Marketing Council Meeting Minutes
August 13, 2025
Meeting In MBACC Boardroom

Marketing Council Members in Attendance: Sean Bailey, Charlie Belissary, Suzanne Hinde, Mayur Jeram, Mark Lazarus, Jay Smith, Tom Tse, Jordan Watkins

Staff in Attendance: Stuart Butler, Jen Brunson, Diane Charno

Call to Order: 11:00 AM

Minutes Approval: Mayur Jeram -Motion, Jay Smith- 2nd – All Approved

Fahlgren Mortine (PR and Crisis Communication Update): The presentation to the Marketing Council by Fahlgren Mortine was delivered via Zoom and provided a comprehensive overview of Visit Myrtle Beach's public relations and influencer engagement program for 2025. The agency highlighted its extensive national and international network and tourism expertise, and introduced the full PR team supporting Visit Myrtle Beach. Key components of the 2025 strategy include earned media relations, influencer engagement, integrated partnerships (notably with NBC/Today Show and DotDash Meredith/Southern Living), content development, crisis communication, and performance measurement.

Year-to-date results showed over 18 billion impressions, 20 placements in top-tier media, and high engagement levels across partners and influencers. Fahlgren Mortine outlined aggressive goals for the year, including hosting 70 media events or briefings, securing 25 placements in top 100 outlets, and exceeding 17 billion media impressions. A total of 175 industry member partnerships are targeted, along with achieving over 9 million in reach through influencer engagements.

The agency also addressed reputation management, noting challenges related to syndicated local news coverage and crime-related reporting, while emphasizing proactive storytelling and close coordination with city and regional partners to reinforce positive narratives. Highlights included successful Satellite Media Tours garnering over 6.7 billion impressions and an NBC Today Show partnership delivering over 36 million impressions.

Looking ahead, the agency previewed upcoming initiatives such as a Southern Living culinary event and continued integrated media efforts with major outlets like AFAR, Garden & Gun, and others. The presentation concluded with a reaffirmation of the team's commitment to amplifying the Myrtle Beach brand through thoughtful, multi-channel PR efforts throughout 2025.

Marketing Updates: The August 2025 Marketing Council Update for Visit Myrtle Beach provided a comprehensive review of Visit Myrtle Beach's tourism marketing and reputation management performance amid national economic softening. While the destination continues to outperform 2019 benchmarks, the team acknowledged a year-over-year decline in leads and bookings. Despite these challenges, overall visitor spending is up 3.1%, with notable strength in dining, though attraction spending has plateaued.

The presentation emphasized a recalibrated marketing strategy focused on agility, including shifting approximately $2 million in marketing funds to earlier windows in March–April and summer to boost bookings and elevate average daily rates (ADR). Strategic use of school calendar data has helped tailor messaging by market, and campaigns have increasingly relied on high-conversion channels such as digital search.

Brand perception remains strong. Myrtle Beach has seen an increase in traveler interest—from 46% in 2022 to 62% in 2025—according to national brand studies, and ranks highly in Google search trends and third among U.S. summer destinations on Tripadvisor.

Looking ahead, plans include rolling out the Flipto analytics platform for hotel partners, developing user-generated content tools for on-property promotion, reworking group marketing videos, and beginning the 2026 strategic planning process with a focus on community-centered KPIs and storytelling. The team remains committed to refining its marketing and PR strategies, addressing perception challenges, and supporting industry partners through data, visibility, and ongoing collaboration.

Open Discussion:

- The marketing council has requested to see more of the marketing/advertising pieces to generate a understanding of the brand in use.
- A request was made to see more information national booking windows and the trends in other markets.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:59 PM, Jordan Watkins -Motion, Charlie Belissary - 2nd – Approved – All