MARYLAND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Minutes Approved on 11.18.2026

MEETING

Friday, October 2, 2026 | Via Zoom Webinar
10:01 a.m. to 11:08 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Robert Arthur, The Ivy Hotel
Todd Burbage, Blue Water
Tonya Fitzpatrick, Esq., World Footprints, LLC
Andrew Frank, Capex Advisory
Del. Wayne Hartman, Maryland House of Delegates
Gerardo Martinez, Wild Kid Acres, LLC
James Mathias, Jr.
Leverne McElveen, Levern McElveen & Associates, LLC
Chris Riehl, Rent-A-Tour
Ben Seidel, Real Hospitality Group
Al Spence, A.S. Midway Tours
Shelonda Stokes, Downtown Partnership
Sandy Turner, Cecil County Tourism

MEMBERS ABSENT

Senator Nancy King, Maryland State Senate
Senator Johnny Mautz, Maryland State Senate
Del. Melissa Wells, Maryland House of Delegates

STAFF

Cassandra Vanhooser, Managing Director
Rich Gilbert, Travel Trade Sales Manager
Lisa Hansen Terhune, Destination Development Manager
Tegan Jones, Marketing Assistant
Brian Lawrence, Assistant Director, Advertising and Communications
Marci Ross, Senior Assistant Director, Tourism Development
Gerard Vetter, Assistant Attorney General, Commerce
Riana Wan, Research Manager

Maryland Tourism Development Board

Draft Minutes of the FY27 Q2 Business Meeting
Friday, October 2, 2026 | Via Zoom Teleconferencing
10:01 a.m. to 11:08 a.m.

I Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Ben Seidel called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m., reviewed webinar procedures, and welcomed board members, staff, industry partners, and guests. He welcomed Executive Director Cassandra Vanhooser and recognized Marci Ross for her work during the leadership transition. Mr. Seidel conducted a roll call and stated that a quorum was present.

Board members present: Ben Seidel, Al Spence, Andrew Frank, Chris Riehl, Gerardo Martinez, Jim Mathias, Laverne McElveen, Rob Arthur, Sandy Turner, Shelonda Stokes, Todd Burbage, Tonya Fitzpatrick, and Delegate Wayne Hartman.

Kerry Doyle, chief of staff to Senator Johnny Mautz attended on the senator's behalf.

Assistant Attorney General Gerard Vetter, assigned to Commerce, reviewed Open Meetings Act requirements for public observation, minutes, and meeting records. Mr. Vetter explained that public comment is at the Board's discretion and reminded members to disclose conflicts or apparent conflicts and refrain from participating in, influencing, or voting on the affected matters.

II Meeting Minutes

June 12, 2026: Ms. Stokes made a motion to approve the June 12, 2026 meeting minutes, and Ms. Turner seconded. There was no discussion. The motion passed by roll-call vote, with affirmative votes from Mr. Spence, Mr. Frank, Mr. Riehl, Mr. Martinez, Mr. Mathias, Mr. McElveen, Mr. Arthur, Ms. Turner, Ms. Stokes, Ms. Fitzpatrick, and Mr. Seidel. Mr. Burbage and Mr. Hartman had stepped away and did not participate in the vote.

January 9, 2026: Mr. Burbage moved to amend the previously approved minutes by changing the date of the referenced prior meeting from September 19, 2025, to November 17, 2025. Mr. McElveen seconded. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously by roll-call vote, with affirmative votes from Mr. Spence, Mr. Frank, Mr. Riehl, Mr. Martinez, Mr. Mathias, Mr. McElveen, Mr. Arthur, Ms. Turner, Ms. Stokes, Mr. Burbage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Hartman, and Mr. Seidel.

III Chairman's Report

Open Meetings Compliance and Committee Meetings

Mr. Vetter summarized the Open Meetings Compliance Board's September 10, 2026, opinion concerning complaints about MTDB procedures. He reported no violation regarding allegations about old or postdated minutes, but noted violations involving committees. He explained that committees created by Board resolution are separate public bodies subject to the Open Meetings Act, including advance notice and online posting of minutes. Regarding closed sessions, he reported that the Compliance Board lacked credible evidence to establish a violation but indicated that one might have occurred. He outlined recommendations to identify specific statutory grounds for closure, maintain detailed closed-session minutes, and limit discussions to the cited exception.

Mr. Mathias moved to pause all committee meetings while their rules and procedures were reevaluated. Mr. Frank seconded. Discussion addressed Open Meetings Act training, the duration of the pause, effects on ongoing work, limited exceptions for closed sessions, and the full Board's ability to hold properly noticed special meetings. Mr. Frank expressed concerns that progress on the strategic plan would stop. Ms. Vanhooser said there was no intention of permanently suspending committees or stopping work on the new strategic plan. She assured Mr. Frank that members would continue to have the opportunity to provide input. Staff and counsel would develop compliant procedures; no firm completion date was established.

The motion passed unanimously by roll-call vote, with affirmative votes from Mr. Spence, Mr. Frank, Mr. Riehl, Mr. Martinez, Mr. Mathias, Mr. McElveen, Mr. Arthur, Ms. Turner, Ms. Stokes, Mr. Burbage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Mr. Hartman, and Mr. Seidel.

Proposed Bylaws Amendments

Mr. Vetter recommended a bylaws provision permitting approval of minutes by email when Board meetings are more than 60 days apart. He planned to present a draft resolution at the November 18 meeting. Members would respond with approval, disapproval, abstention, or corrections. In response to

Mr. Hartman, Mr. Vetter said members absent from a meeting could respond that they were abstaining if they felt unable to approve its minutes. No vote on the proposal was taken.

Mr. Vetter also recommended documenting committee membership, structure, and responsibilities in the bylaws and obtaining board approval by resolution. Ms. Vanhooser explained that drafting those provisions was part of the work needed before committees could resume. In response to Mr. Mathias, Mr. Vetter said one person had filed multiple complaints and that additional complaints remained in process.

Hotel Performance

Mr. Seidel presented year-to-date hotel performance through August 2026, comparing Maryland with national results. He reported increased occupancy, average daily rate, and revenue per available room, and faster room-supply growth in Maryland. He described stronger performance in western Maryland and weaker Eastern Shore performance, citing weather as a factor.

IV Executive Director's Report

Ms. Vanhooser presented her first report following approximately 90 days in the position. She described a coordinated, digital-first Office of Tourism focused on implementing the strategic plan and demonstrating economic growth through the visitor economy. Staff are aligning work, responsibilities, and resources with priorities to increase overnight stays and visitor spending. Tourism will lead its three marketing agencies through shared planning, beginning with a staff and agency mini-retreat the following week.

Ms. Vanhooser reported work to improve content governance, organize content for discovery through AI-powered travel search, and expand performance measures beyond website visits and engagement. She described ongoing work with OTD's digital agency and Commerce to meet accessibility requirements across three websites by April 26, 2027.

Ms. Vanhooser reported that Governor Moore announced on September 23 that Maryland had been named to Lonely Planet's Best in Travel list for 2027. She credited sustained staff work and said the recognition would be incorporated into marketing. She identified Rails, Trails, and Outdoor Recreation as a major 2027 theme celebrating the 200th anniversary of American railroading. The theme would appear in content, publications, and the website, supported by partner tools and guidance.

Ms. Vanhooser presented the Tourism Economics impact report for calendar year 2025: 47.4 million visitors, $21.1 billion in visitor spending, $32.3 billion in total economic impact, 188,417 total jobs supported, and $2.5 billion in state and local taxes. Visitor spending averaged $58 million per day. She reported a 0.5 percent decline in total visitor spending, increased daytrip visitor spending, decreased overnight spending, a 4 percent decline in average spending per visitor, and a 1.8 percent employment decline. She said the full report was available on the industry website and would be provided by email.

Mr. Hartman requested comparisons with neighboring or competing states to help assess the effects of economic conditions, consumer behavior, and marketing investment. Ms. Vanhooser cited consumer pressure, shorter trips, fewer overnight trips, federal layoffs, and weaker international demand. She expressed concern about reduced marketing investment and said staff would further develop comparisons. Mr. Riehl asked whether the employment figures included contractors and gig workers; the question was not definitively resolved. Rianna Wan from OTD said Tourism Economics will discuss the report at the November meeting and could address detailed questions. Mr. Seidel compared

daily visitor spending with his estimate of daily state sales tax revenue and emphasized tourism's contribution to the case for funding.

Ms. Vanhooser asked members to prepare to discuss priorities, share industry insights, and help advance the strategic plan. She previewed the November 18 board meeting in Baltimore and invited members to the Maryland Travel and Tourism Summit, with Tourism covering their attendance. She said the office would lead the State of Tourism presentation and relaunch the Excellence in Tourism Awards without separate categories.

V Board Member Updates

Ms. Vanhooser reported that Melanie Johnson had retired from National Harbor and resigned from the Board, and that her husband had subsequently passed away. Flowers had been sent on behalf of MTDB and the Office of Tourism.

Mr. Mathias expressed concern about the long-term effects of Airbnb, VRBO, and other short-term rentals on hotels and the broader visitor economy, including hotel investment, maintenance, employment, and restaurant activity. He requested examination of those effects. No motion or vote on the matter was recorded.

VI Adjournment

Mr. Mathias moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Martinez. The motion passed unanimously among those still present, with affirmative roll-call votes from Mr. Riehl, Mr. Martinez, Mr. Mathias, Mr. Arthur, Ms. Turner, Mr. Burbage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, and Mr. Seidel. Mr. Spence, Mr. Frank, Mr. McElveen, Ms. Stokes, and Mr. Hartman had left the meeting. Mr. Seidel adjourned the meeting at 11:08 a.m.

Next meeting: November 18, 2026, in Baltimore. Upcoming meeting dates will be posted on Industry.VisitMaryland.org.