

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
JULY 13, 2023
HARLEY DAVIDSON RICHMOND
12200 HARLEY CLUB DRIVE
NOON**

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

- A. Welcome: Chair Angela Kelly-Wiecek called the meeting to order at 12:19 p.m., established a quorum and led the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. Chair Kelly-Wiecek welcomed the group and introduced Mr. John Budesky, Hanover County Administrator, who gave a brief welcome to the County of Hanover. Mayush Mehta with JP Hospitality was welcomed as the Vice Chair of the newly formed TID Governance Committee. Other guests included staff representatives, Mike Kerr, Director of Finance, Robin Chidester, Manager of Accounting, Deanne Ralston, Community Relations Coordinator and Toni Bastian, Group Tour & Visitor Center Manager. Three student interns were welcomed, Rebecca Kontos, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Jacob Butcher, University of Lynchburg and Cate Moffatt, University of South Carolina. Chair Kelly-Wiecek also recognized Lori Waran and Rita McClenny as the 2023 Virginia Business Women in Leadership.
- B. **MOTION Minutes**: The minutes from the May 18th meeting were reviewed. Mr. Neil Amin made a motion to accept the minutes which were seconded by Mr. Jim Holland. The vote passed.

II. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. **MOTION Governance Committee Update**: Ms. Bridgette Bywater, committee chair, reviewed the proposed Articles and Bylaws updates. Ms. Bywater made a motion to approve the amendments which consist of removing the ChamberRVA from Class A membership and creating a seat for ChamberRVA as Ex Officio. Creating an Ex Officio seat for the TID Chair or Vice Chair of the TID Governance Committee of the board and removing Richmond Region Hospitality Association Seat and renaming the seat as a Hotel Seat to be appointed by the RRT Board of Directors. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Cario. The vote passed. It was noted that more than 2/3rds of the directors were in attendance for the vote and all that attended voted in the affirmative.
- B. Inspiration Campaign Update: Mr. Tom Loftus, Vice President of Marketing, updated the board regarding the initial results of the campaign. After only 4 weeks, the results are trending very positively. Public relations, digital ad buys and social media influencers are the focus of the campaign outreach. PR efforts have led to 23 media outlets picking up the story and three significant travel writers wanting to visit the region. The first three social media influencer's posts have reached over 150k people. Our targeted audiences are our drive markets and selected direct fly markets. The major metric for our digital ad buys is "impressions" which is when our ad is seen by our targeted audience. So far, our ads have generated 6.6 million impressions. The goal is to put the video and ads in front of the intended travelers several times to improve their recall but not too many times that will produce fatigue. The marketing department is building out campaigns, including additional 15 second videos for each jurisdiction that will complement the inspiration campaign with calls to action to visit the region.
- C. President's Report: Mr. Jack Berry gave a personnel update and noted Mike Kerr has been hired as our Director of Finance. Robin Chidester was hired as Manager of Accounting and started on June 20th. Candidates were interviewed for the Vice President of Community Relations position and the candidates were narrowed and panel interviews were held. Dan Schmitt assisted us in the final hiring stages. An announcement will be made by July 14th.

Three staff members were promoted at the beginning of the fiscal year which includes Liana Acevedo as Director of Destination Services, Deanne Ralston as the new full-time Community Relations Coordinator and Morgan Stanley as Sports & Events Specialist. Open positions consist of an Administrative Coordinator and a Tourism Insights Analyst. Also, soon a Sports Events Manager will also be hired.

Mr. Berry introduced Mike Kerr, Director of Finance, who reported that an RFP for a banking partner for the TID was issued to six banks and five responses were received. Staff is working to develop a budget with the TID Governance Committee. The first set of CD reserves have been renewed, and the rates continue to be excellent at 5.35% for short-term assets. A plan for the audit of fiscal year 2023 is in place and staff has met with the auditors and CPA to identify a timeline. The jurisdictions have been invoiced for the 1st quarter of FY24. RRT expenses for FY23 are within budget and staff is working with the CPA to close the year. Expenses were projected at \$8.15 million for FY23 but draft actual expenses are around \$7.5 million.

MOTION Mr. Jack Berry presented the FY24 proposed budget to the board of directors highlighting the income and expenses of \$9,052,230. The budget was initially presented last fall in November when it was due to the funding jurisdictions. The income is based on FY22 hotel occupancy tax collections. The budget was reviewed, and Mr. Jim Holland made a motion to adopt the budget. The motion was seconded by Ms. Lisa Sims. The vote passed.

Mr. Berry reviewed the hotel market trends and occupancy tax collections through June and noted that while occupancy has flattened, the REVPAR has not. March 2023 was the largest ever in REVPAR followed by May 2023. Hotel tax collections for FY23 were over \$35 million which is up 16%.

Chair Kelly-Wiecek introduced Leonard Sledge, Director, City of Richmond Economic Development Office, to the meeting.

- D. Tourism Improvement District (TID) Update: Ms. Katherine O'Donnell, Executive Vice President, updated the board on the progress of the TID. The fee collections began on July 1st for all localities with the exception of Colonial Heights who will hopefully be collecting the fee later in the fall. The TID Governance Committee held their first orientation meeting in early June and will work with staff to develop their budget and work plan for the year on July 31st. The budget and work plan will be presented to the board in September for approval.
- E. Accessible RVA Presentation: Matt Robinette, Vice President of Visitor Experience introduced teammate, Toni Bastian, Group Tour & Visitor Center Manager who presented Accessible RVA to the board of directors. The Accessible RVA plan will create a digital platform on visitrichmondva.com and will also create a forum for RRT to collaborate with disability organizations to educate frontline staff about disability etiquette. Accessibility resources will be shared with meeting planners and visitors. In FY22 a certification program was launched with VisitAble and approximately 15 attractions were certified. The Board will be sent a link to take the certification and the Presentation slide deck will be shared with all board members.

III. OLD BUSINESS & WRAP-UP:

A. Roundtable Announcements: The floor was open to roundtable announcements. Topics included:

- Karate group downtown this upcoming weekend
- John Cario presented Katherine O'Donnell with a special award for her efforts to create the Tourism Improvement District
- Various General Manager openings at downtown hotels
- Jazz Festival returns in August to Maymont
- Mission Tomorrow – October 10-12
- Upcoming events in Chesterfield such as USTA National Tennis, Pickle Ball tournament and Pony league world series baseball
- Kings Dominion just wrapped up Carnivale and will be ready for Haunt in 6-7 weeks. Park attendance is up and also just awarded \$6,000 in scholarships. A new Communications Director was also hired for Kings Dominion
- Dominion Energy rates going down
- Congratulations to Matt Robinette for his CDME certification
- NASCAR suite tickets are available
- City of Richmond projects such as Amphitheatre on the riverfront, Diamond district project, Casino project and City Center hotel project
- Ashland Theatre celebrating 75th anniversary
- Airport statistics for May/June with record breaking passenger count as well as cargo
- Live horse racing returns to New Kent and Colonial Downs; upcoming Derby Days and Buc-ee's Truck Stop
- Various restaurant updates such as Ramz House Restaurant and Farm and Oak
- Tri City Chili Peppers at Shepherd Stadium and 2,000 people for the July 3rd game
- Upcoming NASCAR event in July and upcoming concerts
- August 26th ½ marathon in Ashland
- Museum space exhibits
- \$550,000 raised for Secretariat monument with unveiling proposed for March 30, 2024
- Berkeley Town Park in Ashland
- Hanover Tomato Festival

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 1:57 p.m.

Attendees:

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland
Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels
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
Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County
Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights
Michael Lindsey, Lindsey Food Group
Mayush Mehta, JP Hospitality
Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission
Patricia Paige, New Kent County
Danielle Ripperton, Children's Museum of Richmond
Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond
Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association

Lori Waran, Richmond Raceway

Guests Present

John Budesky, Hanover County
Dawn Miller, Henrico County
Martha Miller, Town of Ashland
Tara Worden, City of Richmond
Angela Wright, Hanover County
Leonard Sledge, City of Richmond
Doug Smith, Colonial Heights

Staff Present

Jack Berry
Michelle Lovatt
Katherine O'Donnell
Jerrine Lee
Matt Robinette
Tom Loftus
Mike Kerr

Robin Chidester
Toni Bastian
Deanne Ralston
Rebecca Kontos
Jacob Butcher
Cate Moffatt

Absent:

Jon Lugbill, Sports Backers
Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp
Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels
Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond
Dan Schmitt, Henrico County
Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership