross then asked Rianna Wan to give an update on research.



## Research Update

Rianna Wan

### The Maryland Online Data Privacy Act (MODPA)

#### What is the Maryland Online Data Privacy Act (MODPA)?

The Maryland Online Data Privacy Act (MODPA) is a new state law (Effective on October 1, 2025 ) that establishes strict guidelines for how companies collect, use, and share personal data from Maryland residents. The law specifically limits the collection of sensitive information, including precise location data. **MODPA is Maryland's first truly comprehensive consumer data privacy law.**

#### Maryland Online Data Privacy Act (MODPA) – 2024 Overview

**Effective Date:** October 1, 2025

**Enforcement by Maryland AG:** April 1, 2026

**Scope:** Applies broadly to businesses handling Maryland residents' personal data, with limited exemptions.

#### Key Requirements

##### Data Minimization

- Collect only data that is "reasonably necessary and proportionate" for the requested product or service.
- Applies even with consumer consent; undefined by statute.

##### Sensitive Data

- Categories: biometric, genetic, precise geolocation (<1,750 ft), consumer health, child data, sexual orientation, gender identity, race/ethnicity, religion, citizenship, immigration.
- Sale prohibited;** collection allowed only if strictly necessary or with consent.

**and more** (see [here](#) for detailed MODPA's general requirements.)

### Impact to Symphony Dashboard for Maryland Office of Tourism

#### How does this impact us?

MODPA directly affects the geolocation data used within our tourism dashboards.

This data relies on precise device-level location information to show where visitors travel within Maryland and identify the metropolitan statistical area (MSA) where each device originates.

Under MODPA, tracking precise location data (defined as within 1,750 feet) for Maryland residents is prohibited. As a result, all geolocation data providers have suspended the delivery of all Maryland geolocation data to ensure compliance.

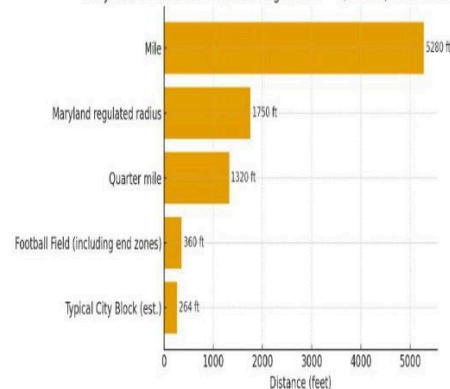
This change will affect the timeliness and granularity of data available in our geolocation dashboards in the Symphony Dashboard that Tourism Economics created for MOTD that we use for some of our research projects and reports, and the dashboard and summary that we share on the industry site.

#### What is our solution?

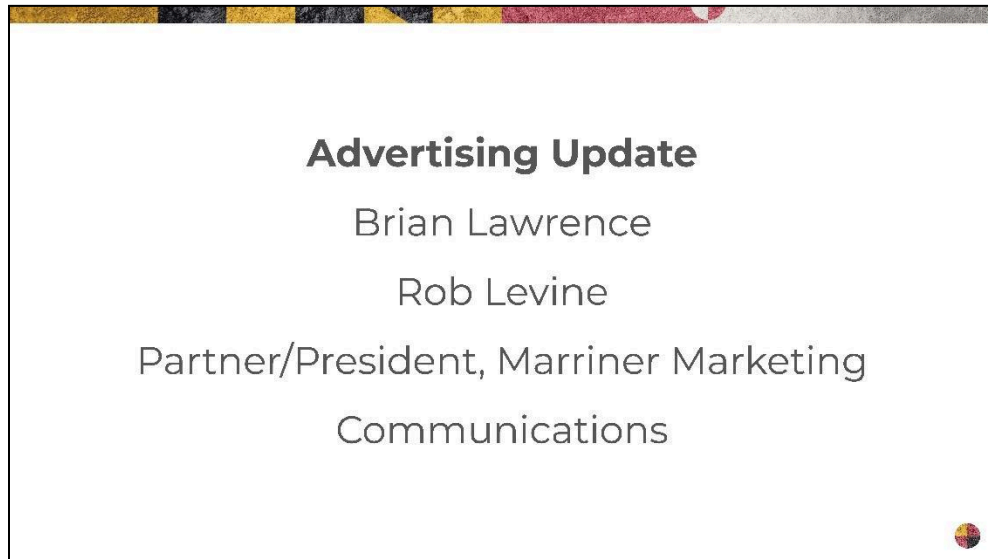
Tourism Economics and OTD are actively working with our data vendors to implement a compliant alternative using imprecise location data. This approach will still enable us to monitor visitation trends across Maryland, though with reduced spatial detail.

All historical geolocation data will remain accessible, but new data will not be added until the imprecise solution is finalized and integrated.

Maryland Geolocation Distance Regulation – 1,750 ft (contextual comparison)



Wan shared changes impacting research due to a new law that goes into effect April 1, 2026 that prioritizes consumer privacy, which will affect the use of geolocation data for tourism marketing decisions. Wan said OTD, along with its contractors, are working through the implications. She plans to follow-up with updates and link sources about the law and its impact on collecting data for tourism research.



Brian Lawrence introduced Rob Levine, Marriner Communications, who provided the results for the spring/summer 2025 advertising campaign. The 2025 campaign faced difficulties due to a flat budget, cautious American consumers, softened domestic travel, and a drop in Canadian leisure travel. Marriner adapted by starting campaigns earlier, tailoring messaging to stem overnight travel export, targeting higher-income, niche such as Hispanic market and celebration travelers, and expanding the New York market. The Return on Ad Spend (ROAS) was reported as \$55 for every dollar invested, a 38% increase from the previous year.

For 2026, the strategy will continue to drive efficiency and focus on revenue generation in New York, Philadelphia, and home markets.

Ross reminded all that some of the board's FY26 budget cut was offset by \$2.3 million in federal EDA grant money designated in advertising scenic byway driving tours. Those grant funds will not be available in FY27.

## **BALTIMORE CONVENTION & TOURISM REDEVELOPMENT AND OPERATING AUTHORITY TASK FORCE**

- \$600K OTD investment for two studies
- Legislation passed last session
- Subcommittees are meeting
- Full TF will meet on 12/15
- TF Report delivered in Dec



photo credit: Visit Baltimore

Ross introduced the next topic about the Baltimore Convention and Tourism Redevelopment and Operating Authority Task Force, in which she reminded all that the Maryland Tourism Development Board provided a \$350,000 grant to support the task force studying the Baltimore Convention Center and marketing in Baltimore. Ross then introduced Mac Campbell, Executive Director of the Baltimore Convention Center.

## **Baltimore Convention and Tourism Redevelopment and Operating Authority Task Force**

Mac Campbell

Executive Director, Baltimore Convention Center

Campbell provided an update about the task force sharing that the final report is due to the General Assembly in December, following the full meeting on December 15th.

Campbell gave a deep overview of the center, a Baltimore city agency, and its funding model compared to other cities/convention centers around the country. After reviewing statistics about budget shortfalls and lack of upkeep/maintenance funds, Campbell said he is advocating for a governance change because, as a city agency, the BCC lacks the agility and ancillary income of successful authority models. He emphasized the need for a bonding strategy, noting the Stadium Authority as a current deficit-offset partner.

Campbell highlighted the center's community focus, including local art, cultural refresh, sustainability, MBE partnerships, and opportunities for local food procurement. He noted Visit Baltimore is also "woefully underfunded," receiving only 40% of the Baltimore City hotel tax. He concluded by reiterating the BCC's role as a key statewide economic driver and that the December report will launch legislative efforts.

## **V. Other Business**

Other business included reminders to save these dates:

- Friday, January 9, 2026 for the next board meeting at a location to be determined.
- Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup> for Tourism Day in Annapolis. Details will be shared in the coming weeks.

In conclusion, Ross let board members know that the OTD Staff update report was in the board packet and includes a checklist used by the office to increase engagement in the field.

## **VI. Board Member Updates**

Sandy Turner informed the group that she is the tourism board representative on the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority. She noted that her term ends in September 2026 and MHAA requests a decision by the end of the year if another board member is interested in serving in this capacity. Turner said she would discuss the position further with any interested board members; if no one else is interested, Sandy is willing to serve another term on the MHAA board.

Tonya Fitzpatrick mentioned that she is the chair of the American Travelers chapter and editor for World Footprints, which is looking for a new meeting destination next year and that they are pushing for Maryland. The meetings bring in up to 100 people.. She will share the meeting specs with Rich Gilbert who will work with her to identify potential sites.

Shelanda Stokes drew attention to two significant 2026 events. The CIAA event is scheduled for the last week of February in Baltimore City and she noted its substantial annual economic impact, which exceeds \$30 million for the state. Additionally, Preakness will take place in May and this year, it will be held in Laurel, a change from previous years when it was held in Baltimore City. First Lady Moore aims to expand the Preakness activities from two days to a week to amplify its economic benefits across the state.

## **VII. Reports from the Industry**

Representing the Brewers Association of Maryland, Kelly Dudeck from Cultivate and Craft encouraged board members to engage in its new statewide campaign, "Make Mine a Maryland."

## **VIII. Adjournment**

Ferraro requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Stokes made the motion. The motion to adjourn was seconded by Fitzpatrick and all were in agreement. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.