



## Meeting Minutes

### October 18, 2024 Quarterly Meeting

#### Call to Order

A quarterly meeting of MATPRA Board of Directors and DMO members commenced at 10 a.m. on October 18, 2024, during the organization's quarterly meeting, which was held in Dover, DE.

#### Attendees

- Board attendees included Managing Director Heidi Schlag, Chair Claire Aubel, Chair-Elect Eric Knopsnyder, Secretary Catherine Jenkins, and Treasurer Jake Wynn.
- Full list of MATPRA attendees is available on Google Drive.

#### Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the past meeting minutes was made by Eric Knopsnyder and seconded by Sarah Frey. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Reports

##### Treasurer's Report – by Jake Wynn

- Jake explained the total revenue of the organization is \$55,430, which is different from past years because the money from Marketplace is being collected directly through Wild Apricot online, and we are working with the Marketplace host to reconcile payments. As far as expenses, we are in the final stages of working with VBR so you should see those numbers reflected in the next meeting.
- Jake also said that we are working with our accounting firm to set up Quickbooks so there will be a better system set up in the future and will be easier than Excel spreadsheets which is what we currently use.

A motion to approve was made by Lisa Haggerty and seconded by Kathryn Lucas. The motion passed unanimously.

#### Media Committee Update – by Eric Knopsnyder

- Eric gave updates in place of Carl Whitehill who could not attend the meeting. Ginny Colella has accepted the role of Co Chair for the Media Committee this year and everyone is very excited to have her on board.
- He stated that the committee is planning a meeting in November to start going over applications for next year's Marketplace, with the goal of sending out invites in early February.
- The Media Committee will also be going over the previous policy on influencers/content creators and paid content, and how it should be phrased moving forward to avoid any confusion.
- Kathryn Lucas mentioned that it's difficult to determine a price with influencers because some of them do an exchange rate, and some of them say they're paid, but it all depends and a lot of them are flexible on pricing.
- Eric said that he always leverages MATPRA as much as he can by telling influencers he works with other destinations that are on the way or near his, that way they could get small checks from everybody or they can work on some kind of deal. Mentioning MATPRA to any journalist or content creator has helped his destination a lot in the way that they want to work with us or other DMOs.

#### Marketing Committee Update – by Darby Seymour

- Darby said that the committee is still working with the website committee to get the submission forms set up on the new website to be able to submit the editorials again, and she encouraged anyone willing to join the committee.

#### Social Media Committee Update – by Catherine Jenkins

- Catherine gave the updates in place of Aaron Jumper who could not attend the meeting. She said that the committee is currently trying to manage the social media accounts Monday-Friday, and that Aaron requested at least one or two more people to join the committee if possible.
- She also shared that there was a lot of engagement on social media during and after Marketplace which has been very positive.

#### Membership Committee Update – by Tyler Zeisloft

- Tyler explained that there wasn't much to report, but the committee has been talking about collecting testimonials and working with the Social Media Committee on these to continue sharing the value of MATPRA. He said they have 5 questions for the video they started to create in Hagerstown, and he'd be happy to send out the questions if members could respond with a video of them in their destinations, vertical orientation.

#### Website Committee Update – by Jake Wynn

- Jake gave updates in place of Ali who could not attend the meeting. He said that the committee has been working on making the new website a smoother experience, and that if any member encounters any glitches or issues on the site to please let one of the committee members know so it can be sorted out.
- Jake explained that Ali did a member audit and just recently heard back from the website developer so that we can work on getting the forms up and running for editorials.
- After looking at website traffic from July through end of September, total website sessions were up 21% with the new site so that's very exciting, and there will be more details on that in the future. Jake also reminded everyone to put their biggest holiday events onto the website, or any cool holiday stories to share to help promote your destination.

## Unfinished Business

#### Marketplace Wrap Up – by Kathryn Lucas

- Kathryn thanked everyone who attended Marketplace and everyone who was a sponsor, and there were over 30 destinations that were able to sponsor this year. She explained that a big part of the sponsorships helped bring \$87,000 in revenue to Virginia's Blue Ridge and the expenses were just under that, with a MATPRA profit of around \$10,000. She said VBR had money in the budget to help with expenses if needed, but they didn't have to use it.
- She said she hasn't seen the survey responses from Marketplace yet but is looking forward to seeing the feedback. Heidi chimed in and said the Marketplace survey is available until October 31st, and out of the responses received so far,

there was a lot of positive feedback. Something interesting was that some of the members didn't like the influencers, and some members loved them, so after the survey closes the Board will take another look at it and have a Coffee Chat on that topic soon.

- Claire also chimed in and said that she and Heidi met with SATW (The Society of American Travel Writers) to see if there would be a benefit to a partnership, and that they may do a Coffee Chat together, but they're also confused when it comes to the influencer space and we are at the forefront of a pretty major transition in the industry and we get to set the groundwork on how to move forward from here. She said a lot of the Coffee Chat on this topic will be an open discussion.
- Heidi also said that if you have thoughts on influencers, content creators, or anything Marketplace-related to please make sure to fill out the survey and give your feedback.
- Kathryn said there were a bunch of images taken throughout the weekend at Marketplace, and she will be putting that together and will share a Dropbox link when it's done. She also said she has been tracking social coverage from the event, and there have already been 60 social media posts from the content creator side, from Brittany Brown, Jordan Campbell, and Anna Cook. There have already been some blog posts written, and people reaching out wanting to cover the area. She explained that hosting Marketplace was such a great experience and that VBR couldn't have done it without MATPRA members, and that she is happy to offer any advice on hosting.

#### Marketplace 2025 Update – by Lisa Haggerty

- Lisa said that her team has secured the Reading stadium for the opening reception, and that the ballpark is a prize-winning stadium with many new updates to the space and it's a very entertaining place to be with a swimming pool and a boardwalk, so it will be a good time for everyone attending.
- She said her team is working on FAM tours right now, and the difficulty is that there are a lot of main streets and are trying to figure out how to bring the best of Berks County to both members and journalists. She said they've brought in some local writers and people who have actually worked as tour guides, and we have so many ideas together so they're trying to fine tune it right now.

- Lisa also said that she would really like to see the Marketplace survey results to see what the theory is about what people prefer for dine-arounds, and if they would rather one big dinner or a dine around option. She wants to see feedback before her team makes that decision.

## New Business

### Marketplace 2026 & 2027 – by Claire Aubel

- Claire said that the Board is in the process of talking to folks about hosting Marketplace for 2026 and 2027, and that there are a few destinations that are interested. If any members are interested, to just get on the phone with us and ask us questions because there are some major misconceptions about hosting Marketplace and Kathryn has offered to chat with anyone about her experience hosting as well.
- Claire explained that the Board is working a couple of years out so we can have more solid plans in place and the host will have more time to put things together. She said that Heidi put together a template for an RFP response and she can share that with anyone who's interested, and that there will also be a Coffee Chat on hosting Marketplace and Quarterly Meetings. She also said that we are trying to be mindful of spreading locations throughout the Mid-Atlantic but we can only go where we get applications for, so keep that in mind, but we would like it to be balanced.
- Claire said that the revised Bylaws and Procedures are out for vote now even though there are already 30 votes so that is quorum, but she would love for everyone to be familiar with the Bylaws and how the organization runs so please feel free to look over those and vote. Morgan did an amazing job at going through the language and updating it, and Claire wanted to thank him even though he couldn't be here for this meeting.

Claire Aubel asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting, Aynae Simmons motioned to adjourn and it was seconded by Jake Wynn.

## Announcements

Claire announced that it's our duty as an organization to protect our media contact list because there have been two serious attempts by a PR agency this year alone to poach our media list.

## Work Session

Heidi gave a presentation on America's 250th Celebration, and how members can start preparing as well as discussing how MATPRA can support members in their marketing for this celebration. She highlighted that your destination doesn't have to have revolutionary war history, or that your messaging doesn't need to be focused on history but rather that the main message is we are telling America's story, whatever that means to your destinations.

## Professional Development

Podcasters and Chiropractors, Dr. Megan Epps and Dr. Frank Chi gave a presentation on storytelling and community engagement through podcasting, and shared tangible tips to get started like what equipment and software they use.

Catherine E. Jenkins

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Secretary

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Date of approval