



ATTACHMENT A

Newport and Bristol County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Board of Directors Meeting
November 18, 2025
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Newport and Bristol County Convention & Visitors Bureau board of directors was convened at 12:05 p.m. on November 18, 2025. The meeting was held at the Wyndham Newport Hotel. A quorum was present.

Board Members Present:

- CHAIR** **Keith Chouinard**, Chief Operating Officer, The Newport Experience
(Represents: Hotels – Less than 100 Rooms)
- VICE-CHAIR** **Dr. Melissa Varao**, Director and Department Chair, Department of Business and Economics,
Salve Regina University *(Represents: Member of the Public)*
- TREASURER** **Matt Gray**, President, Ragged Island Brewing Co. *(Appointed by: Town of Portsmouth)*
- Joanna Arrighie**, Director of Hotel Sales, Newport Marriott *(Represents: Hotels – More than 100 rooms)*
- Rebecca Bertrand**, Executive Director, Newport Historical Society *(Appointed by: City of Newport)*
- Meredith Brower**, Owner/Operator, Firefly Mandalas and Meredith Brower Photography
(Appointed by: Town of Tiverton)
- Peter Connerton**, Middletown Town Council Liaison *(Appointed by: Town of Middletown)*
- Keri Cronin**, Owner, DISH/Warren Town Council Liaison *(Appointed by: Town of Warren)*
- Patrick Fitzgerald**, Owner, Sardella's Italian Restaurant *(Represents: Restaurants)*
(Appointed by: City of Newport)
- Ann Hof**, Director of Membership & Special Events, Rhode Island Marine Trades Association
(Appointed by: Town of Barrington)
- Mayor Charlie Holder**, Director of Operations, Gardiner House and Mayor of Newport
(Appointed by: City of Newport)
- Kajsa Kempenaar**, Vice President, Kempenaar Real Estates, Inc. *(Appointed by: Town of Middletown)*
- John Nunes**, Owner, Newport Vineyards *(Represents: Attractions)*
- Sean O'Connor**, Executive Director, The Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation, Inc. and Co-Owner,
Newport OUT *(Appointed by: City of Newport)*
- Kevin O'Leary**, Director of Marketing, Preservation Society of Newport County *(Appointed by:
Town of Middletown)*
- Marla Romash**, Owner, Our Table *(Appointed by: Town of Jamestown)*

Staff Members Present:

- Victoria Cimino, President and CEO
- Alyson Adkins, Vice President of Finance & Human Resources
- Pamela Blauvelt, National Account Executive
- Susan Carlson, National Account Executive
- Clara Crawford, Marketing Coordinator
- Anna Duffy, Senior Executive Assistant
- Cassandra Earle, Communications Director

Claudia Evora, Sales Logistics Administrator
Kathryn Farrington, Vice President of Marketing
Julie Grant, Senior Digital Marketing Manager
Alex Hurd, Director of Sales
Natalie Manning, Creative Director
Tim Walsh, Vice President of Sales

I. Call to Order

- Keith Chouinard called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.
 - Chouinard initiated Roll Call

II. Public Comment

- No public comments were presented

III. Economic Briefing and Outlook – Brian Gottlob, Principal, PolEcon Research

- The U.S. economy is struggling; recession risk has lessened, but there remain risks to the outlook
- Consumers are nervous, but still spending; growth is slipping
- Nationally, hospitality industries appear to be contracting
- Job growth has stagnated in Rhode Island and the U.S.
 - Concentrations in military, healthcare, and education employment
 - Newport's regional economy is outperforming the U.S.
- Job growth likely to continue to stagnate through the first half of 2026
- It's a "No Fire, No Hire" labor market, with low new claims for unemployment
- Newport County will see stronger growth than Rhode Island overall

IV. News and Notes

- None presented

V. Minutes

- Chouinard requested a motion to approve September 16, 2025, meeting minutes
 - Peter Connerton motioned
 - Mayor Charlie Holder provided a second
 - All were in favor

VI. Chair Report

- Welcome New Director
 - Molly McGlew, Strategy Director, Code and Theory
 - Little Compton appointee
 - Chouinard noted his departure and the need to fill two Executive Committee positions
 - Chair – Matt Gray, President, Ragged Island Brewing Co. – Chouinard requested a motion to approve
 - Missy Varao motioned
 - Marla Romash provided a second
 - All were in favor
 - Treasurer – Rebecca Bertrand, Executive Director, Newport Historical Society –

- Chouinard requested a motion to approve
 - Sean O'Connor motioned
 - Romash provided a second
 - All were in favor
 - With Chouinard's departure, the "Hotels with Less Than 100 Rooms" seat needs to be filled
 - The Governance Committee had convened with the candidate and recommended Andy Ross, General Manager, The Brenton – Chouinard requested a motion to approve
 - Varao motioned
 - Connerton provided a second
 - All were in favor

VII. Treasurer's Report

- Matt Gray introduced Discover Newport's new audit service provider, KLR
 - Jamie Hansen, Partner, Nonprofit Services Group, and Mia Bettencourt, Supervisor, Audit Services Group, presented FY25 audit findings
 - Clean unmodified opinion with no material issues to disclose
 - Noted a restricted net position of \$897,611, which reflects the Tourism Improvement District's (TID) contribution to Discover Newport
 - Provided business advisory comments:
 - Establish:
 - Investment Policy
 - Capitalization Policy
 - Segregation of Duties
 - Succession Planning
 - Schedule for Policies and Procedures
 - Crisis Management Plan
 - Strategic Plan
 - Gift Acceptance Policies and Procedures
 - Written Information Security Plan (WISP)
 - Board Communication Portal
 - Document Retention Policy
 - Conflict of Interest Policy
 - Journal Entry Policy
 - Chouinard requested a motion to approve the FY25 Audit Report
 - Varao motioned
 - Rebecca Bertrand provided a second
 - All were in favor
- Gray shared September/October/FYTD financials
 - September 2025
 - September 2025 revenues were ~\$971K – over budget by ~\$31K
 - Hotel tax receipts (§ 44-18-36.1-July) totaled ~\$948K, over budget by ~\$29K
 - Private source revenue was ~\$23K, over budget by ~\$2K
 - September 2025 expenses were ~\$491K, over budget ~\$52K
 - Marketing expenses were ~\$221K, over budget by ~\$52k
 - Revenues have outperformed budget and allocated to increased advertising
 - Sales activities were ~\$46K, under budget by ~\$7K
 - Shift in tactics
 - Product Development and Community/Government Relations expenses were ~\$9K, over budget by \$5K
 - Visitor Center expenses were ~\$3K, over budget by ~\$2K

- Administrative expenses were \$42K, over budget by ~\$3K
 - Due to timing of research and strategic planning payments
 - Allocated costs were ~\$19K, under budget by ~\$2K
 - Personnel costs were ~\$150K, under budget by ~\$1K
 - September unbudgeted-investment return, net was a ~\$17K gain
- October 2025
 - October 2025 revenues were ~\$1.06M – over budget by ~\$107K
 - Hotel tax receipts (§ 44-18-36.1-August) totaled ~\$1.03M, over budget by ~\$107K
 - Private source revenue was ~\$29K, over budget by ~\$900
 - October 2025 expenses were ~\$446K, under budget by ~\$99K
 - Marketing & Communications expenses were ~\$173K, under budget by ~\$57k
 - Shift in email tactics
 - Sales activities were ~\$85K, under budget by ~\$18K
 - Shift in tactics
 - Product Development & Community/Government Relations expenses were ~\$5K, under budget by \$8K
 - Visitor Center expenses were ~\$2K, under budget by ~\$2K
 - Administrative expenses were \$9K, under budget by ~\$13K
 - No legal fees or lobbyist retainer fee
 - Allocated costs were ~\$21K, over budget by ~\$40
 - Personnel Costs were ~\$151K, under budget by ~\$2K
 - October unbudgeted-investment return, net was a ~7K gain
- FY26 YTD
 - Fiscal 2026 YTD revenues were ~\$3.3M, over budget by \$235K
 - Hotel tax receipts (§ 44-18-36.1) totaled ~\$3.2M, over budget by ~\$228K
 - Private source revenue was \$92K, over budget by ~\$7K
 - Fiscal 2026 YTD expenses were ~\$1.7M, over budget by ~\$32K
 - Marketing & Communications expenses were ~\$445K, over budget by ~\$3k
 - Sales activities were ~\$209K, under budget by ~\$14K
 - Product Development & Community/Government Relations expenses were ~\$121K, over budget by \$17K
 - Visitor Center expenses were \$15K, over budget by ~\$9K
 - Administrative expenses were ~\$167K, under budget by \$40K
 - Allocated costs were ~\$81K, under budget by \$2K
 - Personnel costs were ~\$666K, under budget by ~\$5K
 - Fiscal year 2026 YTD unbudgeted-investment return, net was ~\$90K
 - Investment return, net was ~\$71K gain
 - Gain on sale of the Rav 4 was ~\$19K
- Cash on Hand and Investments
 - Discover Newport has ~\$3.85M in Bank Newport
 - \$2.87M for operations
 - \$980K for the TID
 - Accounts payable liability and accrued expenses on October 31 were \$278K, leaving ~\$2.6M cash on hand for operations

- Discover Newport has ~\$2.34M in investments with Charles Schwab, \$1.17M for operations and \$1.17M board designated expenditures
- Hotel Tax
 - August hotel tax revenue increased by ~\$107K or 11% year-over-year
 - ~\$1.03M in 2025 versus ~\$928K in 2024
- FYTD Hotel Tax by Municipality
 - 97% of hotel tax revenue is derived from Newport and Middletown
 - 3% is derived from the remaining seven municipalities
- TID September/October Financials
 - September 2025
 - Revenue was ~\$65K, under budget by ~\$200
 - Expenses totaled ~\$13K, over budget by \$5K
 - October 2025
 - Revenue was ~\$55K, under budget by ~\$1K
 - Expenses totaled ~\$13K, over budget by \$500
 - FYTD
 - Revenue was ~\$237K, over budget by ~\$31K
 - Expenses totaled ~\$64K, over budget by ~\$30
 - TID Assessment Fee – September activity, a one-month lag to financial reports
 - ~\$53K in 2025 versus ~\$49K in 2024
- Chouinard requested a motion to approve the Treasurer’s Report
 - Varao motioned
 - Connerton provided a second
 - All were in favor

VIII. President and CEO Report

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
 - September STR Report (measures hotel performance)
 - Occupancy
 - 2025 = 70.4%
 - 2024 = 67.4%
 - 4.5% increase YOY
 - Average Daily Rate (ADR)
 - 2025 = \$341
 - 2024 = \$325
 - 5% increase YOY
 - Demand/Rooms Sold
 - 2025 = 73,850
 - 2024 = 71,876
 - 3% increase YOY
 - Revenue
 - 2025 = \$26.1M
 - 2024 = \$24M
 - 8% increase YOY
 - Marketing/Public Relations/Sales Program
 - Marketing
 - September Advertising (\$200K)
 - WGBH
 - CT Public Television
 - Comcast: On demand streaming

- October Advertising (\$143K)
 - Linear TV (Providence, Hartford, Boston)
 - Email via Boston Globe and Philadelphia Magazine
 - Digital Display
 - Boston Globe
 - WPRI.com
 - Philadelphia Magazine
 - WGBH
- Top Social Posts
 - White Horse Tavern
 - Fall Events
 - Bowen's Wharf Seafood Festival
- Public Relations – September Earned Media
 - Global Impressions: 2.5B
 - Placements: 44
 - Coverage includes:
 - *Fodor's Travel*
 - *The New York Times*
- September Journalist FAMs
 - Lily Alt: *Good Housekeeping*
 - Katherine Parker: *USA Today, msn, Lonely Planet*
 - JoAnn Greco: *AAA Mid-Atlantic*
 - Geoff Hill: *The Irish Times*
- Public Relations – October Earned Media
 - Global Impressions: 853M
 - Placements: 44
 - Coverage includes:
 - *Observer*
 - *Travel + Leisure*
- October Journalist FAMs
 - Colleen McNally Arnett: *Garden and Gun & Southern Living*
 - Tanya Edwards: *Boston Globe & Yankee*
 - Dahlia Singer: *Conde Nast Traveler, Afar, Thrillist*
 - Cassie Shortsleeve: *Two Truths, Forbes, Huffington Post*
 - Simon Copeland: *The Sun*
 - Jefferson Graham: *Photowalks*
 - Laney and Maddie Henson: @BaggageGirls
- Upcoming FAMs
 - SATW Post-Conference FAM
 - @TheNoGlutenGirl
 - *Fallstaff Magazine*
- Sales: September/October Performance
 - Trade Shows and Events
 - Retreat Resources
 - Destinations East
 - Tour Operator Luncheon
 - NYC Client Events (Luncheon and Evening Reception)
 - Greater Northeast Motorcoach Association
 - IMEX
 - Prestige Global Meeting Source
 - Brand USA Travel Week
 - Meetings Made Easy (MME) Experience

- Site Inspections
 - Successful Events
 - Prestige Global Meeting Source
 - Oribe Hair Products
 - ACCES Board Pre-Visit Meeting
 - DEAMcon27
 - Motley Price
 - ACTRIMS
 - USS Fox Association
 - DNE/CANUSA FAM
 - TJX
 - Arch Diocese of Hartford
 - NAREC
- September booked/new business leads
 - Booked business: 22 pieces of business; 2,855 room nights
 - Leads: 35 leads issued, representing 7,535 room nights
 - October booked/new business leads
 - Booked business: 7 pieces of business; 970 room nights
 - Leads: 32 leads issued, representing 13,709 room nights
 - Cimino congratulated the sales team on being named “Best East CVBs/DMOs” by *Meetings Today*
- Strategic Planning Update
 - Cimino thanked the board of directors for their participation in one-on-one interviews
 - Upcoming staff retreat to take place November 20 – 21
 - Coraggio will present strategic plan at January board meeting
- Research Update
 - Listening sessions took place on October 9 – 10 in Bristol, Jamestown, and Newport
 - Resident survey has been issued
 - Cimino introduced two new metrics dashboards: Zartico and Dean Runyon’s Economic Impacts (to be completed by June 30)
- Tourism Improvement District (TID) Committee Update – presented by Joanna Arrighie, Committee Chair
 - The former TID board is now a standing committee under Discover Newport
 - Core responsibilities
 - Review annual budgets
 - Set sales and marketing priorities
 - Recommend and collaborate on promotional initiatives
 - Consistent meeting schedule
 - Six times a year
 - Strategic alignment
 - Fully integrated with Discover Newport’s marketing efforts
 - Primary goal is to increase mid-week, shoulder season overnight stays
 - In FY26, the committee is focused on spending down funds
 - \$630K in paid advertising
 - \$300K in sales initiatives
 - Advertising will run through May
 - Utilize four tactics:
 - Out-of-home
 - Boston and New York City
 - Digital display, streaming video, consumer emails
 - Expedia and Fodor’s

- Sales
 - Cash rebates and event enhancement for meetings and events taking place during the off-season
 - Two new client events in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia
 - Enhanced tradeshow sponsorships
- Thank You Keith
 - Cimino thanked Chouinard for his service on the board of directors

IX. Old Business

- None presented

X. New Business

- None presented

XI. Adjournment

- Chouinard requested a motion to adjourn
 - Connerton motioned
 - O'Connor provided a second
 - All were in favor
- Meeting adjourned
- The next meeting will take place on January 20, 2026