

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 19, 2023
CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF RICHMOND
NOON**

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

- A. Welcome: Chairman Dan Schmitt called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.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 thanked Henley on Grace for catering the lunch. Ms. Danielle Ripperton with the Children's Museum of Richmond gave a brief welcome and opening remarks. Chairman Schmitt welcomed three new board members to the group. Mr. Paulin Cheatham representing Dominion Energy, Mr. Michael Lindsey representing Lindsey Food Group and Ms. Renee Haltom representing the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond.

Chairman Schmitt congratulated Mr. Matthew Smolnik with New Kent County for his recent promotion as Assistant County Administrator. Amishi Amin, VP of Procurement for Shamin Hotels, was in attendance representing Neil Amin as a guest. Two staff members were recognized, Katie Potter, the new Public Relations Manager joined the staff on November 29th and student intern, Trevor Hockman, a senior at Randolph-Macon College, is conducting a one -month internship with the organization.

- B. MOTION Minutes: The minutes from the December 1st meeting were reviewed. Ms. Lisa Sims made a motion to accept the minutes which were seconded by Mr. Jim Holland. The vote passed.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. Special Presentation: Mr. Eric Terry with Virginia Restaurant Lodging & Travel Association presented the tourism industry topics that will be presented during the General Assembly's short 45-day session. Top priorities include:

- Tipped Wage/Tip Credit
- Minimum Wage
- Dealer Discount on Tax Collections
- ABC Update
- Inherent Liability Protection for Campgrounds
- Short Term Online Rental Market
- National Gas Accessibility
- Association Healthcare Plans
- Workforce Matters/Workforce Development

Mr. Terry reported on the hospitality and tourism workforce efforts of recruitment and training and working with groups such as HOPES Program and Go Virginia. The board members were invited to the VRLTA Legislative Reception on January 24th and the Day on the Hill January 25th. The presentation will be sent to all board members along with Mr. Terry's contact information.

- B. Special Presentation: Mr. Brian Anderson with ChamberRVA presented the Regional Visioning Initiative which outlines how the region will advance a more equitable form of economic growth. The ChamberRVA along with other groups in the region will work together to unify around equitable growth and will create a direction and map out existing programs, identify key drivers, seek stakeholders' input and engagement and then package and promote the plan and track the progress for the future. The presentation will be sent to the board members.

- C. President's Report: Mr. Jack Berry reported that the organization has one open vacancy of National Destination Sales but expects to fill the vacancy soon. The financial summary through October was reviewed and Mr. Berry noted the ARPA funding for the Inspiration Campaign. After the initial budget was approved for the campaign 50% of the ARPA funding was received and we have spent approximately \$150,000 to date. Mr. Berry reviewed the market travel trends through December. While there still is not a full recovery of government or corporate business travel, the region is still doing very well.
- D. Economic Impact Video: Mr. J.C. Poma, Vice President of Community Relations, introduced the new economic impact video and presented the video to the board. A link to the video will be sent to all board members.

III. OLD BUSINESS & WRAP-UP:

- A. Tourism Improvement District (TID) Update: Ms. Katherine O'Donnell, Executive Vice President, updated the board on the progress being made with the TID. The petition threshold has been met in all jurisdictions except Colonial Heights. Colonial Heights will be met once their newest hotel is open after April 1st. Ordinances in each jurisdiction are being drafted and the petitions have been sent to the jurisdictional attorneys for review. There will be some upcoming public relations surrounding the TID and the next steps will be to set board of supervisor/council meetings for support. A Governance committee is being established consisting of nine hoteliers which will govern the TID and be a subcommittee of the RRT board. Out of 200 TIDs in the country, we will be the first in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- B. Tourism Master Plan Initiatives: Mr. Berry reported that the City of Richmond's EDA has teamed up with the Greater Richmond Convention Center Authority (GRCCA) regarding the proposed hotel. A recent request for information generated 5 proposals. A committee has been established to review the proposals and Ellen Robertson and Jack Berry have both been added to the committee. Due to the confidentiality of the project, there will not be any further reports regarding this project until public statements have been released regarding the project.

Mr. J.C. Poma reported on the workforce development initiatives with InUnison. A workforce development webinar will be offered on January 31st by Warren Whitney in conjunction with InUnison. The board is invited to attend and Ms. Nancy Thomas reported that she will see that information is sent to the board regarding the opportunity. Mr. Poma reported that the I Am Tourism Ambassador program has undergone a refresh and a new partnership has been formed with Bryant & Stratton College where all students will have access to the class.

Mr. Tom Loftus, Vice President of Marketing reported that three concepts for the Inspiration Campaign have been established and that the group along with ChamberRVA and the Greater Richmond Partnership will select one concept which will drive visitors into the region and create a halo effect for business and economic development. The board will have the opportunity to see the inspiration campaign concept at the March meeting and a full launch of the program will begin in May and through June 2024.

- C. Roundtable Announcements: Chairman Schmitt asked for any new business and then opened up the discussion to any roundtable announcements. Topics included:
- Track and Field group to meet in Hanover where Team USA will be selected.
 - RFP for management of the new sports facility in Henrico
 - Newly created baseball tournament for Memorial Day Weekend in Henrico

- Ukrop's 10K April 22nd
- New ad for Ashland and a new 30,000 square foot facility for dog agility and competitions
- Train Day in Ashland – 4th weekend in April; new travel series “Humans of the World” to be streamed on Amazon Prime and first episode was filmed in Ashland (to be released by end of 2023 or early 2024)
- Shepherd Stadium to host Native American Baseball World Cup in May
- National homebuilding in a recession but not in the Richmond Region
- Affordable housing challenges in the region
- Mild recession and laser focus on inflation
- Dominion Energy Charity Classic, Build It Exhibit at CMOR and Virginia Commission of the Arts award winners
- Kings Dominion open year round
- New hotel projects in the region
- New tourism brochure in New Kent County; Colonial Downs announcing new races for 2023 season
- Venture Richmond Business Improvement District being expanded into Manchester area
- Homelessness Task force in region
- Graffiti removal downtown
- Richmond Folk Festival in 2022 was largest ever with over 230,000 attendees
- NASCAR races upcoming – 1st weekend in April; recent survey reported Richmond track most diverse attendees.
- Green City Project
- GRTC appointed new CEO – Sheryl Adams
- Randolph-Macon College baseball 30 days until opening day

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland
 Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA
 Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion
 John Cario, Richmond Hilton Downtown
 Paulin Cheatham, Dominion Energy
 Pat Collins, TowneBank
 Renee Haltom, Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
 Jim Holland, Chesterfield County
 Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights
 Jon Luginbill, Sports Backers
 Michael Lindsey, Lindsey Food Group
 Danielle Ripperton, Children's Museum of Richmond
 Dan Schmitt, Henrico County
 Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond
 Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association
 Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership
 Lori Waran, Richmond Raceway

Guests Present

Amici Amin, Shamin Hotels
 Dawn Miller, Henrico Sports & Entertainment Authority
 Martha Miller, Town of Ashland
 Matt Smolnik, New Kent County
 Eric Terry, VRLTA

Absent:

Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels
 Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County
 Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp
 Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission
 Patricia Paige, New Kent County
 Todd “Parney” Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels
 Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond

Staff Present

Jack Berry
 Katherine O'Donnell
 Michelle Lovatt
 Tom Loftus
 J.C. Poma
 Jerrine Lee
 Katie Potter
 Trevor Hockman