



Board Meeting Minutes from October 17, 2024

Sussex County West Administrative Complex

In attendance: Anne Angel, Scott Anthony (Board Co-Chairperson), Drew DiFonzo, Carol Everhart, Bonnie Hall (Past Chair), Maggie Lingo, Fred Mast, Kristin Miller, Matt Parker (Board Chairperson), Bill Pfaff, Linda Price, Patrick Ruhl, Jo Schmeiser, Fred Thompson, Kevin Thompson, Scott Thomas, Lauren Weaver, Allyson Ennis, Tom Summers, Nadine Timpanaro

Absent: Terry Carson, Kevin Evans, Mike Dunmyer, Ben Gray, Betsy Reamer, Alison Schuch,

1. Call to Order time: 9:30am by Matt P.

2. Welcome and Introductions: Matt P. welcomed everyone and those in attendance introduced themselves through alphabetical roll call including new board members Tom Summers and Nadine Timpanaro who expanded on their backgrounds. Quorum confirmed by Scott T.

3. Approval of the July 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion by: Bonnie H., **Seconded by:** Drew D., **Passed by** the Board.

4. Committee Reports

- **Finance** – Presented by Scott A.

1. First Quarter Expenses: large expense variances, such as association dues, are a result of the timing of receiving and paying invoices.
2. Miscellaneous Income of \$15,000 from Sussex County Government to pay for SDT Visitor Guides
3. Education- Expenses are up compared to last year due to more money being budgeted in this area this year for items such as cost for Certified Destination Marketing Executive (CDME) courses.
4. Discussion ensued relating to a request for a 3-year audit of the Division of Revenue's accounting of the Public Accommodation Tax (PAT) at both the Finance Committee and P&P Committee levels.

Notes from Fred M.:

1. The PAT Revenue for the 1st quarter was up \$19,276 from this same quarter last year (3.22% increase).
2. Since this is just the first quarter report, there are quite a few variances between this year and last year, and this year and the budget. This is pretty typical, as a lot of these variances are just timing differences, between when things were paid this year verses last year. We'll have a clearer picture after the December financial statements are completed, and months of the year are done.
3. The State of Delaware recently corrected their PAT collections by zip code report for last year, which changed our PAT %'s for each of the Chambers. All of the Chambers allocations have been updated with this last month's PAT checks, besides Milton. Milton has currently been paid about \$2,000 too much, so their future PAT checks will be reduced until they've received the correct allocation.
4. At 9/30/24, there was \$313,730 in the checking account. \$527.41 of this is reserved for the Culinary Coast campaign. There also is \$168,838 in SDT's reserve (money market) account. The Edward Jones investment account that was opened last spring with \$25,000, had a current cost basis at 9/30/24 of \$25,142

Motion to approve the First Quarter Financial Statements by Linda P.,
Seconded by Drew D., **Passed** by the Board.

- **Investment** – Presented by Matt P.
SDT's Edward Jones Account currently has a balance of \$25,230.

- **Policies & Procedures** – Presented by Matt P.

The committee last met on October 2nd that included the following:

- Discussion centered on the Division of Revenue (DOR) funding discrepancies that were uncovered earlier this year
- Committee realized the potential trust impact on DOR and SDT from our board and its associated chambers, especially with STR revenue coming next year.

- Need to ensure we have an action plan ready to present at our next board meeting. Action plan includes:
 - Draft letter to all state elected officials. Done and the letter is posted in the boardroom.
 - Outline issues and invite collaboration to resolve
 - Jessica Welch is requesting meeting with DOR and SDT
 - Request for full audit and inventory list for Sussex County. Needs to include A/R record for which hotels have paid and what is currently outstanding. Three years of data requested.
- Succession Planning: Tabled due to the DOR discussion
 - **Marketing** – Presented by Bonnie H.

Bonnie outlined and called out highlights of SDT's First Quarter Marketing Report that was shared and posted in the Boardroom.

Bonnie referenced the SDT Media Coverage Report, powered by SDT's subscription to Muck Rack. SDT's advertising value equivalency (AVE) this quarter was \$1,709,283 with 184.7 million unique visits per month to the publications cited in the report.

SDT's Tourism Ambassador Program to date has certified 81 participants with 39 completed this past quarter. The committee is currently exploring other marketing-centric courses to add on this platform.

- **Advocacy** – Presented by Drew D.

The committee will be meeting later this month to discuss and prioritize FY 25 goals/topics including Workforce Housing, SDT Community Relations and Off-Shore Wind. Drew also expanded on SDT's recent Hotel Committee Meeting and DHLA Meeting.

5. DTO Update – Presented by Allyson Ennis

- The Sports Tourism Capital Investment Fund review panel will meet on October 24 at 2 p.m. in Dover to discuss the applications received for the second round of funding. All applicants have been notified of the meeting and will have an opportunity to give a brief summary of their project to the review panel. The meeting is public and is posted on the public meeting calendar. We received 18 applications requesting \$47 million, and we have \$10 million to distribute.
- DTO is currently accepting applications for our TEAMS program for sports events. We've received 22 applications requesting \$290,000 and we have \$500,000 to distribute. More info is available on our website at visitDelaware.com/sports.
- DTO is working with Tripscout again to bring in influencers. We are planning to bring four influencers in over the next few months. They'll highlight places throughout the state. We haven't been sent a list of vetted influences to choose from but should get the info soon. We'll have some who are driving in and others who will be flying.
- Sponsorship opportunities for the American Bus Association marketplace in Philly in February are still available. If interested, reach out to Tina Madanat in our office for more info.
- DTO expects to release the economic impact study on sports tourism in mid-November.

6. SDT 2024 Awards Luncheon: Friday December 13, 2024 at the Lighthouse Cove Event Center / Hyatt Dewey Beach.

Scott T. confirmed U.S. Senator Tom Carper as this year's speaker and award nominations are currently being received. Invitations were distributed as registration is open for tickets.

7. Next Board Meeting is on January 16, 2025 from 9:30am - 11:30am.

8. Meeting Adjourned at 10:40am