BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES
June 9, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
VIRTUAL ONLY: meet.google.com/ftz-gpvi-hty

MEMBERS VIRTUAL
Leon Bailey, Chair
Secretary Harry Coker
Ericka Covington
Brett Foelber
Jeff Nussbaum
Shelonda Stokes
Micha Weinblatt
Laura Van Eperen, Chair
Sila Alegret-Bartel
Linda Thornton Thomas
Ari Hicks
Dionne Joyner-Weems

MEMBERS ABSENT
Ali von Paris
Laura Van Eperen
Shannon Prudhomme

MMP STAFF
Sherri Diehl, Executive Director
Robert Scherr, Partnership Manager

COMMERCE STAFF
Saundra Jones
Carolyn Hammock
Maggie Whitescarver

I. ROLL CALL

Sherri Diehl conducted a roll call to confirm attendance, noting that some members would arrive late or leave early. They successfully confirmed a quorum with nine members present.

II. WELCOME/OPENING REMARKS

Leon Bailey opened the Maryland Marketing Partnership Board meeting on June 9, 2026. They thanked the Department of Commerce and board members for their successful collaboration on a recent event held near the University of Maryland. Noting the positive reception from business owners.

The board voted to approve the meeting minutes, with Ericka Covington providing the motion and Sila Bartell seconding. The motion passed unanimously.

III. COMMERCE UPDATE (Secretary Harry Coker)

Secretary Harry Coker reported on the current economic environment. They emphasized a "no-fail" mission to maintain job growth and attract capital despite a challenging environment. Secretary Coker announced the groundbreaking of the Sparrows Point Container Terminal, a $1.2 billion project involving $88 million in state and county investment. They noted that once operational in 2030, the terminal is projected to increase the Port of Baltimore's container capacity by 70% and create 8,000 jobs, including 2,000 permanent union positions. He also announced the third round of the Build Our Future grant program and noted that the program provides up to $2 million per company to support innovative projects in sectors such as life sciences, medtech, clean energy, and cyber security training.

As it relates to legislative outcomes and energy initiatives, Secretary Coker summarized recent legislative successes, including the FY27 budget, which was signed with no new taxes or fees, and the maintenance of a 8% rainy day fund. They also highlighted the creation of an energy sub-cabinet, led by MEA Director Kelly Speaks-Backman, to address energy accessibility and affordability and proposal for senior citizens. Micha Weinblatt proposed the creation of tax-free zones for senior citizens to encourage retention and attract business. Secretary Coker expressed interest in the idea and stated they would coordinate with the Secretary of Aging to explore it as part of a "longevity economy" initiative.

Dionne Joyner-Weems raised concerns regarding the film industry, citing feedback that Maryland's tax credits are uncompetitive. Secretary Coker acknowledged the issue, noting previous unsuccessful legislative attempts to increase credit and mentioning that they had hired a new director for the film office. Leon Bailey added that the opening of Revolutionary Studies and potential studio developments in Prince George's County make this a priority. In closing,

Secretary Coker noted an upcoming BIO International Conference in San Diego. They also discussed exploring a return to using Tik Tok for tourism and business attraction, noting that a waiver regarding state phone usage and Tik Tok has been submitted.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT UPDATE

Ericka Covington provides a financial update. They are as follows:

On the revenue side:

- MMP Partner contributions paid in FY2026 *(to-date)*: $230,000
    - $293,332 has been committed in FY2026
    - $163,332 still to be collected

On the expense side (July2025-May2026) ***(to date)***:

- Total expenses for this FY26 to date: $1,846,857
    - Fall Media - $1,405,943
    - Website - $19,506
    - Contractors, Creative, PR, Select USA, etc. - $345,506

Upcoming Expenses thru FY2026

- Total projected FY26 expenses $2,162,387
    - Remaining expenses include: Spring media buy, fundraising contractor, website, PR firm, photos/video/music, receptions, and printing)

Projected Balance at the end of FY26: $3.3M (includes revenue from partners to be collected through FY26.

The board moved to approve the budget, with Shelonda Stokes providing the motion and Brett Foelber seconded.

V. MARKETING UPDATES

Aisha Booker provided an update on SelectUSA event, noting that 83 companies registered and approximately 30-35 attended the spin-off events. The program included tours of the Discovery District at the University of Maryland and pitches from various incubator partners. She also reported that 15 companies are potential candidates for the Global Gateway soft landing program. They highlighted that the Governor conducted seven meetings with international delegations, including signing an MOU with Jordan via TEDCO and a deal with Hitachi.

Leon Bailey suggested that the team capture more video and photo content at future events, such as the Select USA spin-off, to create “sizzle reels” for marketing purposes. Aisha Booker agreed with the suggestion and committed to gathering photos.

Secretary Coker and Sherri Diehl discussed the upcoming Quantum World Congress in September. Sherri Diehl confirmed that they are working with the University oof Maryland on a shared booth and a strategic PR plan. Shelonda Stokes asked about the scheduling process for future Select USA tours. Aisha Booker explained that planning begins in the summer and involves broad collaboration across the ecosystem. Secretary Coker emphasized the need for earlier engagement with partners to ensure better coordination.

Carolyn Hammock announced that the team is working on an integrated marketing RFP to replace advertising and PR contracts that expire at the end of the year. The intend to release the RFP in July. Carolyn also reported that the team is evolving Maryland's brand framework and positioning. A special meeting will be scheduled in June to discuss the new vision and the resulting creative campaign. She also introduced the FY27 media plan, which includes a $1.5 million budget, a new focus on in-state audiences and a 30-second spot. Additionally, they highlighted the launch of the Maryland Business Growth Guide, a centralized resource for financial incentive programs.

Dionne Joyner-Weems praised the new positioning strategy. Secretary Coker echoed the need to align messaging with the state's actual economic wins. The meeting concluded after confirming the media plan budget.

VI. FY 27 MEDIA PLAN UPDATE (Planit)

Melanie Megale outlined the media plan for the period of July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027, maintaining the primary objectives of driving consideration of Maryland for business attraction, increasing awareness and consideration among the workforce, and reinforcing Maryland as a trusted resource for business retention. The strategy focuses on fall (September to November) and spring (March to May) flights, with time on site remaining the primary key performance indicator.

Melanie Megale presented the budget breakdown, noting that business attraction receives 61% of the total budget, while business retention and talent attractions each receive 19%, with 1% allocated to ad serving fees. The team is currently analyzing market and audience targeting, with specific markets to be finalized during the summer prior to the fall launch. The team is shifting audience priorities, increasing the budget for business retention to better align with business decision-makers and reducing the budget for workforce investment compared to the previous year. Additionally, the plan involves expanding efforts on LinkedIn and introducing a new business-to-business native advertising partner to leverage contextual content placement. The team will continue purchasing print ads in Site Selection and Area Development magazines to reach site selectors. For conference support, the team is moving beyond digital geofencing to include experimental activations, both in-booth and off-site, designed to differentiate Maryland from other states.

Sherri Diehl -COMMERCE- committed to evaluating AfroTech for potential advertising opportunities following a suggestion by Shelonda Stokes. The team also confirmed they will continue advertising at BWI Airport, leveraging new digital placements to rotate success stories for business attraction and retention.

VII. PUBLIC RELATIONS UPDATE

Nick Jones introduced Rosina Ferrante as a new colleague working with the Maryland Marketing Partnership and the Department of Commerce. The team provided a recap of second-quarter PR efforts, noting successful media pickups and the distribution of the May news roundup, and encouraged board members to share news updates. The team is increasingly collaborating with the Governor's team to identify opportunities to feature the Governor as a central figure in Maryland's economic development story, noting that such appearances historically attract media attention. Outreach efforts are being coordinated for upcoming events, including the RSA conference in San Francisco, which resulted in an upcoming feature in *The Wall Street Journal* regarding the cyber industry. The team is also preparing for Bio International in San Diego and the Quantum World Congress, where they plan to promote Maryland’s lighthouse sectors.

Nick Jones outlined the strategy to coordinate interviews with media at conferences and develop an op-ed to explain quantum technology in layman's terms. Ericka Covington and Shelonda Stokes emphasized the importance of this approach to educate broader audiences and connect quantum initiatives with various community ecosystems. Ericka Covington suggested that the team should develop content to address public misperceptions regarding the environmental impact and energy usage of quantum computing. Nick Jones agreed, stating that addressing these concerns is essential to establishing Maryland as a subject matter expert and the premier home for the industry.

VIII. NEW BOARD MEMBER INTRODUCTION

Leon Bailey introduced new board member Ari Hicks, who specializes in artificial intelligence and data information and works with the National Institutes of Health and Unissant. Hicks expressed interest in responsible implementation of artificial intelligence and invited board members to connect via LinkedIn.

IX. FY27 BUDGET PROJECTION

Sherri Diehl -COMMERCE- presented the budget for the next fiscal year. Shelonda Stokes moved to approve the budget categories, which was seconded by Ericka Covington and approved by the board.