

## Meeting Minutes

### August 12, 2025 Annual Meeting

#### **Pre - Call to Order**

Eric Knopsnyder (EK) recognized Lisa Haggerty for her hard work planning Marketplace and thanked Claire Aubel (CA) for all her hard work and guidance planning 2025 Marketplace. Morgan Christopher (MC) was also recognized for his contributions to the MATPRA Board over the past several years. Heidi Schlag (HS) was recognized for her instrumental work in making Marketplace(s) happen.

New Board members and positions were introduced: Cat Jenkins as new Vice/Incoming Chair, Kathryn Lucas as new Secretary, and Jake Wynn as continuing Treasurer. Claire Aubel transitioned to Past Chair and Eric Knopsnyder transitioned to Chair.

DMOs were encouraged to use MATPRA and Reading-Berks hashtags and mentions on social media to win contest prize at end of week.

Members were also encouraged to think about sponsorships for next year as they plan their budgets; mentioned that one person has already asked about sponsoring next year.

#### **Whova**

Claire explained that we went with the most basic level because we didn't want it to be too much to take on. Acknowledged growing pains of this being the first year with the app and challenges with appointments. Encouraged DMOs to reach out to media directly through messages instead of appointment request function. Will look at leveling up the functionality of appointment scheduling in the app next year. Encouraged members to let us know what is working well and what they are getting hung up on with the app throughout Marketplace.

#### **Call to Order**

Commenced at 12:20 PM on August 12, 2025 during the organization's annual meeting, which was held in Reading, PA.

#### **Approval of quarterly meeting minutes**

Kaitie Berger motioned to approve and Nicole Warner seconded

#### **Reports**

##### **Treasurer's Report - Jake Wynn**

- Ended FY25 with \$8,113.96 deficit

- Down in total revenue by about \$24,000 due in large part to a significant drop in sponsorship for this year's Marketplace. Sponsorships were down \$14,000 compared to last year's Marketplace
- Additionally budgeted grants/foundation income into revenue that ultimately were not able to bring anything in.
- The -\$21,000 and -\$30,8000 numbers are because the Marketplaces are split across fiscal years.
- Expenditures → significantly underspent what we budgeted (\$108,558.48 actual v. (\$124,930.00)

Chris Temple asked where Whova expenditures were. Heidi explained it was included in the Marketplace budget and was about \$2300 (included a discount) and would be around \$4000 next year to increase functionality.

Eric explained that we are not in dire straits, but cannot continue operating at a deficit. Don't want to raise costs for DMO members because we understand that everyone is in tough financial situations. Adding more members would open opps for more revenue, sponsorships. Adding NJ would help this and open up the NYC media market.

Nicole motioned to approve, Janet Pollard seconded.

Approved. None opposed.

### **Proposed bylaw change to add NJ:**

Eric proposed, Mary Grace approved, Morgan Christopher seconded.

All approved, none opposed

Throughout the discussion below, a significant portion of the membership voiced support for adding New Jersey to MATPRA's membership.

It was asked if there was a reason NJ was excluded originally, Eric Knopsnyder explained it was because of Rand McNally definition. Board reasoned that even if that definition hasn't changed, many search results now include NJ in Mid-Atlantic.

A member expressed support but pointed out that a new logo would need to be made, which the Board acknowledged.

A member asked if New Jersey was interested in joining, Morgan Christopher said yes and stated he received communications about NJ DMOs asking how to get into MATPRA. New Jersey is also connected by bridge from Delaware to NJ and NJ is contiguous with PA. Morgan asked the Board to consider including NY as well. Claire Aubel talked to West Virginia but there was no interest there. Morgan stated how membership is vital to MATPRA succeeding.

Aaron Jumper said he had a writer on his pre-FAM who also suggested adding New York to membership. His only concern is that widening geographic radius could make it a 10-hr. drive for some members depending on where things are located. Another member stated that if MATPRA opens membership to New York, they want to make sure there is enough media to balance the increased DMO presence of adding New Jersey and potentially New York.

Eric Knopsnyder answered that this is something the Board has discussed and agrees with the member on. With 105 media applications for 2025 Marketplace, he is encouraged by the media interest, and feels adding NJ will only increase the likelihood of more media interest next year. Morgan suggested making it clear to NJ and NY that there are no “favored nations” in MATPRA and everyone has an equal seat at the table. Kaitie Berger said she has worked with lots of NY DMOs so they are very used to working in a capacity like this.

The Media Committee was asked how they felt about getting many more applicants. Ginny Colella (Chair) said it is very Pennsylvania-heavy right now so they want at least one state and a larger media committee. Eric acknowledged and thanked the Media Committee for all their hard work.

A member noted that assets are \$108K and he remembers days when MATPRA was lucky to have \$10K. The question was raised as to why the budget/deficit was a concern right now. Eric reiterated that we are not in dire straits but really want MATPRA to be able to grow. Eric said we will see how NJ works and then if things go well we can consider NY, but right now the topic of convo is NJ.

Another concern was shared that an increase in Marketplace attendees could make it more difficult to find a destination with the capacity to host. Eric said the Board talked about that as MATPRA wants to be as inclusive as possible for potential hosts. The Board will look at every option possible as far as hosting. He estimated maybe 8 DMOs from NJ joining in the first year (22 total DMOs in NJ); therefore doesn't think it will be that big of an issue next year if the size only increases a little.

A member asked that driving distance for members be taken into account when Marketplace RFPs are being reviewed.

Someone asked if there was a rule about larger DMOs participating because she does not see many of them in MATPRA. Eric said it is likely because some of the larger ones don't see a value but there is nothing precluding them from joining.

It was asked if there would be follow-up on NJ being accepted. Eric said MATPRA will reach out to New Jersey (hasn't had discussions with them yet because it isn't officially approved) once it is approved by members.

## **Proposed bylaw change to change officer terms**

Change language to “At the conclusion of the Annual Meeting” instead of “at the annual meeting”

Motion to approve: Justin Kerns; Second: Chris Temple

Discussion: None

All in favor, none opposed

## **Discussion of FY26 Budget**

Heidi framed the conversation by agreeing that an \$8,000 deficit is not a huge deal because we have \$108K in the bank. However, MATPRA is projecting a \$20K deficit for 2026 which will really start cutting into that balance quickly. Joel Cliff asked if it is a structural deficit, Heidi confirmed yes and that it also includes estimated revenue from NJ DMOs.

Morgan Christopher asked if \$20,000 reflected the sponsorships that wouldn't be received. His destinations are losing Canadian travel because of the political climate and could not sponsor this year. He suggested looking at other ways to monetize (i.e. advertising on website). Expressed concern that more people are going to continue feeling the crunch of the economy.

Janet Pollard asked if DMO sponsorships or vendor sponsorships were declining. Eric said DMO Marketplace sponsorships. Heidi explained that this is only the 2nd year vendors are here so we are going to look at more expansive options.

Jake Wynn pointed out that when the host had to deal with the money for Marketplace, it was a focus for the host to make sure that they broke even. Inflationary pressure is being factored into this proposal of where we are sitting at with this \$20k deficit.

A member requested that vendors not reach out to them so much before Marketplace. Doesn't want 10+ emails a day, on the app, etc. Suggested maybe expanding their time from an hour. Another member seconded that statement but with influencers - getting lots of sales pitches from them ahead of time. Said it surprised her and she had never been sales-pitched by pay-to-play media before

Claire said in the future we would lock down the app to the media until right before the conference. This time the app just went live and people got flooded → giving DMOs time to settle into the app could solve some of these problems

## **Committee Reports**

\*Eric iterated that participating in committees will give you a fuller experience/benefits of MATPRA; “you get out what you put in”

### Website - Ali Morris (Co-Chair)

Asked if anyone was having trouble with logins, no one was. So she said she would like to see more content submitted. Happy to provide any tutorials for people.

April - August: 15,000 views; 5,000 users

- Most is organic search/direct traffic
- Homepage still most-visited
- Erie's Tall Ships Event listing is 2nd most-visited, Marketplace is 3rd
- Encouraged interesting, signature events that will pique media interest

Encouraged members to put holiday content already on their site onto MATPRA's

Want to put together 250th Landing Page → will emulate press release content process with uploading info for the page

- Topics for the next 12 months to give them enough info to package into an article to help generate stories
- First due date end of month (Founding of America - places connected to Presidents), Indigenous Histories, New 250th exhibits, events in 2026, Black history sites, Women's history sites, Civil War/French and Indian/Revolutionary War battlefields; summer activations for 250th, Road Trip to the Revolution, Immigrant Culture, Heritage, and History; Innovation in America; Historic Charm and Welcoming Towns

### Social Media - Mary Grace Kaufmann

- Encouraged follows on LinkedIn, IG, FB; also to join MATPRA members FB group; post this week and use hashtags
- Small committee right now; goal to showcase member destinations and Marketplace
- Encouraged members to join committee
- Process - look at members websites/socials for inspo, try to post about events, recognitions, etc.
- Posting ~once a week
- Members can contact Mary Grace if they have ideas or want things posted, will work it into the social calendar
- Members discussed making sure the private group does not include lapsed members or media

### Marketing - Darby Seymour

- Eric recognized Darby for her work and that she will be leaving Friday
- Shared September press release topic
- Reorganizing committee, asked people to please join
- Currently 3 people, each with a task that they repeat monthly

### Membership - Lindsay Arcuri

- Lindsay just started in role, excited to work with Eric as liaison
- Mary Grace asked any new members to raise their hands (11 new Marketplace attendees)

### Media - Ginny Colella

- Try to do 80-20 traditional media-content creators ratio; understand lots of DMOs don't have budget to work with content creators
- This is how they came to the 1:1 meetings first portion of Marketplace
- Encouraged people to join; Dec work on application, Jan/Feb it goes live
- Morgan encouraged anyone considering to joining to make sure they can be at the in-person meeting to review applicants

### **Vendor Presentations**

Brightr Travel  
Collector Studios  
Hello Social

### **Keynote Speaker**

Adam Stoker (Brand Revolt)

### **Vendor Presentations**

Brand Revolt  
Getaways/Pennsylvania on Display  
ITI Digital

### **Work Session**

- Members were asked to get in 6 small groups (plus one Board member at each group) and brainstorm/discuss different revenue opportunities
- Ideas were then shared and discussed among the larger group.
- Notes from this session attached.

After the work session concluded, Ginny Colella motioned to close, Lindsay Arcuri seconded.