Marketing Council Meeting Minutes
November 12th, 2025
Meeting In MBACC Boardroom

Marketing Council Members in Attendance: Sean Bailey, Suzanne Hinde, Matt Klugman, Tom Tse, Jordan Watkins, Ryan Swaim

Staff in Attendance: Stuart Butler, Jen Brunson, Diane Charno, Bob Harris, Melissa Kavanagh, Matt Pivarnik

Call to Order: 11:03 AM

Minutes Approval: Suzanne Hine -Motion, Matt Klugman - 2nd – All Approved

Group Sales Update: Year-to-date results through November 3rd reported 595 group leads, generating 353,856 group lead room nights, with 280,635 room nights confirmed as definite bookings. The Meetings & Conventions team shared several updates, including that Myrtle Beach will host the Rendezvous South tradeshow in March 2026, which features a strong planner-to-supplier ratio. Cyndi Mohr was appointed to the South Carolina Society of Association Executives Board of Directors, marking a significant leadership milestone. Visit Myrtle Beach was also recognized with a "Best of Meetings Today" award from *Meetings Today* magazine. Site inspections continue for key prospects, including SEAHO's 2028 annual conference, projected to bring over 1,200 room nights, and two bids for the School Social Work Association of America conferences in 2027.

The Canadian market remains a focus, with team participation in multiple travel shows in Toronto, Montreal, and Newfoundland, as well as with the Association of Canadian Travel Agents in Quebec. Myrtle Beach was spotlighted by Northstar Travel Agency in October, reaching 150 agents and over 9,000 customers. Planning is also underway for CanAm Days' 65th Anniversary in March 2026, with coordination efforts ongoing with the Canadian Consulate General's office.

The Tour & Travel team had strong presence at the Ontario Motorcoach Association show and hosted client dinners with key operators. While 2026 Canadian group travel is expected to be light, operator planning for 2027 is robust. There is also a focus on growing student travel, including band and choir festival participation.

Sports tourism efforts included attending the TEAMS Conference and the USA Softball Annual Meeting, with future events under discussion. Melissa Jefferson-Wooden, 3-time world champion, made a guest appearance at the Fall Track & Field Clinic. Recent events

included Goombay Kickball, the Myrtle Beach Half Marathon, and the International Senior Softball tournament. Upcoming sports events include the Valhalla Wrestling Beachfront Brawl, the Myrtle Beach Bowl, the 45th Annual Beach Ball Classic, and the ACL College and High School Cornhole Championship.

Finally, the presentation highlighted recent and upcoming tradeshows, as well as updates on lodging developments and new projects. These included the groundbreaking for Compass by Margaritaville, renovations at Marina Inn at Grande Dunes, the Home2Suites under construction at Inlet Square Mall, and redevelopment projects like the Sun and Sand Resort and the Viking Motel. Additional projects included the Hilton Oceans 23 expansion, Hampton Inn & Suites Cherry Grove, and The Shelby's approval for new pickleball courts and an aquatics venue, with construction planned for 2026.

Marketing Updates: The November 2025 Marketing Council update outlined the finalized 2026 Marketing Strategy under the guiding theme: *"Every Dollar Accountable. Every Story Connected. Every Visitor Inspired."* The presentation emphasized that while Q3 STR occupancy outperformed forecast in September, national headwinds remain. Economic pressure continues to suppress travel confidence despite rising discretionary spending in categories like travel and entertainment. The 2026 outlook anticipates a constrained budget environment with a $12 million reduction in available marketing funds. In response, the strategy will prioritize precision, accountability, and smarter messaging -evolving Visit Myrtle Beach's approach from a broad brand engine to a more insight-led, consumer-first marketing ecosystem

Key environmental considerations included persistent bifurcation in demand, growth potential in shoulder seasons, and an aging, diversifying population that increasingly values service quality. The strategic approach will be structured around a "Three Horizon Framework" designed to balance short-term visitation goals with long-term brand equity. Strategic media investments will continue to focus on performance-driven channels, supported by a full-funnel media mix aligned with seasonal travel planning phases. The 2026 messaging calendar will include efforts across paid, earned, and owned channels with clearly defined calls-to-action and measurable content strategies.

Notably, the team presented enhancements to owned channels, including increased production of short-form video, use of rapid content testing models, and stronger integration across social, web, and email. A performance scorecard will be used to measure weekly content impact, driving reinvestment into top-performing creative. A major technological advancement highlighted was the introduction of *MindTrip*, an AI-powered trip planning tool built into VisitMyrtleBeach.com to personalize the discovery experience and feed user behavior insights into CRM and paid media optimization.

Strategic partnerships will continue to serve as major amplifiers. This includes a renewed collaboration with *Wheel of Fortune* for “The Beach Week” airing in May 2026, expected to reach over 40 million viewers and support cross-channel campaigns tied to the Myrtle Beach Classic and other local events. Additional partnerships span sports tourism campaigns, retail brand activations (such as the PLAY-DOH “Ready, Imagine, Cook!” program), and new collaborations with influencers, media outlets, and tour operators to showcase the destination on national and international stages.

Finally, the update previewed the upcoming 2026 agency RFP process and reinforced the marketing team’s focus on measurable results, brand integrity, and continued collaboration with community stakeholders through AMP programs and regional alliances. Overall, the 2026 plan reflects a shift toward leaner, smarter, and more accountable destination marketing amid a changing travel environment.

Open Discussion: N/A

Meeting Adjourned: 12:43 PM, Ryan Swaim -Motion, Suzanne Hinde - 2nd – Approved – All