

HOSPITALITY HOTLINE

January 2026



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Dates For Your Calendar

2026 Mayor's Prayer Breakfast

January 7th - 8:45am
Convention Center Ballroom

Coastal Chambers Mixer

January 21st - 5pm to 7pm
Ocean Downs Casino Event Center

OCHMRA Brand Relaunch Party

January 30th - 5pm
Seacrets - Morley Hall

OCHMRA Spring Trade Expo

March 8 & 9
40th St. Convention Center

Nibble & Network Events

5:30pm to 8:30pm
February 19th - Aloft Hotel
April 16th - Oyster & Scales
May 14th - Vista Rooftop

Member Message

From Executive Director, Susan L. Jones

Hello 2026! The countdown is on, and we're getting ready to celebrate in style! The band is booked (hello, Cecilia's Fall!), the food is ordered, and a signature drink is ready to make its debut. Let the festivities begin!

After 55 amazing years as the Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association, we're turning the page and stepping into our next chapter as the **OCMD Hospitality Association**. Since 1971, we've been serving up unforgettable hospitality—and now it's time to freshen the look while keeping the heart that makes our community shine. *Your passion and energy are what will make this new brand truly one of a kind.*

Don't miss out! Check out pages 7-8 for all the details on our official launch and celebration, and mark your calendars for January 30th. We can't wait to clink glasses and celebrate with you!

As we head into 2026, let's continue to inspire one another, learn from each other, and raise the bar for hospitality excellence. Together, we're stronger, and the impact we make on Ocean City's hospitality scene is nothing short of incredible. After all, we're the pros who turn moments into memories and service into lasting impressions. Cheers to what's next! 😊



FEATURED PARTNERS



Your single source for exterior building maintenance. Our comprehensive commercial service offerings include window cleaning, facade restoration, waterproofing services, safety systems, and more.



Leading high-performance commercial coatings contractor specializing in seamless resinous (epoxy, polyaspartic, MMA, urethane) polished/stained concrete, and commercial painting service - serving the mid-Atlantic.



Member Directory

Hospitality Highlights

What's new in the industry?

WARM WELCOMES & CELEBRATIONS

We wanted to give a warm welcome to **Sade Bacon** who is the new General Manager at **The Spinnaker**. **Kaitlyn Mourlas** has joined **D3** as a Client Success Associate—she's the daughter of Jimmy & Kim from Jimmy's Kitchen! **Olivia Nash** is the new Assistant General Manager at **Hyatt Place Ocean City**. Congratulations to **Shannon Wilkins, Grand Hotel**, on her promotion to General Manager!

Pinnacle Hospitality Group is expanding with the launch of a new subdivision, **Pinnacle Development**. The team recently broke ground on The Elms, a luxury townhome community in West OC, expected to open in summer 2026 with homes for purchase and long-term rentals.

Lots of changes are happening in the industry lately! **Dawn Gallick** is now with Equipment Share, **Trish Seitz** and **Donna Haffer** are retiring from **Comcast**, and **Chase McClure** is moving on from **D3**. Big changes for some familiar faces!

SAD GOODBYES

Our sincerest condolences to **Angelo Telo, Nock Apartments**, on the passing of his father. With a heavy heart, we are deeply saddened to announce the passing of a beloved **Marie Houck**, wife of Phil Houck, and mother to **Phillip Houck (Crab Alley)**, **Michele Houck Knopp (Bull on the Beach)**, and **Kevin Houck (Bull on the Beach Boardwalk)** - she was a cherished member of the community. It is with a heavy heart that we share the news of the passing of **Linda Lynch, Commander Hotel & Suites**. The Lynch family has long been an important part of the OCHMRA community, and Linda will be remembered with great fondness by all who knew her.

Welcome New Members

ASSOCIATE

The Kite Loft
kiteloft.com

ALLIED

Precision Concrete Coatings
mdprecisioncoatings.com

RobotLAB Bethesda
RobotLAB.com

Rough Seas Painting & Coatings
Roughseas.pro

SPRINGTRADEEXPO

OCEAN CITY SPRING TRADE EXPO

March 8 & 9, 2026

Roland E. Powell Convention Center

Sunday 11am - 5pm | Monday 11am - 4pm

Register for FREE at OceanCityTradeExpo.com | EXCLUSIVELY for the trade, No one under 21 admitted

Partners In Focus

December Nibble & Network Recap

What a great way to wrap up the year! Our December Nibble & Network at Harpoon Hanna's brought the industry together for delicious food, meaningful connections, & giving back to help stock Diakonia's pantry. Thanks to everyone who came out and made it such a great evening.



Check out our full photo album [here!](#)

A special thank you to all who donated door prizes!

A1 American | Aire-Masters of Delmarva | All States Construction | Becker Morgan Group | Comfort Inn Gold Coast | Delaware Elevator | Diversey | Eden Roc Motel | Ferguson Facilities Supply | Harpoon Hanna's | Harrison Group Restaurants | Jolly Roger Amusement Parks | Keller Brothers, Inc. | Landmark Insurance | Ocean City Florist | Ocean Downs Casino | Princess Royale Oceanfront Resort | Real Raw Organics | Residence Inn by Marriott | Restaurant Association of Maryland | Sea Bay Bar & Grille | Shore United Bank | Spain Wine Bar | Wagner Foodservice



OC Tourism - Book Now & Save More

Have a deal you'd like to promote? Or an offer that inspires travel and dining out?

OC Tourism is looking for hotel, restaurant, & attraction deals to feature on ococean.com and promote directly to visitors. It is a great opportunity to boost bookings, fill seats, and reach visitors actively planning their trips.

Please send all deals and offers to Nicole at nolson@oceancitymd.gov.



Save the Date: Gala 2026

Mark your calendars! On **April 19th**, the Restaurant Association of Maryland will host the largest foodservice industry event of the year—the annual [RAM Awards Gala](#) at **Maryland Live! Casino**. Winners will be announced for Chef, Server, Manager, and Bartender of the Year.

Nominations are now open and must be submitted by January 24th, 2026. All Maryland restaurant professionals are eligible in the publicly voted categories. Five finalists will be selected by a committee, with public voting open March 1–31.

Help recognize the industry's best—[submit your nominations today!](#)

Business Briefs



Taste of Maryland

Virtual Legislative Preview

Monday, January 26th, 2026 | 2pm | Virtual

Mark your calendars for RAM's 2026 Virtual Legislative Preview! State lawmakers return to Annapolis in January for the Maryland General Assembly's Legislative Session. On January 26th, RAM's Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, Melvin Thompson, will be hosting a FREE Virtual Legislative Preview to discuss some of the likely business issues/legislation of concern to the foodservice industry. This event is open to all RAM members.

More information and the registration link will be shared soon.

Maryland Outdoor Recreation Business Directory Now Live!

The [Maryland Outdoor Recreation Business Directory](#) is a digital map featuring more than 600 outdoor recreation businesses, designed to connect guides, outfitters, manufacturers, and rental providers with the public, strengthening Maryland's outdoor industry.

You can [search for businesses](#) by name, location, business type, or recreation type. Zoom in on your area to learn which businesses operate near you, or play with the filters to explore all the different ways to spend time outdoors in Maryland! Businesses can also use the tool to identify and connect with other outdoor recreation partners.

Help grow the Outdoor Recreation Business Directory! If you would like to **add your business** or **update your information** in this directory, please click to fill out the [Business Directory Update Request](#) form.

Business Opportunity - Retail Property For Sale

A new retail property has officially come to market, presenting a great opportunity for investors or business owners looking to expand.

- Property Website: [Click Here](#)
- Property Brochure: [Click Here](#)

Interested in learning more? Reach out to Wesley Cox with SVN – Miller Commercial Real Estate, Inc. at (410) 543-2421 or Wesley.Cox@svn.com for details.



Full-service Turn-key Coastal Restaurant
For sale - Big Fish Grill, 30415 Cedar Neck Rd, Ocean View, DE 19970
[properties.svn.com](#)

ON THE PENNY SHORTAGE

When operators can't provide exact change, it creates friction at checkout, frustrating customers. In a highly competitive industry, like restaurants, any change to the hospitality our customers expect could mean a lost return sale for an operator.



MICHELLE KORSMO

President & CEO

National Restaurant Association

The National Restaurant Association Offers Resources to Address Penny Shortage

The Association released new resources addressing the growing nationwide penny shortage. After the U.S. Mint stopped minting new pennies in February, much of the privately run coin infrastructure began limiting penny deposits and disbursements to businesses like restaurants. Today, about 60% of these operations are no longer moving pennies.

To address the shortage and long-term impacts of fewer pennies in circulation, the Association is working on 3 solutions:

1. Get the *Administration and the Fed to work together to get pennies circulating again*
2. Work with Congress to establish set national rules for rounding when pennies aren't available and create a safe harbor that would protect restaurants from legal action because they're forced to round
3. Urge the Treasury to issue temporary rounding rules to help cut friction between businesses and customers

Explore their issue page about the penny [here](#). You'll also find a [policy brief](#) about it that can be distributed at meetings. Also, find letters NRA sent to the [Treasury](#) and [Fed](#) about the issue.

Room Tax Increase Info From Worcester County

On December 16th, 2025, the Worcester County Commissioners, Maryland, passed a resolution to increase the hotel rental tax rate imposed on all short-term rentals (4 months or less) within Worcester County on the amount paid for room or building rental at any hotel, motel, apartment, cottage or other similar place providing sleeping accommodations, **FROM 5% TO 6%**. This sales/use tax applies to all compensation received for use of the sleeping space. The 6% gross rental tax is effective for all charges for rentals taking place on/after January 1st, 2026.

Any stays 12/31/2025 would be 5%. | Any stays 01/01/2026 forward would be the 6%.

NOTE: If the person has put a partial deposit down in 2025, but their stay is in 2026, the stay would be charged at the 6% tax rate.

2026 Legislative Priorities

The Maryland Chamber of Commerce released its 2026 Legislative Priorities and Anticipated Critical Issues for Maryland, outlining their focus for the upcoming legislative session to ensure a stronger future for the state.

The top priorities for the 2026 Legislative Session include:

- Business Taxes
- Transportation Funding Solutions
- Business-Driven Data Privacy & AI
- Climate Tax Policies & Energy Reliability
- Job Creation & Workforce Development

[Click here](#) to view.

Flipbook created with [@ issuu](#)

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Community Connections

Coastal Delmarva Chamber Winter Mixer

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Ocean Downs Casino, Events Center
10218 Racetrack Rd., Berlin, MD 21811

Got a bit of the winter blues? Come in from the cold at the for the third annual Coastal Delmarva Joint Chamber Winter Mixer on Wednesday, January 21, 2026 PM, 5:00 - 7:00 PM, at the Ocean Downs Casino.

Members from Delmarva will gather for mingling and networking, light appetizers, a complimentary drink, and \$10 in casino free play!

Participating organizations include:

- Bethany-Fenwick Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce
- OC Hotel Motel Restaurant Association
- Pocomoke Chamber of Commerce
- Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce
- Snow Hill Chamber of Commerce
- Worcester County Chamber of Commerce

Music will be provided by DJ Randy Potter, Revive Sound Productions, LLC.

- Registration is required. FREE for members.
- Space is limited and registration will close when the event is at capacity.
- Attendees must be a member (or guest of a member) of a participating chambers to attend this event.
- You will be required to list your chamber affiliation.



MLK WEEKEND Dreamfest 2026

Dreamfest Events

January 15 - 17, 2026

3 unforgettable days filled with a fusion of music and fun! From January 15 - 17, 2026, come together with friends, family, and the community to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s enduring legacy and the vision he had for a world united in equality and peace.

Ocean City Performing Arts Center Event Lineup:

- Jan. 15 - The Pointer Sisters
- Jan. 16 - Shadows of the 60's
- Jan. 17 - Evolution of Pop



Art League of OC Film Festival: Sponsorships Available

The Art League of Ocean City is gearing up for the 10th season of the [Ocean City Film Festival](#), taking place March 5-8, 2026. This milestone event is expected to be the largest yet, drawing filmmakers, industry professionals, and film enthusiasts from around the world to Ocean City.

They are currently seeking event sponsors. –This is an excellent opportunity for businesses to connect with the audience while giving back to the community during the off-season.

[Click here](#) to explore sponsorship opportunities.

Join Us & Celebrate

After 55 years as the Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Association, **WE'RE REBRANDING** as the

OCMD Hospitality Association

Enjoy a casual night of light bites, cocktails, and music as we celebrate our next chapter for Ocean City hospitality!

Jan. 30th, 2026 | 5:00 PM

Seacrets 49th St. – Morley Hall

Thank you to our sponsors:



Flip over to RSVP



[https://oceancitymdassoc.weblinkconnect.com/events/
OCHMRA-Rebranding-Launch-Party-202/details](https://oceancitymdassoc.weblinkconnect.com/events/OCHMRA-Rebranding-Launch-Party-202/details)

RSVP by January 26, 2026

*Scan the QR code or email Susan at
susanjones@ocvisitor.com*



TOWN OF OCEAN CITY, MD

Upcoming

AMI INSTALLATIONS – WATER METER REPLACEMENTS

DEAR CUSTOMER,

Starting Monday January 5th 2026, the Town of Ocean City will initiate a comprehensive water meter program that will upgrade all water meters in town to an automatic meter reading (AMI) system. During this process if the current water meter needs replacing this will be done as well. The purpose of this effort is to upgrade the City's water distribution system with an electronic reading capability and to replace meters that have served beyond their estimated useful lives. The target meter population includes all commercial and residential meters. The estimated time of completion for the project is April of 2026. The following is an overview of the project including benefits of the program and frequently asked questions.

Overview:

The new system will allow water meters to be read from data collectors mounted to infrastructure across the Town. Water meters are the devices used to measure the amount of water delivered to our customers. Replacing old meters will ensure that The Town of Ocean City can accurately track both individual and commercial customers usage for billing purposes.

Benefits:

Advanced Metering Infrastructure(AMI) Is now the best method of collecting water use data. It uses new equipment at the water meter that is read automatically. The water use data is transmitted from the device over a secure network to a central data base. The main benefit is that Town personnel no longer have to come to your property to collect water use data

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is AMI safe?

Yes, AMI is safe. It uses radio and cellular systems like AM/FM radios and cell phones.

Will my personal information be protected?

Yes, your information will be protected. AMI does not communicate personal information

Will I be notified prior to any meter installation at my property or business?

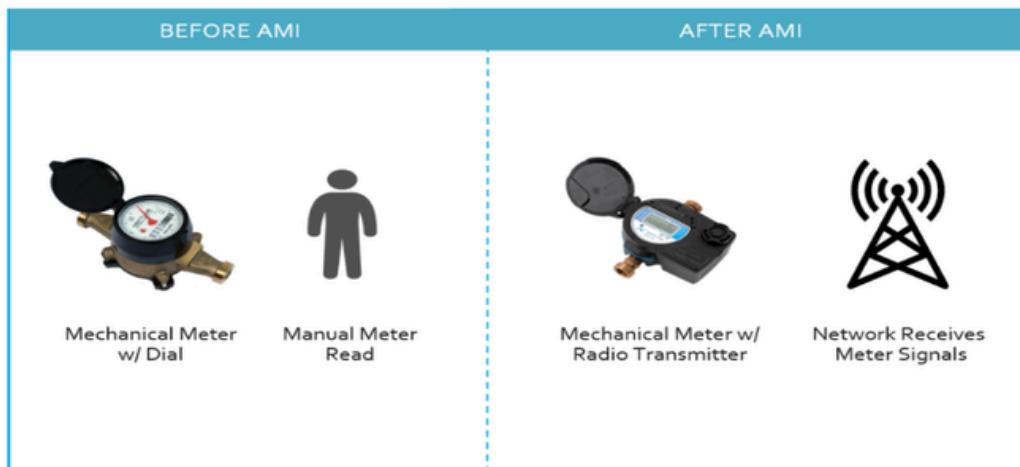
Yes, you will be notified in advance.

Will water service be disrupted during installation?

There may be a short interruption of about 30 minutes. If this happens, you will be informed of how to flush your water lines afterwards.

Will my property be disturbed during installation?

In most cases meters are in the public right-of-way or easement area. That means the installer will not disturb your property during the replacement process, nor will the need to access your home. There are a very small number of situations where your meter might be located inside of your home or building. In those cases, we will schedule an appointment in advance. When the meter is located outside of the home, the installer will simply remove the current meter and replace it with an AMI meter and transmitter in the same meter box. One additional goal of this project is to address any damaged meter boxes. In that case, the contractor will replace the box with a new one in the same location.



THERE IS NO ADDITIONAL COST TO YOU AS A CONSUMER FOR THE AMI INSTALL OR IF YOUR CURRENT METER NEEDS REPLACING!

YOUR PATIENCE THROUGHOUT THIS IMPORTANT PROJECT IS APPRECIATED. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNs, PLEASE CONTACT DAN COLE WATER SUPERINTENDENT AT 410.524.8388 OR EMAIL AT DCOLE@OCEANCITYMD.GOV

Who will perform this work?

Concord Utility Services is the contractor performing the installations. All Concord staff and vehicles have insignia identifying them.