



Board Meeting Minutes from January 16, 2025

Sussex County West Administrative Complex

In attendance: Scott Anthony (Board Co-Chairperson), Drew DiFonzo, Mike Dunmyer, Carol Everhart, Ben Gray, Bonnie Hall (Past Chair), Maggie Lingo, Fred Mast, Kristin Miller, Matt Parker (Board Chairperson), Bill Pfaff, Betsy Reamer, Patrick Ruhl, Alison Schuch, Tom Summers, Fred Thompson, Scott Thomas, Nadine Timpanaro, Lauren Weaver, Jessica Welch, Jessica Schlegel, Jim Smith

Absent: Terry Carson, Kevin Evans, Linda Price, Jo Schmeiser, Kevin Thompson

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 Jessica Schlegel and Jim Smith who expanded on their backgrounds. Quorum confirmed by Scott T.

3. Approval of the October 2024 Meeting Minutes

Motion by: Bonnie H., **Seconded by:** Alison S., **Passed by** the Board.

4. Committee Reports

- **Finance** – Presented by Scott A.

1. The PAT Revenue for the 2nd quarter was up \$23,643 from this same quarter last year (4.59% increase) and is up a total of \$42,918 for fiscal year (3.85%).
2. A few notes about a couple of income/expenses:

- a. Bonds and Insurance - there's an extra month's health insurance expense in the current year as compared to the prior year, and the monthly premium starting in November is \$392 higher than it was back in July of 2023.
 - b. Rent - I believe the budgeted amount for rent probably got set too low - as the annual budget is a slightly less than the \$985 that gets paid each month.
 - c. SDT Meeting & Forum expense -- most of this variance is just a timing issue - the cost of the Awards luncheon fell in December in 2024, but it fell in January last year, so that is causing most of this variance.
 - d. Miscellaneous Income - is funds received from Sussex County for the visitors guide
 - e. The "Funds passed through" expense item is for the portion of the EDA Grant that belonged to the City of Seaford - and it was forwarded on to them.
3. In total - administrative and marketing expenses are 4.56% higher through the first 2 quarter than they were last year.
 4. At 12/31/24, there was \$463,415 in the checking account. None of this is reserved for the Culinary Coast campaign, as any money collected from businesses for this has now been spent in full. There also is \$168,842 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 12/31/24 of \$25,142.

Motion to approve the Second Quarter Financial Statements by Bill P.,
Seconded by Mike D., **Passed** by the Board.

- **Investment** – Presented by Matt P.
 SDT's Edward Jones Account currently has a balance of \$26,261 and has generated a return of a little over 6% since its inception.

Motion to transfer \$50,000 from SDT's Business Checking Account to its Edward Jones Investment Account by Matt P., **Seconded by** Kristin M.,
Passed by the Board.

- **Policies & Procedures** – Presented by Ben G.

(Fun) Ben explained that he can no longer deliver just time as P&P Committee Chair and called out for another committee chairperson. The P&P committee will set the next meeting date before leaving today and a new chair will be determined by that next meeting. Ben reviewed the action items from the last meeting that included meeting with Sussex state officials regarding the Division of Revenue (DOR) and further PAT reporting

information needed. Scott T. and Jessica W. have met twice with the DOR and requested list of properties reporting as well as a monthly tally on properties who are late reporting. DOR will be providing a cumulative amount of late reporting amounts per county each month after the PAT report is released. Scott T. will continue to match inventory lists from Sussex and obtain a list of PAT payers that DOR uses.

- **Marketing** – Presented by Bonnie H.

The committee last met on 1/9 and examined the mid-year budget vs actual Marketing activity.

A survey has been created for all chamber of commerce directors (in the Boardroom Portal) to complete regarding collective marketing efforts among each chamber and SDT.

Expanding SDT's marketing efforts into Ohio and Canada were discussed by the committee and research to do that is underway. The next committee meeting is on 4/10.

Bonnie outlined and called out highlights of SDT's Second 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 \$259,803 with 28 million unique visits per month to the publications cited in the report.

SDT's Tourism Ambassador Program to date has 97 certified participants exceeding the initial 2024 goal of 50.

Lauren W. asked if an "SDT Sponsor" mention warrants coverage by Muck Rack. Scott T. will double check and report back.

- **Advocacy** – Presented by Drew D.

The committee met 10/28 to discuss SDT's response to inquiries on off-shore wind turbines. Mike D. joined the committee meeting to offer his expertise on the subject. The committee concluded that sharing a link to FAQ sheets from organizations such as the Delaware Sea Grant (UD) and NOAA, sharing objective, third party information is the best response for SDT on the subject of off-shore wind.

Drew expanded on newly-elected Governor Meyer's inaugural events taking place in Sussex and Kent counties. Delaware minimum wage legislation respective to hospitality industry employees was discussed and the implications it presents. The new Fire and Ice Dover event was discussed respective to the similar brand and logo as the Quiet Resorts' Fire and Ice Event and the problems/conflicts it presents. SDT sent a letter to Downtown Dover Partnership asking them to reconsider the name/brand/logo moving forward next year.

5. DTO Update – Presented by Jessica W.

- PBS' Travel with Darley program featuring Delaware airs February 1st on WHYY. In Sussex County, the Nanticoke Indian Museum and the Zwaanendael Museum will be featured. DTO will be issuing a press release.
- Sports Tourism Investment Fund. New grant awards going out to sports facilities including three from Sussex County: Factory Sports receiving \$577,000, Bethany Tennis Club receiving \$3.8 million, Hudson Fields receiving \$1.2 million.
- Staffing changes. C.J. Bell is the new Division of Small Business Director (replacing Regina Mitchell). Jaclyn Hulihan is now working for the Lt. Governor's Office and Allyson Ennis will likely move into the Marketing Manager role.
- DTO will be a sponsor for the Philadelphia Union for the 2025-26 season in effort to capitalize on the country's 250th Anniversary and driving fans to visit Delaware.
- Travel Guide is being updated.
- DTO is sponsoring the Delaware Restaurant Association's Fast Forward Symposium on 2/4 at the Christiana Hilton. They have 5 tickets available for restaurants that may be interested in attending. Please contact Jessica should you have any takers.

6. Next Board Meeting is on April 17, 2025 from 9:30am - 11:30am.

7. Meeting Adjourned at 11:18am