**Marketing Council Meeting Minutes**
**April 15, 2025**
**Meeting In MBACC Boardroom**

**Marketing Council Members in Attendance:** Sean Bailey, Charlie Belissary, Suzanne Hinde, Patrick Norton, Jay Smith, Tom Tse

**Staff in Attendance:** Stuart Butler, Jen Brunson, Bob Harris, Tracy Conner, Diane Charno, Johanna Hodge, Wes

**Call to Order:** 9:12 AM

**Minutes Approval:** Patrick Norton -Motion, Jay Smith 2nd – All Approved

**Groups Update:** The April 2025 Marketing Council presentation provided a comprehensive update on group sales, motorcoach engagement, meetings and conventions, lodging, and attractions for the Myrtle Beach area. As of April 10, the group sales team reported 242 group leads, generating 132,060 group lead room nights and 86,665 definite room nights. Myrtle Beach was also announced as the host city for the 2026 South Carolina Governor's Conference on Tourism, marking the return of this major industry event to the area for the first time since 2020.

Recent motorcoach activity included a student-focused FAM tour in collaboration with *Group Travel Leader Magazine* and WorldStrides in Toronto, as well as preparations for the TAP (Travel Alliance Partners) conference in May. Efforts to welcome Canadian motorcoach groups were also highlighted, including personalized welcomes and giveaways, and a site inspection for Cardinal Tours.

On the sports side, a bid has been submitted with Coastal Carolina University to serve as a base camp for a FIFA World Cup team in 2026. Additionally, the team participated in the Sports ETA Symposium to promote Myrtle Beach as a destination for sports tourism.

Zavier Jones was promoted to Assistant Sales Manager.

Meetings and conventions remain a strong focus, with Visit Myrtle Beach earning a "Best in Show" award at the SC Society of Association Executives trade show and the Arrowhead Religious Planner meeting is scheduled for August 2025. Notably, there was a 135% increase in definite meetings bookings in 2024 compared to the prior year, celebrated during Global Meetings Industry Day, where local community partners were recognized for their support.

Significant lodging developments were reviewed, including major renovations and openings across properties such as the Sandcastle Oceanfront Resort, Compass Cove, Ocean Reef, and new builds like Home2Suites and a Hilton Grand Vacations expansion. The Sea Dip Ocean Front Resort and Sun N Sand Resort were noted for upcoming redevelopment plans.

New attractions were also spotlighted, including a joint brewery/distillery by Ole Smoky Distillery and Yee-Haw Brewing Company coming to Broadway at the Beach in 2026, and Guy Fieri's Downtown Flavortown opening at the Myrtle Beach Mall. Updates were also shared on the North Myrtle Beach Sports Complex and the upcoming ONEflight Myrtle Beach Classic golf tournament, which now includes ONEflight as a title sponsor and expanded public events during tournament week.

**Marketing Updates:** The April 2025 Marketing Council update highlighted key trends, performance metrics, and strategic initiatives across the Myrtle Beach tourism and hospitality landscape.

The AMP 2026 pricing and sales timeline were introduced, including the first rate increase in three years, with AMP Flex and Vacation Guide ad packages reflecting moderate pricing adjustments. A motion was made to approve a recommendation to the board on the above.

Patrick Norton-Motion, Charlie Belissary -2nd – All Approved

Myrtle Beach was ranked the #1 beach destination on the East Coast, moving up three spots to #19 nationally, driven by improved hotel review scores.

Tourism revenue performance remained strong, with the 2024 Accommodations Tax and Tourism Development Fee showing double-digit growth over 2019 even after adjusting for inflation, although slightly down compared to 2023. Travel interest remains healthy, with 43% of U.S. leisure travelers indicating they plan to visit Myrtle Beach in the next two years, matching 2022 levels. However, traveler sentiment and Canadian spending have declined, with Canadian Visa card spend down 29% through February 2025.

Forecasts for hotel and vacation rental occupancy suggest a lower-than-expected Q1, but stronger performance projected for Q2 and summer 2025. The STR data and vacation rental indicators show stability, with bookings and revenue holding steady year over year.

Major marketing initiatives included an Amazon Prime Day campaign estimated to generate 40 million impressions, ongoing activations with iHeart and Gibson Gives, and a partnership with the Today Show for Autism Awareness Month featuring "Traveling the Spectrum" Season 2 and the children's book *Splish, Splash, Squawk!*. The Wheel of Fortune "Beach Week" is set to air during the ONEflight Myrtle Beach Classic, supported by a viewer sweepstakes.

Additional promotions include shows filmed in Myrtle Beach—such as *RV There Yet*, *Undiscovered America*, *Travels with Darley*, and *Fly Brothers*—with airings and campaigns continuing through 2026.

A new community newsletter and resident survey were launched to better engage locals and highlight ongoing development in the area. Overall, the report underscored continued momentum in both tourism marketing and community outreach.

**Open Discussion:** Discussion was had around how to share the facts about where people go across the Grand Strand and how to share with Robert Whitehurst.

**Meeting Adjourned**: 10:42 AM, Suzanne Hinde -Motion, Tom Tse - 2nd – Approved – All