



ATTACHMENT A

Newport and Bristol County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Board of Directors Meeting
May 20, 2025
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Newport and Bristol County Convention & Visitors Bureau board of directors was convened at 12:08 p.m. on May 20, 2025. The meeting was held at the Newport Marriott Hotel and Spa. A quorum was present.

Board Members Present:

CHAIR TR McGrath, Owner, McGrath Clambakes (*Appointed by: Town of Middletown*)
VICE CHAIR Keith Chouinard, Chief Operating Officer, The Newport Experience
(*Represents: Hotels – Less than 100 Rooms*)
TREASURER Matt Gray, President, Ragged Island Brewing Co. (*Appointed by: Town of Portsmouth*)
SECRETARY Stephan Brigidi, President, Bristol Workshops (*Appointed by: Town of Bristol*)

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*)
Gillian Friedman Fox, Executive Director, Newport Classical (*Appointed by: City of Newport*)
Ann Hof, Director of Membership & Special Events, Rhode Island Marine Trades Assoc.
(*Appointed by: Town of Barrington*)
Mayor Charlie Holder, Director of Operations, Gardiner House and Mayor of Newport
(*Appointed by: City of Newport*)
Rocky Kempenaar, President/Owner, 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*)
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
Pam Blauvelt, National Account Executive/Group Tours
Susan Carlson, National Account Executive
Clara Crawford, Marketing Coordinator
Anna Duffy, Senior Executive Assistant
Cassandra Earle, Director of Communications
Claudia Evora, Sales Logistics Administrator
Kathryn Farrington, Vice President of Marketing
Julie Grant, Senior Director of Digital Marketing

Natalie Manning, Creative Director
Patricia Smurro, Senior National Account Executive
Tim Walsh, Vice President of Sales

I. Call to Order

- TR McGrath called the meeting to order at 12:08 p.m.

II. Public Comment

- No public comments were presented

III. Welcome from Newport Marriott Hotel and Spa

- McGrath introduced Walter Andrews, General Manager
 - Andrews welcomed meeting attendees
 - Introduced Joanna Arrighie, Director of Hotel Sales
 - Provided an overview of current and future renovations

IV. Rhode Island Commerce Corporation Briefing – Mark Brodeur, Vice President of Tourism

- McGrath introduced Mark Brodeur
- Brodeur provided a briefing on:
 - History Channel partnership
 - Augmented reality installation
 - Saks 5th Avenue partnership
 - International visitation/forecast
 - Development Plan update
 - America 250
 - Wedding pages on visitrhodelisland.com
 - Hotel of the Month campaign

V. Minutes

- McGrath requested a motion to approve the March 18, 2025, meeting minutes
 - Sean O'Connor motioned
 - Peter Connerton provided a second
 - All were in favor

VI. News and Notes

- TR McGrath reminded board members that the "Roundtable Discussion" is evolving, noting that updates are not a mandate – moving forward please let Victoria Cimino know if you have something to share and you'll be added to the agenda

- Updates included:
 - Mayor Charlie Holder
 - The City of Newport is focused on several items around infrastructure needs, i.e. First Beach and the Cliff Walk
 - Gillian Friedman Fox
 - Thanked the group for the opportunity to serve on the board of directors and the search committee
 - Congratulations were offered
 - Marla Romash
 - Concern from the business community due to slow winter performance
 - Jamestown budget issues:
 - Housing bond
 - Fort Getty Park & Campground
 - Keri Cronin
 - Annual walking map has seen an increase in distribution
 - Winter business was slow
 - Discover Warren's website has been updated
 - John Nunes
 - "Grapes like sun"
 - Cimino concurred
 - 30-Year anniversary of Newport Vineyards; year-long anniversary celebration
 - Stephan Brigidi
 - Proposed hotel
 - Possibility of new hotel at decommissioned school
 - Sean O'Connor
 - Jamestown Newport Ferry launched May 17
 - Rocky Kempenaar
 - Middletown project update
 - Meredith Brower
 - Sunset Music Series to begin soon
 - Four Corners brochure
 - Tiverton Farmers Market

VII. Chair Report

- Board Terms
 - Overview of current terms
 - Two open seats
 - Hotels with more than 100 rooms
 - City of Newport appointee (Gillian Friedman Fox's seat)
 - Term expires on June 30, 2025; not eligible for renewal
 - Rocky Kempenaar - Town of Middletown appointee
 - TR McGrath - Town of Middletown appointee
 - First term expires on June 30, 2025; eligible for an additional three-year term
 - Peter Connerton
 - Charlie Holder
 - Sean O'Connor
 - Victoria Cimino will circulate a second-term agreement
 - Term expires on June 30, 2026; not eligible for renewal
 - Andrew Moore

- First term expires on June 30, 2026; eligible for an additional three-year term
 - Stephan Brigidi
 - Meredith Brower
 - Keri Cronin
 - Patrick Fitzgerald
 - Matt Gray
 - Second term expires on June 30, 2027; not eligible for renewal
 - Ann Hoff
 - Keith Chouinard
 - John Nunes
 - Missy Varao
 - Marla Romash is fulfilling her predecessor's term, which expires on June 30, 2026; Marla is eligible for two additional three-year terms
 - Governance
 - TR McGrath stated that the Governance Committee has convened and is prepared to make a recommendation on two roles
 - Treasurer - Matt Gray, President, Ragged Island Brewing Co.
 - McGrath requested a motion to approve
 - Romash motioned
 - Connerton provided a second
 - All were in favor
 - Hotels with more than 100 rooms - Joanna Arrighie, Director of Hotel Sales, Newport Marriott Hotel & Spa
 - McGrath requested a motion to approve
 - Connerton motioned
 - Holder provided a second
 - All were in favor

VIII. Treasurer's Report

- Matt Gray shared financial statements for March/April 2025
 - March Activity
 - Revenues were \$174K – over budget by \$38K
 - Hotel tax receipts (§ 44-18-36.1-January) totaled \$152K, over budget by \$37K
 - Private source revenue was \$22K, over budget by \$1K
 - Expenses were \$545K, \$11K over budget
 - Marketing expenses were \$359K, under budget by \$7k
 - Sales activities were \$84K, under budget by \$3K
 - Visitor Center expenses were \$2K, slightly under budget
 - Administrative expenses were \$69K, over budget by \$11K
 - Incurred additional legal fees for two trademark renewals and CEO contract review, as well as the CEO relocation package
 - Allocated costs were \$20K, under budget by \$1K
 - April Activity
 - Revenues were \$169K – under budget by \$5K
 - Hotel tax receipts (§ 44-18-36.1-February) totaled \$144K, under budget by \$4K
 - Private source revenue was \$24K, under budget by \$1K

- Expenses were \$519K, under budget by \$35K
 - Marketing expenses were \$273K, under budget by \$33k
 - Broadcast advertising invoices came in lower than budget
 - Sales activities were \$131K, under budget by \$2K
 - Visitor Center expenses were \$25K, under budget by \$9K
 - Travel guide cost was lower than budget (new vendor)
 - Administrative expenses were \$55K, under budget by \$5K
 - Allocated costs were \$19K, under budget by \$2K
 - FYTD Activity
 - Revenues were \$5M- over budget by \$525K
 - Hotel tax receipts (§ 44-18-36.1) totaled \$5M, over budget by \$408K
 - Private source revenue was \$238K, over budget by \$3K
 - Expenses were \$4.9M - over budget by \$96K
 - Marketing expenses were \$2.7M, over budget by \$140k
 - Revenues have outperformed budget and dollars were shifted to increase broadcast advertising
 - Sales activities were \$1.1M, under budget by \$56K
 - Due to timing of travel trade advertising placement/invoices
 - Visitor Center expenses were \$88K, under budget by \$12K
 - Savings in printed collateral materials (\$7K) and personnel expenses (\$5K)
 - Administrative expenses were \$720K, over budget by \$13K
 - Due to CEO search
 - Allocated expenses were \$223K, over budget by \$11K
 - IT contract with Rapid Scale was extended two months (\$9K) (Feb vs. Dec)
 - Cash on Hand and Investments
 - Discover Newport has \$1.7M in Bank Newport for operations
 - Accounts payable liability on April 30 was \$318K, leaving ~ \$1.4M cash on hand for operations
 - Discover Newport has \$2.2M in investments with Charles Schwab, \$1.1M for operations and \$1.1M board designated expenditures
 - February Hotel Tax Revenue (§ 44-18-36.1)
 - February increased by \$9k or 7% year-over-year
 - \$144k in 2025 versus \$135K in 2024
 - FYTD hotel tax receipts are up 11% versus the same period in 2024
 - TR McGrath requested a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report
 - Peter Connerton motioned
 - Rocky Kempenaar provided a second
 - All were in favor
- Matt Gray introduced Victoria Cimino who presented the FY26 budget recommendation; the budget will be included on the June 17 board meeting agenda for approval
 - Cimino provided an overview of new classifications
 - All personnel costs have been removed from individual departments and will be aggregated in total
 - Leisure & Marketing is now called Marketing & Communications
 - There is a new expense group, Product Development & Community/Government Relations (PDCGR)
 - The following categories have been moved from marketing to PDCGR:
 - Industry education (formerly event hosting/marketing meetings)
 - Networking
 - Local sponsorships

- The following categories have been moved from administration to PDCGR:
 - Networking
 - Hospitality (now included in networking)
 - All Rhode Island-based conferences & events
 - Revenue
 - Budgeted to be \$5.76M vs \$5.78M in FY 25, representing a 0.4% decrease
 - Hotel tax revenue is budgeted to be \$5.49M, flat to FY25
 - Private source revenue is budgeted to be \$264K
 - 37% decrease in trade show participation
 - Reduction in hotel participation
 - 43% decrease in client/FAM events
 - FAM expenses will be billed to the RI Department of Commerce differently
 - Interest - budgeting a 3% interest rate
 - Expenses
 - Budgeted to be \$5.76M vs \$5.8M in FY25, decreasing by 1%
 - Marketing & Communications is budgeted at \$1.96M, decreasing by 7%
 - Public relations is budgeted to decrease by 24% - will not host a James Beard event in FY26
 - Advertising is budgeted to decrease by 7% due to a change in strategy re: local broadcast advertising
 - Sales is budgeted at \$620K, a 3% decrease
 - This budget will not include the following:
 - Discover New England Summit
 - Meetings Professional International luncheon
 - Smart Meetings trade show
 - PDCGR is budgeted at \$349K, a 15% decrease
 - Negotiated a \$35K DATTCO sponsorship versus \$87K in FY25
 - Visitor Center is budgeted at \$44K, a 15% decrease
 - Purchased new brochure racks in FY25, which will not be repeated in FY26
 - Administration is budgeted at \$523K, an 88% increase
 - Adding research:
 - Resident sentiment (\$40K) – a one-time expense
 - Advertising Effectiveness/ROI/Economic Impact Dashboard (\$150K); FY 27 will be substantially less than this amount
 - Adding strategic planning (\$70K) – a one-time expense
 - Organization analysis
 - Strategic plan
 - Professional fees are increasing by 14% (legal counsel)
 - Allocated expenses are budgeted at \$251K, an 18% decrease
 - Lease expenses will decrease by 8%, the lease on the printer/copier was renegotiated
 - Shared computer expenses are budgeted to decrease by 38%, eliminated Rapid Scale cloud network
 - Personnel costs
 - 2.5% cost-of-living adjustment (in-line with the Social Security Administration)
 - Bonus of \$80K (tied to goals moving forward)
 - 6% increase in medical insurance

- Retirement contributions will be realigned to ensure the organization is operating within the 3 – 5% national average

IX. President and CEO Report

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
 - March STR Report (measures hotel performance)
 - Occupancy
 - 2025 = 45.87%
 - 2024 = 43.47%
 - 5.5% increase YOY
 - Average Daily Rate (ADR)
 - 2025 = \$164.31
 - 2024 = \$158.33
 - 3.8% increase YOY
 - Demand/Rooms Sold
 - 2025 = 24,990
 - 2024 = 22,855
 - 9.34% increase YOY
 - Revenue
 - 2025 = \$4.1M
 - 2024 = \$3.6M
 - 12% increase YOY
- Marketing/Public Relations/Sales Program
 - Marketing
 - Target Markets
 - NYC, Hartford, Hartford, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Providence
 - Target Demographic
 - Females, aged 35 – 60 years old, Household Income \$250K+
 - Advertising
 - January – April (\$609K Budget)
 - Linear TV
 - Consumer emails
 - Digital
 - Streaming TV
 - Influencer
 - January – April Familiarization (FAM) Tours
 - Katie Powers @CurlsandCuisines
 - Alaina Pinto @AlainaPinto
 - Caitlin Valentin @BeFatBeHappy
 - Megan Indoe @BoboandChichi
 - Ian Brownhill @ian.brownhill
 - Tara Teal @RhodelslandFoodandTravel
 - Katie Cororan @RhodelslandNative
 - @BucketListBoston
 - @BlakeSwanson
 - @TheCityLists

- Public Relations
 - January – April Earned Media
 - Global impressions: 3.2B
 - Placements: 96
 - Coverage includes:
 - *Travel + Leisure*
 - *Conde Nast Traveler*
 - *Forbes*
 - *Cosmopolitan*
 - *Food & Wine*
 - January – April FAMs
 - Adam Callaghan, *Food & Wine*
 - Karen Cicero, *Good Housekeeping*
 - Stasia Brewczynski, *Eater Boston*
 - Diane Bair, *Boston Globe*
 - Eileen Coffey Wright, *Pure Wonder*
 - Elisabeth Sherman, *Parents Magazine*
 - International Journalists
 - Eaghan Corry (Ireland)
 - Wolfgang Greiner (Germany)
 - Claire Dodd (UK)
 - Stephane Aubouard (France)
 - Steve Hartridge (UK)
 - Emily Johnston (UK)
- Sales
 - March/April performance
 - Tradeshow and Events
 - Pennsylvania Bus Association, Manheim, PA
 - Global Meetings Industry Day, Washington, D.C.
 - Discover New England Summit & Marketplace, Newport, RI
 - Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) CVB Reps Capital Chapter Business Events Industry Week, Washington, D.C.
 - Washington, D.C. CVB Reps Client Event, Washington, D.C.
 - Meeting Planners International Greater New York Financial & Insurance Conference Professionals Executive Leadership Summit, New York City, NY
 - Site inspections & client events
 - TJX Companies
 - Trust
 - Fairmarkit
 - Nestle Purina
 - Marriott Sales
 - Hartford client lunch
 - Prestige Global Meeting Source
 - March booked/new business leads
 - Booked business: 17 pieces of business; 3,303 room nights
 - Group leads: 38 leads; 6,089 room nights
 - April booked/new business leads
 - Booked business: 18 pieces of business; 1,396 room nights
 - Group leads: 26 leads; 6,129 room nights

- Tourism Improvement District (TID) Update
 - Newport Tourism Marketing Management Authority dissolved
 - Discover Newport and participating hotels to create a voluntary TID, which will go live on July 1
- Procurement
 - Discover Newport has issued four requests for proposals
 - Strategic planning
 - Organizational Assessment and Optimization
 - Research
 - Resident sentiment study

X. New Business

- Stephan Brigidi proposed a \$35K grant for four historic tourism initiatives
 - Discussion followed
 - In the spirit of equity and fairness, it was determined that a grant process needs to be developed

XI. Old Business

- None presented

XII. Adjournment

- TR McGrath requested a motion to adjourn
 - Peter Connerton motioned
 - Marla Romash provided a second
 - All were in favor
- Meeting Adjourned
- The next meeting will take place on June 17, 2025