

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 20, 2022  
ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE  
NOON**

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

- A. Welcome: Chairman Dan Schmitt called the meeting to order at 12:05 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 to the meeting and thanked the board members and guests for being flexible and pivoting quickly to hold the meeting virtually. Chairman Schmitt introduced Richmond CAO, Lincoln Saunders, to bring greetings to the Board. Mr. John Cario was welcomed to the board as a new board member representing the Richmond Region Hospitality Association seat. Mr. Clay Bowles, Chesterfield County Deputy Manager was also welcomed to the board as an alternate to Mr. Holland. Ms. Mykal Childs, student intern from Virginia State University was also welcomed. Mr. Leonard Sledge with City of Richmond Economic Development was also recognized as a meeting guest.
- B. Staff Anniversary Recognition: Chairman Schmitt recognized Katherine O'Donnell for her 20 year anniversary with the organization and recognized Julie Fleshman for her 10 year anniversary. Julie Fleshman will be retiring as our Sales Coordinator at the end of March. Both were thanked for their dedication to the organization.
- C. **MOTION** Minutes: The minutes from the November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting were reviewed. Mr. Todd Parnell made a motion to adopt the minutes which were seconded by Ms. Lisa Sims. The vote passed.
- D. Tourism Legislative Issues for 2022: Mr. Eric Terry with Virginia Restaurant Lodging & Travel Association presented legislative tourism issues before the current general assembly. Significant legislation filed:
- ABC issues (Alcohol to Go; Dram Shop Bill; ABC Privatization)
  - Employment (H2B Housing, Mandatory Paid Leave; American Healthcare Plans)
  - Casino issues
  - Human Trafficking (Mandated Training)
  - Minimum Wage (Rescind \$12 increase)
  - Restaurants (Food Delivery Fee Transparency)
  - Short Term Rentals (Transit Occupancy Tax; STR Restrictions)
  - Lodging & Meals Tax (Cap on Taxes)

Mr. Terry discussed the labor crisis in the industry and other programs to assist with issues within the hospitality and travel industry. The Board thanked Mr. Terry for being a champion on the issues.

**II. NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. President's Report: Mr. Berry announced that Jerrine Lee was promoted to the Vice President of Sales position which was previously held by Dasha Runyan. Dasha now works for John Cario at the Hilton Richmond Downtown. Jerrine will over see meetings, conventions and sports. Tom Loftus, Vice President of Marketing, was recognized as a Top 10 Engaging Leader in Destination Organizations.

Mr. Berry noted that the Annual Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statements should be completed by all board members and that Michelle Lovatt will email a copy to you for completion. Finances through October were reviewed, and it was noted that staff travel, and entertainment are increasing but the budget is intact. Market trends were reviewed, and it was noted that since July 2021 to date, the occupancy and RevPAR are at record levels. 2019 was our best year ever and we have been outpacing that year so far.

Staff have produced a new sports video and a link to the video will be shared via email for review. Mike Ritchie was commended for doing an excellent job on the video production. Mr. Berry also recognized Matt Robinette and Nancy Bass for their efforts with the recent Inaugural events in the City with hosting events and finding hotel rooms. The Board discussed the efforts by Rita McClenny and Virginia Tourism Corporation and how great the weekend was to start the year.

- B. Tourism Master Plan Initiatives: Katherine O'Donnell, Executive Vice President outlined the three Tourism Master Plan priorities that include a headquarter hotel, workforce development and an image campaign.
- Headquarter Hotel – A letter from CSL has been distributed via email regarding the feasibility study on the hotel usage. The data shows that if we get a new 500 room headquarter hotel the business will come. The data will assist the City of Richmond with their master plan priorities.
  - Workforce Development – Continue to work with ChamberRVA and VRLTA to have productive meetings regarding this as it relates to tourism and hospitality.
  - Image Campaign – ARPA Funding is available through Virginia Tourism Corporation and an image campaign with RRT, ChamberRVA and the Greater Richmond Partnership is being drafted and will be executed with the ARPA funds from the localities. Once the funds are released the RFP will be launched to find a agency for the campaign.

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

- A. Tourism Improvement District (TID): Katherine O'Donnell has continued to meet with Civitas and work with local jurisdictional leaders in the jurisdictions to discuss the TID program. The proposed 2% assessment should equate to \$6 million dollars annually and will benefit hotels that are collecting the assessment directly. The hotel industry is still recovering, and the belief is that now is the time to do the TID program to help with recovery efforts. Hotel ownership group meetings will occur in March and the district will encompass the entire region. A steering committee will be formed and Civitas will be engaged to assist us with the year long process to establish the TID. Timeframe for completion would be March 2023.
- B. Old Business: Chairman Schmitt asked for any old business that needed to be discussed. It was announced that Jon Luginbill will be inducted to the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame in April, and all were encouraged to attend the event in Virginia Beach. Mr. Rich Conti hosted the Inaugural weekend with the candlelight dinner. The floor was then open to any roundtable announcements:
- Loss of Aubrey Stanley, Board of Supervisor in Hanover
  - GRP – Investor forum and top site selectors were recently in the region
  - Richmond Squirrels – Virtual Banquet February 3<sup>rd</sup>; March 5<sup>th</sup> first date of single game sales; April 12<sup>th</sup> opening date

- Airport Updates – Breeze Airlines Richmond to West Palm Beach to start Feb 19; Passenger traffic 73% of pre pandemic numbers. For December, 85% recovery
- Colonial Heights – Council Member, Mike Cherry, was elected to VA House of Delegates so there is a vacancy on the city council to be filled. Baseball will resume at Shepherd Stadium in three weeks.
- Ashland – Light up the Tracks in December – events happened every week. Train Day April 30
- Richmond Raceway – Meghan Hazzard has left the Raceway; April 1-3 next NASCAR race dates
- ChamberRVA – Internship Grant Program; Network to Work and partnership with Ft. Lee for soldiers transitioning from military to new careers
- Chesterfield – Swift Creek Mill Theatre Bourbon pairing dinners; January 28-30 Soccer tournament with 8,000 attendees; new hotel projects in the planning stages for the County; Triple Crossing Brewery open in Winterfield Crossing; Hidden Witt will start construction in Moseley
- Courtyard by Marriott Scotts Addition to open in February; Boat show at GRCC
- Kings Dominion – Re-open in 7 weeks; \$11 million update to the park for 2022
- Hilton Richmond Downtown – Staffing issues; New renovation to lounge and meeting space as well as the fitness center

The Board was reminded of the February 5 RVA Sports Award Dinner. There being no further business to discuss, the next meeting will be held Thursday, March 24th at Noon. The meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Attendees:

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland  
 Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA  
 Dennis Bickmeier, Richmond Raceway  
 Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion  
 John Cario, Richmond Hilton Downtown  
 Pat Collins, TowneBank  
 Jim Holland, Chesterfield County  
 Lester Johnson, Mama J's Kitchen  
 Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County  
 Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights  
 Jen Kostyniuk, Dominion Energy  
 Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission  
 Patricia Paige, New Kent County  
 Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels  
 Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond  
 Dan Schmitt, Henrico County  
 Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond  
 Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association  
 Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership

Guests Present

Lincoln Saunders, City of Richmond  
 Leonard Sledge, City of Richmond  
 Clay Bowles, Chesterfield County  
 John D. Watt, Chesterfield County  
 Eric Terry, VRLTA

Absent:

Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels  
 Rich Conti, Science Museum of Virginia  
 Jon Lugbill, Sports Backers  
 Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp  
 Chris Tsui, EAT Restaurant Partners

Staff Present

Jack Berry  
 Katherine O'Donnell  
 Michelle Lovatt  
 Tom Loftus  
 Jerrine Lee  
 Matt Robinette  
 Julie Fleshman  
 Mykal Childs