

WICOMICO TOURISM AND CIVIC CENTER COMMISSION MEETING
MARCH 18, 2019
Minutes

The Wicomico Tourism and Civic Center Commission met in regular session on March 18, 2019. Chairman Delano called the meeting to order at 11:05 am. The following Board members and staff were present:

Board Members

Mike Delano, Chairman
Ed Urban
Mike Getzey
Stephanie Willey
Bill Chambers
Sandy Fitzgerald-Angello
Laura Soper

Staff Members

Wayne Strausburg, County Administrator
Larry Dodd, County Councilman
Steve Miller
Chuck Rousseau
Kevin Wright
Kristen Goller
Linda Lyons

The minutes from February 1, 2019 meeting were approved as circulated.

Mrs. Goller led the meeting with the Tourism Key Indicator Report. She reported all properties were up to date with their payments. January hotel room tax was down 15%. Feedback collected from hoteliers attributed the decrease, at least in part, to the government shutdown. She continued by noting that the out year sales portion of the report was tweaked to show contracted, pending and leads for FY20. In FY19, between returning and new business, the economic impact forecast is \$64.8 million. Mr. Getzey shared that new builds in Ocean City are impacting Wicomico County properties. Ocean City supply is too high, dropping room prices to \$35 in some cases. Ms. Fitzgerald-Angello commented that she believes AirBnB is having a big impact on hotel stays. It is becoming more of the norm for younger travelers to use. Mrs. Goller shared that they are attempting to track AirBnB properties in Wicomico County; currently there are approximately 80. Further comments were made that the unemployment rate in Wicomico County is up, which seems to correlate with the slide in room occupancy and could indicate the start of a recession.

Mr. Wright presented the Civic Center Key Indicator Report. He stated the calendar year 2019 was very busy. Bigger shows are booked for the spring, so this should have a positive impact for the upcoming months and the remainder of the fiscal year.

Mr. Miller presented an update on the Civic Center Phase II discussion from the previous meeting. A letter was sent to the Maryland Stadium Authority to request a “refresh” of our 2012 Crossroads Study. The County has requested the Stadium Authority contribute one half funding for the refresh report which can be used to evaluate feasibility on a possible Phase II. If the County proceeds, the update would take approximately 4 – 6 months to complete.

With no further discussion, Mr. Miller went on to new business. He presented the potential concept for field development at the Athletic complex, called “Project 7.5”. The proposed idea is to build a mini field

between fields 7 and 8 at the Henry S. Parker Athletic Complex as a home field for the Challenger Little League Program, which is structured for mentally and physically challenged children to participate in ball field activities. He went on to say after research, he found there are very few program offerings like this currently on the shore. He did note there was a field in Montgomery County called the Miracle Field that was underwritten by the Washington Nationals. The proposed field would consist of a 110 ft. fenced synthetic field with stitched-in lines. In addition to being the primary home for a Challenger-type program, the mini field could also serve as an added park amenity for whiffle ball and/or tee ball during the week or during weekend tournament events. Mr. Miller attended the District 8 Little League meeting last month to seek the level of interest from Little Leagues in the District including Wicomico, Worcester, and Somerset Counties. He received positive feedback from all 10 Little Leagues for this type of facility development. The County has also reached out to the Boards of Education in all 3 Counties with an interest survey from special needs families within the District. There are approximately 4,000 special needs students in Wicomico, Worcester and Somerset Counties combined. Discussion included support from the Board members to continue to move forward with research for this project. Mr. Miller will present the Project 7.5 vision at the April 18 Chamber General Membership Luncheon.

Mr. Rousseau led an initial discussion of the Department's Strategic Plans. The initial conversation focused on the mission statements for each division. Mr. Rousseau noted the Department's intention to build an overall Strategic Plan that covers a five vision and outlook. Emphasis on the youth piece of the WYCC venue needs to be reviewed. Discussion continued to how the facility name may or may not fit into the potential WYCC expansion. Suggestion was made that staff would provide examples of simplified mission statements as needed and then present to the Commission for feedback at the next meeting. The plan is to have a draft of the overall Strategic Plan complete by the end of summer 2019. If and when the mission statements are revised, the Commission agreed the updated plans could be presented to the community through the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce, Greater Salisbury Committee and/or existing events that the Department supports such as the Good Sports Awards Banquet. The staff intends to seek the Commissions' vision and input through the process.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 pm

Tentative next meeting will be held Monday, April 15, 2019

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by,
Linda Lyons