

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 1, 2022  
GREATER RICHMOND CONVENTION CENTER  
10:15 A.M.**

**I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:**

- A. Welcome: Chairman Dan Schmitt called the meeting to order at 10:21 a.m., established a quorum and led the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. Chairman Schmitt welcomed the group and remarked about the outstanding Valor Awards breakfast that occurred earlier in the morning. It was also noted that Chairman Schmitt would need to depart the meeting early at 11:15 a.m. and that Vice-Chair Angela Kelly-Wiecek would take the gavel at that time.
- B. **MOTION** Minutes: The minutes from the September 15<sup>th</sup> meeting were reviewed. Mr. Todd Parnell made a motion to adopt the minutes which were seconded by Ms. Angela Kelly-Wiecek. The vote passed.

**II. NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. **MOTION** Audit Results: Chairman Schmitt introduced Lisa Jones and Kim Baine with A. G. Reese & Associates, P.C. The audit along with management letters to the board were distributed for review. It was noted that the financial statement disclosures were neutral, consistent and clear and no difficulties were encountered while performing the audit. The Auditors thanked the staff for being so prepared for the audit. There were no questions regarding the audit. Mr. Brian Anderson made a motion to accept the audit as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Neil Amin. The vote passed.
- B. BLK RVA Update: J.C. Poma introduced Ms. Malissa Whitby, Chair of BLK RVA. (It was noted that Tameka Jefferson, Community Relations Manager could not attend the meeting.) Ms. Whitby gave a brief overview of the BLK RVA campaign that launched in August 2019 which covers the pillars of Arts & Entertainment, Food & Drink, Community and History. The BLK RVA Advisory team consists of Malissa Whitby, Amy Wentz, Free Bangura, Kia Jordan, Kevin Holland, Steven Taylor and Clarissa Bannor. The campaign promotes approximately 1,900 businesses on [www.visitblkrrva.com](http://www.visitblkrrva.com) and has had more than 231,000 website page views with over 13,000 social media followers. Community event dollars awarded total \$19,550 and have been given to groups such as Untold RVA, Elegba Folklore Society's Juneteenth Event, RVA Black Pride and others. BLK RVA Resource documents have been created to help with B2B outreach and a student intern from Virginia State University worked with the campaign during the summer of 2022 to help promote the efforts. Altria, Capital One, Dominion Energy and Atlantic Union have all sponsored the BLK RVA efforts through the Foundation. Chairman Schmitt and the Board thanked Malissa and J.C. for their efforts regarding this campaign.
- C. Board Member Recognition: Chairman Schmitt recognized the following board members whose terms will expire 12/31/22. Their dedication and support of Richmond Region Tourism was acknowledged by the Board of Directors:
- Chris Tsui 2019- 2022  
Jennifer Kostyniuk 2017-2022  
Lester Johnson 2018-2022
- D. President's Report: Mr. Jack Berry reported that a new Public Relations Manager has been hired. Katie Potter joined the organization on November 29<sup>th</sup>. The only other opening at this time is a part-time Business Development Coordinator position.

The 'FY23-24 Business Plan' was distributed, and Mr. Berry noted that it was submitted to the funding jurisdictions as a part of the FY24 budget process submission.

**MOTION** The FY24 budget was reviewed. The budget for FY24 is \$8,375,480 and the contribution from the jurisdictions is based on 2% of the hotel sales from FY22. The reserves were discussed, and after the audit was complete for FY22 there were \$4,863,704 in total reserves. \$2,851,516 is being used for FY23, and the Foundation Reserves are \$87,226 (out of the \$4.8 million). Approximately \$910,361.30 was not spent in FY22 and went into reserves at 6/30/22. Total RRT reserves then stands at \$1,924,962. Mr. Brian Anderson made a motion to adopt the FY24 budget. The motion was seconded by Ms. Angela Kelly-Wiecek. The vote passed.

The Board discussed updating the current reserve policy and has decided to pause and wait for the Tourism Improvement District work to be finalized. The executive committee met on November 28<sup>th</sup> and decided to purchase certificates of deposit with \$1.5 million of surplus reserve funds. The committee discussed a proposal to purchase certificates of deposit (CDs) as a way of investing surplus dollars to earn additional interest. A proposal from our investment banker at the Principal outlined 3,6,9 or 12 month investments with the potential for up to 4.8% in interest.

The finances through August were reviewed and it was noted that our new departments such as Destination Sales, Sports and Visitor Experience are now broken out to be more specific in the financials. It was also noted that Richmond Region Tourism applied for the Employee Payroll Tax Credit and will receive approximately \$347,000.

Market Trends: Mr. Berry reviewed the trends through October noting that occupancy levels have flattened but that hotel average daily rates are high. Northern Virginia and Williamsburg continue to struggle while Central Virginia is doing well.

Mr. Schmitt reminded the Board to review the Board Department Report which was sent electronically but also distributed at the meeting.

### III. OLD BUSINESS & WRAP-UP:

- A. Governance Report: Ms. Lisa Sims, Chair of the Governance Committee, also thanked and recognized the board members that are rolling off of the board and noted that the City of Richmond has appointed Mr. Michael Lindsey with the Lindsey Food Group as well as Mr. Paulin Cheatham with Dominion Energy. The County of Henrico is working on their board appointment is considering the appointment of Renee Haltom from the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, who resides in Henrico County.
- B. Tourism Improvement District Update: Katherine O'Donnell updated the board on the progress being made. She reported that we launched the petition phase of the process in November and to date, we have received petitions from many hotels in the region. The percentages are:

Ashland 65%  
Chesterfield 64%  
Colonial Heights 49%

Hanover 79%  
Henrico 57%  
Richmond 66%

Staff is working to pick up the original, signed petitions and many were obtained at a petition signing reception that was held November 1<sup>st</sup>. Meetings with jurisdictions have occurred and we expect that all petitions will be received by the end of the year. The jurisdictional attorneys have reviewed the legal documents and the ordinance and approval process will begin in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2023. The TID Sub-Committee will be a sub-committee of the RRT Board of Directors, and their Chair will have a seat on the RRT Board of Directors. Mayor Kochuba with Colonial Heights inquired about the government travel that is exempt from tax. Ms. O'Donnell stated that government travel is exempt from this fee.

C. Tourism Master Plan Initiatives:

Headquarter Hotel: Mr. Berry reported that the new headquarter hotel project for the City of Richmond is underway with the release of an RFI by the City and Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority. A question and answer session as well as a tour of the Coliseum area was presented to the interested parties on November 29<sup>th</sup>. Approximately 80 people attended the tour. Chairman Schmitt noted that the timing is perfect for the hotel project as well as the Diamond District project and the momentum on both projects is great news.

Workforce Development: Mr. J.C. Poma reported that Richmond Region Tourism helped facilitate the relationship between Bryant and Stratton and Va State University for a brand new "bridge gap" program for tourism and hospitality management students. The program gives Bryant and Stratton two-year hospitality and tourism graduates direct acceptance into Va State's hospitality management program to graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree. This would also apply to immediate acceptance to the J. Sergeant Reynolds Culinary hospitality program. Richmond Region Tourism also co-hosted a career fair with Bryant and Stratton and SIVA hospitality that approximately 75 students attended. Mr. Poma also thanked Nancy Thomas with InUnison for their help with the workforce efforts. Ms. Thomas reported that they are developing webinars with Warren Whitney for businesses to participate in for assistance. Mr. Brian Anderson mentioned the ChamberRVA's Talent Summit which is upcoming and will also help to streamline internships with businesses.

Inspiration Campaign Update: Mr. Tom Loftus reported that all stakeholder interviews are complete and that the advertising agency, Padilla, is working on the creative for the inspiration campaign. The campaign is expected to launch near the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2023. Mr. Loftus also reported that the Marketing Department recently won the HSMAI (Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International) Adrian Award for the "*Get Here on A Tank of Gas or Less*" campaign. The Marketing Department also recently launched a new campaign as outlined below:

1. Seniors Skip Day: Have a day off work or taking a break from grandparent duty? This floating holiday for traveling seniors offers a twist on the high school tradition of skipping class. This time, the other seniors can enjoy a day or two free from responsibilities.
2. Gotcha Dog Day: Celebrate your "Gotcha Dog" anniversary with your four-legged friend in the Richmond Region, also known as RVA. The area boasts pet-friendly venues including hotels, restaurants, breweries, trails and parks — ensuring that your pet's visit will be as enjoyable as yours. Share your pet's favorite moments from "Gotcha Day" on social media! #GotchaDayRVA #VisitRichmond

3. Get a Grip Day: Everyone deserves time to get a grip, regain their balance and focus on the road ahead. Get a Grip Day takes this wisdom literally as a day for cycling through RVA destinations on trails for every skill level, from beginner to seasoned pro. No bike? No problem! You can find several places offering rentals from traditional bikes to state-of-the-art electric models. Richmond parks provide over 20 miles of true singletrack, and local parks in the area offer multi-use and bike-only trails to help you cycle your way to better balance.

4. Feast of the 7 Beers: Over 30 craft breweries provide opportunities for this tasty spin on the traditional "Feast of the 7 Fishes." Sample the beers as you explore RVA over a long weekend, using a ride service or designated driver for a fun, safe celebration.

D. Other Business: Chairman Schmitt reported on the new turf baseball diamonds being proposed at Glover Park before turning the gavel over to Chair-Elect Kelly-Wiecek. The floor opened to any roundtable announcements:

- Colonial Heights Christmas parade will be December 6
- Dominion Energy Christmas parade in downtown Richmond will be December 4
- The Tacky Light Run will be December 10 and will be the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with over 4,000 people
- Fall Line Trail Update
- Diamont District Update
- Legendary Santa at the Children's Museum of Richmond – sold out but still virtual options available
- Science Museum's park in front of the museum to open in early 2023
- New restaurant – Wongs Taco opening in Chesterfield and a new Food Hall in Scott's Addition
- Airport Update – two new routes with Breeze to Phoenix and Sun Country to Minneapolis – seasonal routes
- Mechanicsville Christmas parade December 4
- Hanover/Ashland updates include a new hotel opening near Bass Pro Shops
- Tourism Resource Center inside the Convention Center where the Visitor Center was located along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street – will include a board room, lounge area and welcome area for bus tours
- VisitAble to offer disability awareness and inclusion program to local businesses and organizations
- WinterFest at Kings Dominion and also year round – adding 9 weekends to the schedule in 2023
- U.S. Sports Congress will meet in the region December 5<sup>th</sup> week
- ChamberRVA InterCity Visit to Kansas City May 2-4
- State of the Region breakfast in February

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 11:43 a.m.

Attendees:

Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels  
Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA  
Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion  
John Cario, Richmond Hilton Downtown  
Lester Johnson, Mama J's Kitchen  
Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County  
Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights  
Jen Kostyniuk, Dominion Energy  
Jon Lugbill, Sports Backers  
Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels  
Danielle Ripperton, Children's Museum of Richmond  
Dan Schmitt, Henrico County  
Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond  
Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association  
Chris Tsui, EAT Restaurant Partners

Guests Present

Lisa Jones, A.G. Reese  
Kim Baine, A.G. Reese  
Angela Wright, Hanover County  
Troy Bell, Capital region Airport  
Clay Bowles, Chesterfield County  
Malissa Whitby, BLK RVA

Absent:

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland  
Pat Collins, TowneBank  
Jim Holland, Chesterfield County  
Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp  
Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission  
Patricia Paige, New Kent County  
Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond  
Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership  
Lori Waran, Richmond Raceway

Staff Present

Jack Berry  
Katherine O'Donnell  
Michelle Lovatt  
Tom Loftus  
Matt Robinette  
J.C. Poma  
Jerrine Lee  
Matt Robinette  
Kelly Harding