



## **Tourism Commission Meeting Minutes**

**November 3, 2025**

**Convention Center Board Room 214 - 1:00 pm**

*The following individuals were in attendance:*

**Commission and Voting Members** – Tourism Commission Chair and Council President, Matt James; Mayor Meehan; Councilman John Gehrig; Councilman Will Savage; Voting Members Sal Fasano, OC Chamber of Commerce; Joe Wilson, OCDC; Ruth Waters, HMRA.

**Staff Members Present** – Terry McGean, City Manager; Tom Perlozzo, Director of Tourism; Larry Noccolino, Executive Director; Jessica Waters; Director; Molly Wooten, Abigail Yesko, Erin Jones, Marketing & Communications; Kim Mueller, Director of Sales; Nicole Olson, CVB; Chip Woytowitz, Ashley Johnson, Tourism Sales; Brenda Moore, Acting Director, David Rohman, Lisa Mitchell, Heather Wiles, Kerry Bergeman, Special Events; Leslie Raven, Tourism & Business Development.

**Also present:** Susan Jones, HMRA; Amy Thompson, OC Chamber of Commerce; Melanie Pursel, Worcester County Tourism; Zach Bankert, OCDC; Rina Thaler, Art League of Ocean City; Bethany Hooper, OC Today-The Dispatch.

**Tourism Commission Chair and Council President Matt James called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.**

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**

**MOTION** to approve **Minutes** from **August 11, 2025** Tourism Commission meeting was made by Voting Member Sal Fasano and seconded by Voting Member Will Savage. **The vote was unanimous (7-0).**

### **ZARTICO PACING REPORT PRESENTATION By Bill Obreiter, VP Destinations, Zartico**

Zartico is a data science company that helps understand the tourism economy's impact using big data sets like movement data from cell phone devices, credit card data, and lodging data.

The report looks at lodging and in-market spend behavior from Amadeus for October and into November and December.

#### **Caveats of the Report**

- Transactional hotel performance for chain hotels and short-term vacation rentals are being looked at. Allows understanding of quality of stays, looks at feeder markets and allows us to look at overall spend. Does not include independent hotels.
- The 21 chain hotels represent about 21% of overall room inventory.
- Group holds don't count until assigned to a traveler.
- Vacation rental data set comes from direct source property.
- This means that the transaction is seen through a professional short-term vacation rental management company distributing them, both Airbnb and VRBO.
- The report is not meant to be absolute, but a benchmark of performance every month.
- It allows the Commission to make decisions where they should market to find the right customers at the right time.

#### **October Data**

- Data is as of October 30th.



- Compared to last October, there was an overall increase in revenue of 4%.
- The \$8.3 million revenue number is a sample size of overall revenue.
- Paid occupancy was up versus October 1st, but there was a decrease in overall paid occupancy of about a third of a percent.
- There was an increase of 4% on ADR.
- Stay night increased 4%.
- Country Calling saw an increase of 25% in collected revenue through the chain hotels.
- Occupancy was almost 85%, which is the "highest occupancies that we've seen in a shoulder or off season to date."
- ADR increased from \$268 at the beginning of the month to \$273 overall.

### RevPAR

- The report compares the RevPAR weekend to weekend versus last year. Blue is hotel, red is vacation rentals and dotted lines are last year.
- There was a great gap on Sunday night of Country Calling versus last year where there was a major increase.
  - Sunday night had a \$245 ADR for hotels (last year it was \$160).
  - Last year Sunday night was at 53% occupancy, this year it was at 78%.

### Feeder Markets

- Top 30 feeder markets are listed in order by amount of revenue and their revenue market share. Revenue goes down from there. Reservations on left and quality metrics on right.
- Richmond was over \$200 ADR blended for the month.
- Ocean City had the longest length of stay at 3 nights.
- The report shows how far in advance people are booking.
- Connecticut had the highest average stay value and longest length of stay for vacation rentals in October (10 nights).

### October Data Analysis

- Heat maps show revenue. Red is hot, blue is medium, and out here, not much.
- Data helps understand where to put investable dollars.
- From a media standpoint, it helps BVK folks target advertising based on quality of stay.

### Competitive Comparison

- Comparing Ocean City's RevPAR and average stay value (rate people pay times how long they stay) with Maryland overall and Virginia Beach. Majority of market share as well as yield compared to competitive set was in beginning of October with all events that were planned. Can multiply this by the tax collection rate say for someone from Pittsburgh, to see what they are driving per visit. Right side of chart shows how far people are booking advance.
- Country Calling and the second weekend had higher RevPAR than Maryland and Virginia Beach.
- Market share and yield compared to competitors was highest in early October due to events.

### Visitor Analysis

- Visitors: Travel more than 50 miles to Ocean City.
- Local Visitors: Travel 1-49 miles.
- Residents: Live in Ocean City and spend money there.



- Visitors account for about 91% of overall spend.
- Local Visitors, Residents spend more in restaurants and retail than accommodations.

#### Feeder Markets and Demographics

- Can look at top feeder markets and average daily measured expense to see where folks are coming from.
- Summer is more affluent and family-oriented than October. Audience in October is older. The average measured daily spend *times* spends per day show what the value is to locally owned businesses from different feeder markets.

#### Pacing Analysis

- November pacing deficit reduced by about 50% over the last 30 days.
- ADR (Average Daily Rate) decreasing for November, but still an increase compared to last October.
- Deficit time periods towards the end of November, around Thanksgiving, getting into shoulder season where there's no events.
- December is a short-advanced purchase window, especially midweek.

#### **BVK UPDATE PRESENTATION – Darci Bandi, BVK VP Account Director**

##### Leisure Campaign

- Shifted fall focus messaging in August. Doing little less beach, more things on Boardwalk
- Online video and connected TV had really good completion rate. Fall fun video drove 2.8 million impressions.
- 128 people clicked on "Book Now" to look at rates or got a travel guide. Shows really strong conversion intent.
- Another top-performing ad targeted millennial moms and had a great click-through rate, 433% over benchmark.
- Creative resonated strongly with this audience, driving both awareness and actionable engagement.

##### Weather-Triggered Ads

- Used real-time weather data to drive short-term trips to Ocean City. Included time after Hurricane Erin.
- Washington D.C. stood out as a top performer. Reinforces DC as key audience for last minute travel.
- Early season performance was stronger with Summer Sendoff messaging.
- Will look to implement earlier in the season for 2026 plan.

##### Summer Send Off Incremental Campaign: Earned & Influencer

- Targeted moms and travel intenders to get one last beach vacation in Ocean City.
- Two components: End Summer in OCMD.
  - Hopper partnership was huge success: \$25 off your sleep, netted 261 room nights booked in 30 days @ 123 hotels, ROI was \$3:\$1.
  - Paid social performance: High impact with likes and shares, messaging resonated with the target audience, despite Hurricane Erin.

##### Influencer Campaign

- Leah Seeling (MD Fun Fam), the Maryland mom, pivoted her messaging when the summer sendoff event was canceled due to the hurricane.
- She provided an itinerary for activities to do in Ocean City that were safe for that weekend on her webpage.



#### Callings Restaurant Incremental Campaign – Paid Media Program

- Created a landing page promoting local restaurants deals and steals, specifically targeting Worcester & Sussex County residents to come and dine.
- Per-check spend during Ocean's Calling increased by \$4, and people went to more establishments (increased by 4%).

#### Earned Media Highlights

- 18 total publication placements this year so far for 24.5 million impressions.
  - Includes Travel and Leisure photos, Baltimore Business Journal, and Forbes.
- Influencer strategy focused on niche platforms like lifestyle, golf, and family fun.
  - Mentions Leah Seeling, Pilot Drew, and Bryce Cope Golf as generating 1.83 million impressions and 78,700 engagements in 2025.

#### Questions

- There was a question about the perception study. Director Perlozzo mentioned there would be an ad effectiveness study in the coming months. A perception study has not been planned at the moment.

#### **TOURISM and BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT – Tom Perlozzo, Director**

##### Tourism Commission Schedule for 2026

- The 2026 Tourism Commission dates for 2026 were reviewed. Director Perlozzo stated the first meeting will be held January 15th (Thursday). That date will include an afternoon meeting with stakeholders to unveil the 2026 marketing plan, a cocktail reception, followed by a live performance with the Pointer Sisters to start Martin Luther King weekend.
- Mayor and City Council will get the first peek.

#### **CONVENTION CENTER SALES REPORT by Kim Mueller, Director of Sales**

##### Convention Center Sales Report

- *Meet in Maryland* was organized back in 2024 with five counties in Maryland focused on growing Meetings and Conventions as a premier meetings and conventions destination. It's funded through the Maryland Office of Tourism.
- In 2026 Ocean City will be included in this group.
- They're putting in \$764,000 in initiatives to bring together destinations such as Baltimore, Annapolis and now Ocean City to share in trade shows, joint advertising and outreach to high-growth industries.
- OC's participation is fully reimbursable under the State's DMO grant and ensures OC is represented on a statewide stage and well positioned to grow the meeting and convention business here in Maryland.
- Joint presence at key trade show includes ASAE, MPI DC and RCMA Emerge.
- Statewide print and digital campaigns in publications like Meetings Today, USAE, and Mid-Atlantic Events magazine.

##### Convention Center Bookings - FY Sales Comparison & Pace

- 2025: 93 events, \$137.5M in economic impact, 249,000 attendees.
- 2026: 87 events, \$101.6M, EIC; 229,000 Attendees on the books. A little short of halfway through the year.
- 2027: 41 events at \$80 million in economic impact and 184,000 attendees. Already pacing over 80% of FY26's attendee numbers.



- 2028: 27 events, \$54 million in economic impact, and 119,000 attendees.
- Numbers illustrate a solid booking pipeline and continued destination appeal across multiple years.

#### TaraFlex Floor Update

- Initial layout and cutting: December 1st-4th. Hall C only.
- Full Installation: December 15th-18th. The floor will stay down for the US Field Hockey and Futsal events through the holidays.
- After the new event in the first week of January, installers will return to demonstrate floor breakdown, review the storage process and address any concerns.
- The rental cost is lower than competitors, making it desirable for clients.

#### **CONVENTION CENTER MISC.by Larry Noccolino, Executive Director**

#### RV Show and Elevator

- The RV show is moving out.
- Status of Small freight elevator: Third leg of a \$1.4 million spend and was already inspected.

#### Landscaping and Lighting

- Landscaping has started and should be completed before Thanksgiving.
- Meeting with lighting contractor to outline the building.
  - Expecting delivery of product around November 5th or 6th, with work starting around the 17th.
- Goal is to complete lighting by the first week in December.

#### Elevator Rehab

- Large passenger elevator rehab: Starts December 3rd, complete by January 10th.
- Small passenger elevator: Starts around the 13th, completed in time for the boat show.

#### Upcoming Events

- Preparing for the Gift Show and Rising Tides.
- Kim went over Taraflex back and forth.

#### **SPECIAL EVENTS by Brenda Moore, Acting Director of Special Events**

Director Perlozzo introduced Brenda Moore as Acting Special Events Director and provides a seasonal summary report.

#### Special Events Division Introduction

- Acting Director, Brenda Moore, introduced the team: Heather Wiles, Kerry Bergeman, Lisa Mitchell, and David Rohman who handle town-run events and process private events on public property (100+ events a year).

#### Seasonal Wrap-Up

- Sundays in the Park: 28th year, 13 weeks of regional live bands and fireworks.
- Sunset Park Summer Concerts: Collaboration with OCDC, weekly concert series.
- Support for private events: Wine Fest, Rock and Ride, Oceans Calling, Country Calling.



### Sunfest

- Sunfest was reinvented.
- Celebrated the 50th year with great turnout and entertainment.
- Over half the bands were new to Sunfest with great feedback.
- Collaborated with the Art League and *We Are Limitless Studios* on the 150th art mural.
- Fourth year Sunfest held with October dates have been well-received.
- This year's crowd eclipsed last year's.
- The event closed down at 7:00 PM and benefited other businesses

### Winterfest

- Winterfest tickets are on sale and selling well.
- Winterfest opens November 20th with new elements and more engagement.
- Eight fire pits, "Enchanted Evenings" with horse and carriage rides.
  - Runs through December 31st, with Coca-Cola giveaways and a scavenger hunt after Christmas.
- Fire pit nights with food trucks and music on weekends.
  - Christmas parade on December 6th (still taking registrations) and a Holiday Character Breakfast.
- Fireworks will be shot off on opening night.
- Woodland Sheds is a partner and provided two sheds for the train garden which will now be located at Northside Park and not the Convention Center.
- New Year's Eve will have fireworks in two locations: Northside Park and downtown.

### Springfest 2026

- 2026 Springfest will introduce street painting.
- Working with the Art League, an artist from Baltimore who does 3D art has been contracted. The artist hopes to bring two European artists for the event.
- Paid entertainment will be moved to the Performing Arts Center.
- Entertainers have already been booked: a Who's Bad, The Evolution of Pop tribute band, a Taylor Swift tribute band, and Run the World, Beyonce tribute band.
- Brainstorming for a new summer series is underway.

### Rising Tides Event

- Part of the 150th Anniversary and 150 Days of Celebrations.
- Increase in ticket sales after the Callings.
- Celebration of music through the decades.
- 70's Soul Jam and Forever Young tour with I Love the 90's.
- Indoor roller-skating rink and a mini boardwalk inside Hall C.

### 150th Anniversary Gala

- Grand finale to end the year and the anniversary.
- Seven unique experiences in seven different rooms.
- 200 tickets have been sold.
- Features the band Cherry Crush.



- There will be a carving station, an oyster room, crab cakes, a wine room, and a dessert room as well as an Art League room, and a HMRA room.
- The experiences will integrate the history of Ocean City.

#### Upcoming Events and Budget

- Budgets are due November 17th.
- Two events will hopefully be announced soon:
  - Little Feet inside halls A, B, and C.
  - Pure Prairie League, Atlanta Rhythm Section, Orleans, and Firefall will also be in Halls A, B, and C on August 8th.
- Waiting on a contract for Little Feet for Memorial Day weekend.
- Little Feet can bring in 5,000 to 7,000 people.

#### Closing Remarks

- Be on the lookout for more events, check oceoocean.com, and give them a call.
- January 30th, there will be a brand launch party at Marley Hall from 5 to 8 PM.
- Meeting adjourned.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS:

##### CHAMBER OF COMMERCE – No Report



Our **Fall Hospitality Huddle** was a collaboration with Salisbury University's Perdue School of Business BEACON group where we explored AI in Hospitality. Although hospitality will always be rooted in genuine human connection, artificial intelligence (AI) is here to stay. To navigate its many possibilities, we teamed up with Salisbury University's BEACON experts for their insights. Because there is so much to share and learn, a follow up session is planned.

The **Winter Hospitality Huddle** is in partnership with MD's Coast Economic Development and Tourism and will explore workforce - slated for **March 24th**.

We've expanded our annual **Trade Expo**. Taking place on **March 8 & 9**, we'll have 2 floors of exhibits featuring 509 booths!

The **Nibble & Networks** (formerly our Dinner Meetings) are beginning.

- November 13th BLU
- December 18th Harpoon Hanna's
- January 15th Aloft Hotel
- February 19th Vista Rooftop
- April 16th Oyster & Scales
- Rebranding will soon be officially unveiled (sneak peek – new logo at the top!)





## **Save the Date - January 30<sup>th</sup> at Morley Hall!**

### **OCDC –**

The OCDC receives and approves applications for the following revitalization programs:

- Façade Improvement Program
- Commercial Façade Improvement Program
- Green Building Initiatives Program
- Roof Improvement Program
- Streetside Fence Program
- Downtown Lighting Program
- Business Assistance Program
- Workforce Housing Program
- In September 2024, the OCDC announced plans to refresh one of downtown Ocean City's most recognizable public art pieces—the Cruisin' mural located at South Baltimore Avenue and Talbot Street. As part of OCDC's ongoing effort to revitalize and beautify the area, the organization sought community feedback through a public online survey and discussion with Boardwalk business during its Boardwalk Committee in October. Outcomes from the survey favored replacing the current mural with a new classic car themed mural.
- In October 2024, the OCDC launched its new Workforce Housing Program, replacing the previous Development & Assistance Program. This program focuses on renovating and improving existing workforce housing rather than building new projects, with the goal of preserving and enhancing the quality of housing available for Ocean City's employees and creating more housing by converting structures with various uses into workforce housing. Grants will reimburse one-third of total renovation expenses up to \$10,000.
- The OCDC hosted the following events from August through October:
  - o Sunset Park Party Nights (August)
  - OC Cruzers Car Shows at Somerset Plaza (August-September)
  - The 25th Annual OCDC/Art Davis Memorial Golf Tournament (October)
  - The Shore Craft Beer Garden at Sunfest (October)
  - The 11th Annual Shore Craft Beer OCToberfest (November 1st)

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- There are no upcoming OCDC events planned for the immediate future.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

For more information about the OCDC and its programs, please visit [www.ocdc.org](http://www.ocdc.org) or follow the OCDC on social media at [facebook.com/downtownoceancitymd](https://facebook.com/downtownoceancitymd).

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### **WORCESTER COUNTY – No report**

### **OC ART LEAGUE -No report**

**Mayor Meehan made a motion to adjourn meeting; seconded by Councilman Will Savage. Meeting adjourned at 1:53 p.m.**