



ATTACHMENT A

Newport and Bristol County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Board of Directors Meeting
June 17, 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 June 17, 2025. The meeting was held at The Pell Center at Salve Regina University. 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*)

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*)
Mayor Charlie Holder, Director of Operations, Gardiner House and Mayor of Newport
(*Appointed by: City of Newport*)
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
Anna Duffy, Senior Executive Assistant
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

- TR McGrath called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.
 - Two new directors were introduced:
 - Joanna Arrighie, Director of Hotel Sales, Newport Marriott Hotel and Spa
 - Rebecca Bertrand, Executive Director, Newport Historical Society
- McGrath introduced Dr. Nancy Schreiber, Provost/V.P. of Public Affairs at Salve Regina University
 - Schreiber welcomed meeting attendees to the Pell Center
 - Provided an overview of Salve student life and new construction on campus

II. Public Comment

- No public comments were presented

III. U.S. Travel Association (USTA) Policy Briefing – Nicole Porter, Vice President of Political Affairs

- Porter joined the meeting via Zoom and provided multiple policy priorities:
 - Upgrades to air traffic control
 - Brand USA's budget cut/Senate negotiations to preserve funding
 - U.S. Customs delays
 - Decade of major American events:
 - 2028 Olympics to be held in Los Angeles
 - FIFA World Cup in 2026 will take place in eleven U.S. host cities

IV. News and Notes

- Updates included:
 - Stephan Brigidi
 - Provided an update on July 4th activities, as well as the Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Sculpture unveiling
 - Joanna Arrighie
 - Newport Marriott has completed outdoor space renovations

V. Minutes

- McGrath requested a motion to approve May 20, 2025, meeting minutes
 - Mayor Holder motioned
 - Marla Romash provided a second
 - All were in favor

VI. Chair Report

- McGrath stated that the Governance Committee has met and is prepared to make a recommendation on four positions:
 - Chair – Keith Chouinard, Chief Operating Officer, The Newport Experience
 - McGrath requested a motion to approve
 - Peter Connerton motioned to approve
 - Keri Cronin provided a second
 - All were in favor

- Vice Chair - Dr. Missy Varao, Director and Department Chair – Business and Economics, Salve Regina University
 - McGrath requested a motion to approve
 - Marla Romash motioned to approve
 - Matt Gray provided a second
 - All were in favor
- Treasurer - Matt Gray, President, Ragged Island Brewing Co.
 - McGrath requested a motion to approve
 - Keri Cronin motioned to approve
 - Holder provided a second
 - All were in favor
- Secretary - Stephan Brigidi, President, Bristol Workshops
 - McGrath requested a motion to approve
 - Cronin motioned to approve
 - Connerton provided a second
 - All were in favor
- McGrath noted that it was the final meeting for both him and Rocky Kempenaar (absent)
 - Victoria Cimino presented Pamela Baldwin and McGrath with a “Hospitality Champion” print to recognize their service and contributions to Discover Newport

VII. Treasurer’s Report

- Matt Gray shared May 2025 financials
 - May 2025 revenues were ~ \$218K – under budget by ~ \$59K
 - Hotel tax receipts (§ 44-18-36.1-March) totaled ~ \$199K, under budget by ~ \$51K
 - Private source revenue was ~ \$20K, under budget by ~ \$8K
 - May 2025 expenses were ~ \$421K, \$21K under budget
 - Marketing expenses were ~ \$200K, under budget by ~ \$49k
 - Due to timing of advertising
 - Sales activities were ~ \$137K, over budget by ~ \$26K
 - Additional travel trade advertising was placed
 - Visitor Center expenses were ~ \$12K, over budget by ~ \$6K
 - Administrative expenses were \$53K, under budget by ~ \$2K
 - Allocated costs were ~ \$19K, under budget by ~ \$2K
 - May unbudgeted-investment return, net was ~ \$19K gain
- Fiscal YTD Activity
 - Fiscal 2025 revenues were ~ \$5.5M- over budget by \$352K
 - Hotel tax receipts (§ 44-18-36.1) totaled ~ \$5.2M, over budget by ~ \$357K
 - Private source revenue was \$258K, under budget by ~ \$5K
 - Fiscal 2025 expenses were ~ \$5.3M - over budget by ~ \$72K
 - Marketing expenses were ~ \$2.9M, over budget by ~ \$91k
 - Revenues have outperformed the budget, and dollars have shifted to increase broadcast advertising
 - Sales activities were ~ \$1.3M, under budget by ~ \$30K
 - Due to timing of travel trade advertising placement/invoices
 - Visitor Center expenses were \$100K, under budget by ~ \$7K
 - Savings in personnel expenses

- Administrative expenses were ~ \$773K, over budget by \$10K
 - Due to CEO search
 - Allocated expenses were ~ \$240K, over budget by \$7K
 - IT contract with Rapid Scale was extended two months (\$9K) (Feb vs. Dec)
 - Fiscal year 2025 unbudgeted-Investment return, net was ~ \$133K gain
- Cash on Hand and Investments
 - Discover Newport has ~ \$1.5M in Bank Newport for operations
 - Accounts payable liability and accrued expenses on May 31 were \$304K, leaving ~ \$1.1M cash on hand for operations
 - Discover Newport has ~ \$2.2M in investments with Charles Schwab, \$1.1M for operations & \$1.1M board designated expenditures
- Hotel Tax - March activity
 - March hotel tax revenue increased by \$14k or 7% year-over-year
 - ~ \$198k in 2025 versus ~ \$184K in 2024
 - Fiscal YTD hotel tax receipts are up 11% versus the same period in 2024
 - ~ \$5.2M in 2025 versus ~ \$4.7M in 2024
- FYTD Hotel Tax
 - 96% of hotel tax revenue is derived from Newport & Middletown
 - 4% is derived from the other 7 towns
- McGrath requested a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report
 - Patrick Fitzgerald motioned
 - Connerton provided a second
 - All were in favor
- FY26 Budget Recommendation
 - 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
 - McGrath requested a motion to approve the FY26 Budget as presented
 - Romash motioned
 - Connerton provided a second
 - All were in favor

VIII. President and CEO Report

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
 - April STR Report (measures hotel performance)
 - Occupancy
 - 2025 = 56.7%
 - 2024 = 59%
 - 3.8% decrease YOY

- Average Daily Rate (ADR)
 - 2025 = \$189.66
 - 2024 = \$193.18
 - 1.82% decrease YOY
- Demand/Rooms Sold
 - 2025 = 60,093
 - 2024 = 64,195
 - 6.4% decrease YOY
- Revenue
 - 2025 = \$11.5M
 - 2024 = \$12.5M
 - 8% decrease YOY
- Marketing/Public Relations/Sales Program
 - Marketing
 - Target Markets: Hartford, Boston, NYC, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Providence
 - Target Demographics: Female, 35-60 years old, Household income \$250K+
 - May's Advertising (\$106K Budget)
 - Linear TV
 - Digital Ads
 - On Demand Streaming
 - Top Social Posts
 - Rail Explorers (more than one million views)
 - Newport Oyster & Chowder Festival
 - Memorial Day Weekend
 - Bamboo Birds at Blithewold
 - Influencer Marketing
 - May - Familiarization (FAM) Tours
 - Tara Teal @RhodelslandFoodandTravel
 - Mawra Osman @TheCityLists
 - KateWeiser @BucketListBoston
 - AlainaPinto @AlainaPinto
 - BlakeSwanson @BlakeSwanson
 - Public Relations – May Earned Media
 - Global Impressions: 175M
 - Placements: 45
 - Coverage includes:
 - MSNBC
 - AFAR
 - May Journalist FAMs
 - Laurie Bain Wilson, *Nat Geo Traveler*
 - Madeline Weinfield, *Elle Décor*
 - Brittany Robinson, *Lonely Planet*
 - Claire Brito, *Town & Country*
 - Sales Program: May Performance
 - Trade Shows and Events
 - Discover Newport Destination Overview
 - Discover New England (DNE) Austrian Trade FAM
 - Brand USA UK & Ireland Mega FAM
 - Retreat Resources Trade Show
 - New England Society of Association Executives (NESAE) Tradeshow

- Site Inspections
 - U.S. Air Force Bomb Navigator Reunion
 - Commanderie de Bourdeaux Conference
 - Beekley Corporation
 - Prelude Tours
- May booked/new business leads
 - Booked business: 15 pieces of business; 2,148 room nights
 - FYTD: Closed on 138 pieces of business, representing ~23,000 room nights
- Tourism Improvement District (TID) Update
 - Cimino provided background on the need for a Voluntary TID
 - Participating hotels will remit payment directly to Discover Newport
 - Contracts due on June 27

IX. Old Business

- Stephan Brigidi shared thoughts on funds appropriated to the Warwick Providence Convention and Visitors Bureau; discussion followed

X. New Business

- None presented

XI. Adjournment

- McGrath requested a motion to adjourn
 - Connerton motioned
 - Gray provided a second
 - All were in favor
- Meeting adjourned
- The next meeting will take place on September 16, 2025