

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES  
ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE CALL  
JANUARY 21, 2021  
NOON**

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

- A. Welcome: Chairman Dan Schmitt called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m., established a quorum and led the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. The agenda will be changed, and Item D under New Business (Update on JetBlue Promotion) will be moved to the end of the agenda. Chairman Schmitt welcomed guests to the meeting and acknowledged the new members of the board consisting of Mr. Todd "Parney" Parnell with the Richmond Flying Squirrels, representing Henrico County and Ms. Bridgette Bywater, the new General Manager of Kings Dominion.
- B. **MOTION** Minutes: The minutes from the November 19 meeting were reviewed. Ms. Lisa Sims made a motion to adopt the minutes which were seconded by Ms. Kelly-Wiecek. The vote passed.
- C. Employee Recognition: Chairman acknowledged Nancy Bass, National Sales Manager for her 15 year anniversary with Richmond Region Tourism. The Board acknowledged her years of service and dedication to the organization.

**II. NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. President's Report: Mr. Berry reported on the financial summary through October and noted that since travel and entertainment are not occurring there is a good savings in the budget for the year. For the market trends, Mr. Berry reviewed the year end occupancy statistics through December 2020. Occupancy with the decline of the average daily rate, you have revpar. The revpar figures are significantly down. Northern Virginia, specifically Arlington, is suffering greatly. For our local occupancies, we are holding at 47%. Ms. Ellen Robertson asked about revenue projection shortfalls due to the current trends. Mr. Berry stated that \$30 million in occupancy tax collections were collected last year. Currently we are projecting \$17-18 million in tax collections at the end of this fiscal year. We are trending better than we anticipated because of sports tourism and being able to continue to host most sporting events. Mr. Neil Amin reported that sports tourism is also benefiting from winter sports bookings in Virginia Beach as well.
- B. Governance Update: Lisa Sims, chair of the committee, reported that the committee consists of Pat Collins and Jennifer Kostyniuk. Ms. Sims reported that the committee has looked at a bylaw revision as well as a new conflict of interest statement for the board of directors. Staff has met with legal counsel and has looked at other conflict of interest statements used by other non-profits.

**MOTION** The proposed bylaw change will now require jurisdictions in Class A and Class B to appoint at least one elected official among their appointments to our board. Mr. Jim Holland made a motion to amend the bylaws, which motion was seconded by Mr. Neil Amin. Two-thirds of the board were present, and a vote was taken and passed.

**MOTION** The committee presented a new Conflict of Interest Statement for 2021. The form had not been updated in a while and the new form is more consistent with disclosure statements in the non-profit world. Ms. Ellen Robertson made a motion to adopt the new conflict of interest statement, which motion was seconded by Mr. Jim Holland. The vote passed.

The composition chart has been updated with terms and the new representatives have been added including the board directory that was circulated to all. Chairman Schmitt thanked the Governance Committee and staff for their work in this area.

- C. Sports Award Gala: Mr. J.C. Poma, Director of Sports Relations, updated the Board on the new Sports Award Gala being planned for 2022. Raising funds through the Foundation will be done as part of a new signature event. The RVA sports gala will be similar to the ESPYs and planned by a regional committee of sports partners. CBS 6 News in Richmond will be a media partner and will help with public voting and videos. The gala will be Saturday, February 5, 2022 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. Local athletes as well as collegiate athletics and local sports partners will be recognized as well as a scholarship recipient.
- D. Tourism Master Plan Update: Chairman Schmitt asked the various chairs and staff liaisons for the following update:
- Place Branding Co-Chairs: Angela Kelly-Wiecek & Lisa Sims and staff liaison Jennifer Hendren reported Ms. Lisa Sims updated the committee on the work of the committee. Research is being conducted so that a base line is established. Ms. Hendren reported that research regarding image and perception and what people think about the Richmond Region is being conducted. Ms. Jennifer Wakefield with the Greater Richmond Partnership is working to complete a business community survey. A national research survey will be conducted, and this committee will review during their March meeting.
  - Experience Development Co-Chairs: Dennis Bickmeier & Rich Conti and staff liaison Matt Robinette. Mr. Bickmeier updated the Board on the work of the Experience Development Committee. The group recently met and has added some additional committee members to the group. Three buckets of work will be tackled in the areas of Culture Tourism, Adventure Tourism and Sports Tourism. The Committee will break into sub-groups to work on tactics in all three areas once the Place Branding group has tackled the research.
  - Infrastructure & Investment Co-Chairs: Neil Amin & Ellen Robertson and staff liaison Dasha Runyan. Mr. Neil Amin reported that additional members have been added to the committee to assist with the work ahead. The VCU Athletic Village and the Bridgepark RVA are two infrastructure projects that the committee will learn about in the coming months. Ms. Robertson noted that a meeting was held with the Mayor and economic development with the City to discuss the downtown coliseum/convention center footprint area.
  - Industry Advancement & Advocacy Co-Chairs: Jim Holland & Brian Anderson and staff liaison Katherine O'Donnell. Mr. Brian Anderson reported that the group met in early December and has also added members to their committee. The group has reviewed the Meaningful Meetings project and all of the regional economic development teams have met to hear about the program. The work of diversity, equity and inclusion is being looked at as well as the work of other groups in regard to DEI initiatives. The group will meet again in early February.

### **III. OTHER NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Chairman Schmitt noted the new 2021 meeting date schedule that was circulated. A Roundtable session was held and the following topics were discussed:

- VTC Fall campaign on digital channels and social media
- Vaccine distribution at Richmond Raceway and throughout the region
- Meeting with the Governor to discuss re-opening guidelines
- Chesterfield sports fields activity and SwimRVA activity. New Springfield Suites hotel under construction in Chesterfield near Rt. 10 & I95
- RIC direct flights – JetBlue and the destinations of Tampa Bay, Los Angeles and Las Vegas
- Dominion Energy Diversity Scholarships
- Colonial Heights rise in sales tax collections and small business grants to 128 businesses resulting in \$480,000 in grant dollars
- May 29<sup>th</sup> Tri-City Chili Peppers Baseball at Shepherd Stadium
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion work at ChamberRVA
- InterCity Visit trip will be moved from spring to fall 2021
- New Kent County 16 businesses to be featured in Virginia Living for reader votes
- Retail Merchants – holiday retail sales numbers and general assembly legislative issues
- Venture Richmond downtown small business owner ad campaign – faces of downtown campaign
- Hanover's 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020 to be celebrated throughout 2021 #hereinhanover campaign and an app; hiring for a new director of parks and recreation and a new hotel opening at Atlee/Elmont Exit; Retirement of deputy county administration, Kathy Seay; Hanover vaccine call center
- No baseball at Squirrels baseball field since September 2019 but hopeful that baseball returns soon. VCU using the facility for practice and community using the parking lot for COVID19 testing
- Henrico – new indoor sports and event center; operator to be established in June, set to open October 2022. Belmont Golf Course to open in May
- Henrico Board of Supervisors looking at tournament fees for FY22. Fee would be 3% based on number of teams or participants multiplied by the entry fee and only on Henrico fields.
- Chesterfield COVID vaccine supply concerns; Chesterfield sales tax collections are up
- Museums struggling region-wide; Va Senate meeting at the Science Museum and a new mental health exhibit to open the 1<sup>st</sup> week of February
- Shamin announced the opening of the Hampton Inn in Short Pump and plans to open the downtown Moxy later this year

*(noted that directors Perry Miller and Jim Holland left the meeting prior to the JetBlue Promotion discussion)*

B. JetBlue Promotion: Mr. Brian Anderson updated the board on the direct flight campaign that has been a collaborative effort by many organizations. Ms. Jennifer Hendren reported recent accolades from Travel & Leisure Magazine – 50 Best Places to Travel in 2021 and the Richmond Region was listed. Also, Condé Nast Traveler Best Places to Travel in February and we are also on that list. The direct flights campaign will assist with these

wonderful accolades. JetBlue Vacations will have Richmond packages live on their site soon.

There being no new business to discuss, the next meeting will be held March 18<sup>th</sup> at Noon. The meeting adjourned at 1:23 p.m.

Attendees: 20

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland  
Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels  
Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA  
Dennis Bickmeier, Richmond Raceway  
Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion  
Rich Conti, Science Museum of Virginia  
Jim Holland, Chesterfield County  
Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County  
Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights  
Jen Kostyniuk, Dominion Energy  
Jon Lugbill, Sports Backers  
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  
Dan Schmitt, Henrico County  
Tom Silvestri, Retired, Richmond Times Dispatch  
Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond Dawn Miller, Henrico County  
Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association

Guests Present

John D. Watt, Chesterfield County  
Dawn Miller, Henrico County  
Angela Wright, Hanover County  
Doug Smith, Colonial Heights  
Karen Epps, Colonial Heights

Absent: 4

Pat Collins, TowneBank  
Lester Johnson, Mama J's Kitchen  
Scott Jones, Richmond Region Hospitality Association  
Chris Tsui, EAT Restaurant Partners

Staff Present

Jack Berry  
Katherine O'Donnell  
Michelle Lovatt  
Jennifer Hendren  
Dasha Runyan  
Matt Robinette  
J.C. Poma  
Nancy Bass