

**RICHMOND REGION TOURISM
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING MINUTES
JULY 14, 2022
COLONIAL DOWNS RACETRACK
NEW KENT COUNTY, VA
NOON**

I. CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

- A. Welcome: Chairman Dan Schmitt called the meeting to order at 12:17 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 introduced Mr. Rodney Hathaway, County Administrator, New Kent County. Mr. Hathaway welcomed the group and gave the group a brief update on live racing as well as other tourism assets in the jurisdiction.
- B. **MOTION** Minutes: The minutes from the May 12 meeting were reviewed. Mr. Jim Holland made a motion to adopt the minutes which were seconded by Mr. Brian Anderson. The vote passed.
- C. Board Member Recognition: Chairman Schmitt recognized Mr. Rich Conti for his years of service to the board representing the at-large Museum Director seat. Mr. Conti could not be present but will be honored with a dedication to service award. The Governance Committee is collaborating with staff and the museum director group to fill the vacancy.

Ms. Lori Waran was welcomed as the new President of the Richmond Raceway. Ms. Jennifer Wakefield, not in attendance, was recognized by Virginia Business for the top 42 executives for 2022 Women In Leadership. It was announced that John D. Watt retired from Chesterfield County at the end of June in their economic development department.

- D. Employee Recognition: Chairman Schmitt acknowledged Nancy Bass, National Destination Sales Manager, who will be retiring on September 2nd. Nancy joined the RRT team in 2006 after working in hotels and private clubs for over 20 years. She served most of her tenure as Convention Sales Manager and was promoted in August of 2017 to National Sales Manager. Nancy has traveled extensively promoting Richmond and brought hundreds of conventions to our region during her time at RRT. Some of the recent and upcoming conventions to highlight include: United States Association of Cider Makers 2022 CiderCon, National Main Street Center 2022 Main Street Now Conference, National Genealogical Society 2023 Family History Conference, and National Council on Education for Ceramic Arts 2024 Conference. It was Nancy's hard work and dedication that created a multiyear relationship with GalaxyCon back in 2019 that extends through 2024. In this next chapter, Nancy is looking forward to spending time with family and friends. The Board was also invited to an open house for Nancy on Monday, August 29th from 3-5pm.

Chairman Schmitt noted that the culture at RRT is to promote from within where possible. Jason Whitt will be promoted to National Destination Sales Manager starting August 1st. Jason has been with RRT for almost five years. During this time, he has proven himself as a dedicated Destination Sales Manager. He and Nancy Bass have the same market segments: Association and Corporate, and Hobby making the transition from single property to city-wide sales seamless for Jason and our clients. He has over 20+ years of experience in the hospitality industry and is respected by our hotel partners.

Chairman Schmitt also recognized the new staff that were in attendance:

Jatiska Reed – Started with us March 15th as our Sales Coordinator. She is a graduate from Powhatan High school. Graduated in cosmetology and was a hairstylist for 11 years and then ventured off to the mortgage world before coming to the hospitality industry. She grew

up in Powhatan Virginia and relocated to the Richmond area in 2015. Her hobbies are traveling, reading and most outdoor activities.

Gerald Taylor – Started with us April 4th as our Sports Sales & Event Manager. Gerald is an alumnus of Virginia State University where he received both his bachelor's and master's degree in Sports Management. While attending VSU Gerald was an honors student maintain a 3.5 GPA while being the Team Captain (baseball) and the Number 2 overall pitcher in the CIAA conference. Gerald has received awards such as: Arthur Ashe Jr Scholar Award, 2nd Team All Independent Conference and Coaches Choice Awards. Gerald has worked with RMC Events, NASCAR (Daytona), Richmond Raceway, MiLB Diversity Program, Chesterfield County Park & Rec, VSU Athletics, BIG 12 Conference, A10 Conference, and local AAU Basketball & Baseball Programs.

Reed Patterson – Reed could not be with us today, but he started with RRT on May 9th as our Convention Services Manager. Reed graduated from Radford University and came to RRT from the YMCA of Greater Richmond.

Carla Murray – Started with us May 31st as our Director of Marketing Communications. She was most recently the Director of Marketing and Communications for the Virginia Restaurant Lodging and Travel Association, and before that, she worked in various marketing roles at Maymont for more than 23 years. Carla is a life-long resident and fan of the Richmond Region and a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University. She has two daughters – a rising senior at VCU and a rising freshman at James Madison University – and lives in New Kent with her husband and their dog, Sammy.

Cate Moffatt – Cate is a student intern with us this summer working with our sports department. Cate is a rising junior at the University of South Carolina where she majors in Psychology and double minors in Sport & Entertainment Management and Dance. She has lived in Henrico County her entire life and loves to be back in Richmond during summer and winter breaks. She is highly interested in sport management and tourism and has found that Richmond Region Tourism was the perfect place to learn more about the industry.

Dhara Patel – Dhara is a student intern with us this summer working with our marketing department. Dhara grew up in a small town called Brunswick just outside Cleveland, OH, and moved to the Short Pump area about 6 years ago. She goes to Virginia Tech and is studying Digital Marketing and Management Consulting.

Justin Anderson – Justin is also a student intern with us this summer working with the Community Relations Department and specifically with the BLKRVA program. Justin is from Dinwiddie and is a student at Virginia State University studying business marketing. Some of his interests are nature parks/trails, cars, and calisthenics.

II. **NEW BUSINESS:**

- A. Executive Vice President's Report: Ms. Katherine O'Donnell, reported on behalf of Jack Berry who was out of town. Ms. O'Donnell reported on the financials through April and noted that staff is working on the end of fiscal year financials. We expect to be under budget with a surplus at fiscal year-end. Permission was given to spend \$1.1 million from the reserves to balance the FY22 budget, but we will not need all of the reserves as originally thought. Once the audit is complete in early fall, we'll have exact figures to share.

RISE Diversity Vendor Project: Michelle Lovatt, Vice President of Administration, shared with the board the RISE project that staff will begin. RISE stands for (Report on Inclusive Spending Efforts). RRT will use our vendor data to survey to determine our total spend with diverse vendors. The staff, board and vendors that we have done business with will be surveyed. RRT attended the ChamberRVA Vendor Diversity Workshop and hopes to create a plan for being more diverse with spending and vendor procurement. A handout about the RISE project was distributed.

- B. **MOTION FY23 Budget Approval**: Ms. O'Donnell presented the FY23 budget for approval. The budget income is \$5,300,854 and expense is \$8,152,370. As discussed last fall when the budget was submitted to the jurisdictions, it was noted that we would be once again submitting a deficit budget because of the lower tax collections. Approval was given at that time to use reserve surplus funds to make the programming whole. For FY23, the tax collections were based on FY21. RRT is budgeting to take \$2.8 million from reserves to complete our programming and staffing needs to drive business in FY 23. Note that FY23 is the first year that we are collecting 2% of the total occupancy tax collections from the jurisdictions where previously we were allocated 1.75%. The board reviewed the reserve history from 2015 – 2022 and Ms. O'Donnell reported that reserves at 7/11/22 were \$5,124,598 but will be re-calculated after the audit is complete in early fall. After FY22 and FY23, approximately \$1.1 million will be left in reserves if all of the funds are spent. It was noted that for FY24 the income from the hotel occupancy tax collections will be back to a normal collection of approximately \$7.6 million and therefore funds from the reserves should not be needed in FY24. Work will begin this fall to work with the board to aggressively build the reserves back up to \$4 million. The FY23 budget is different overall with new department breakdowns such as Visitor Experience vs. Visitor Center and Sports has been separated from Destination Sales. Chairman Schmitt reported that the Executive Committee met on July 11 and discussed the budget and reserves in detail. Mr. Schmitt described how fiscal year 23 is the worst due to the pandemic effecting the tax collections in 2020 and 2021. He asked staff to be conservative this year with spending and to be aggressive with reloading the reserves for the future. The RRT Executive Committee will begin reviewing the reserve policy at the September meeting. Ms. Bywater and Mr. Holland both noted that using the reserves to keep the organization whole while recovery takes place is the best course of action. Mr. Jim Holland made a motion to adopt the FY23 budget, seconded by Ms. Nancy Thomas. The vote passed.

Katherine O'Donnell reviewed the hotel occupancy tax collections and also the market trends through May noting that hotel recovery still holding strong. While Occupancy was down a point in May over 2019, RevPAR was up by nearly \$7 per room.

- C. **Mission, Vision, Values Work Session**: Chairman Schmitt reported that the staff have worked together to revisit the current mission, vision and values of RRT. Katherine O'Donnell shared other mission statements from various places and asked the board to guess who the statements were from or who they represented. J.C. Poma, Vice President of Community Relations then addressed the board regarding the work that the staff have done to redraft the current mission and vision statements. Mr. Poma also shared a short video clip from the chief of advocacy at Destinations International sharing the vision of what we do for our community and how that differs from just heads in bed mentality. After the video, the board discussed the mission, vision and values statement drafted by the staff, individually with their tables. Afterwards, a few board members shared opinions and suggestions to further improve the statements. Overall, the board applauded the staff for taking a passionate lead re-drafting the statements. Mr. Poma stated that the feedback

would be brought back to the team and a final statement will be submitted in September for adoption.

- D. Longwoods Visitor Volume Study: Tom Loftus, Vice President of Marketing, presented visitor survey data from the domestic travel market highlighting trip characteristics and demographic profiles of overnight and day visitors. The PowerPoint will be emailed to the board after the meeting. Mr. Loftus also reported that a pet friendly campaign is underway and will be launched in the fall.

III. OLD BUSINESS & WRAP-UP:

- A. Tourism Improvement Districts: Katherine O'Donnell distributed a new brochure on the Tourism Improvement District (TID) and reported that four in-person meetings have been held with owners of hotels. The feedback so far is very positive. The Steering Committee will be meeting to refine the TID Governance structure. Several board members such as Neil Amin, Bridgette Bywater, Dan Schmitt, and John Cario are serving on the committee. This Steering Committee will be a subcommittee of our board made up of hotels from each TID jurisdiction and from a variety of hotel sizes. The legal service plan document will be drafted this fall and the petition process will also begin in the fall.
- B. Tourism Master Plan Initiatives: Ms. O'Donnell reported that the City of Richmond is making headway with transferring the land needed for the hotel to the Economic Development Authority and that a meeting will be held on Friday, July 14th to discuss the progress. Mr. J.C. Poma reported that workforce development initiatives continue to evolve and that we are working closely with InUnison and VRLTA. John Cario at the Hilton Richmond downtown is utilizing our workforce development video as part of their new employee recruitment efforts. The video will also be utilized and incorporated into tourism and hospitality curriculum at jurisdictional hospitality and tourism career and technical education programs in Hanover, Henrico and Chesterfield as well as collegiate programs at Reynolds Community College and Virginia State University. Mr. Poma shared a recent video with the board regarding our partnership with Atlantic Union Bank and a student intern, Justin Anderson, with Virginia State University.

Mr. Tom Loftus updated the board on the inspiration campaign and noted that 13 proposals have been received. The proposals will be reviewed and narrowed to five finalists. Presentations will begin in August.

- C. Other Business: Chairman Schmitt reminded the Board of Directors to review the full department report document that was shared and also e-mailed in advance of the meeting. Also shared with the board was a Foundation yearly recap document. The board was encouraged to attend the August 31st day at the races with staff from 1-4pm. The floor opened to any roundtable announcements:

- Broad Street Brawl ballgame between the Marriott and Hilton
- New Chesterfield Lego plant announcement
- RiverCity Sportsplex concert series
- NASCAR August 13-14
- Keystone Tractor Museum – Train Days July 23-24 and July 30-31
- New hotel development in Colonial Heights
- Live Horseracing and new restaurant in New Kent

- Hanover Tomato Festival upcoming
- GRTC President departure and search for new CEO
- Henrico Green City moving forward
- New synthetic turf fields at Glover Park and Virginia Center Commons/Convocation Hall opening summer 2023

Chairman Schmitt thanked New Kent for their hospitality for hosting the event and reminded the board of the updated date schedule in the packet. The Executive Committee meeting in November has been moved from November 14 to November 28 and the Board meeting in November has been moved to Thursday, December 1 immediately following the Valor Awards at the Convention Center from 10:15 a.m. – Noon.

There being no further business to discuss, the next meeting will be held Thursday, September 15 at Noon in the Town of Ashland. The exact meeting location will be announced soon. The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Attendees:

Kathy Abbott, Town of Ashland
 Brian Anderson, ChamberRVA
 Bridgette Bywater, Kings Dominion
 John Cario, Richmond Hilton Downtown
 Jim Holland, Chesterfield County
 Angela Kelly-Wiecek, Hanover County
 Greg Kochuba, Colonial Heights
 Jen Kostyniuk, Dominion Energy
 Jon Luginbill, Sports Backers
 Rita McClenny, Virginia Tourism Corp
 Perry Miller, Capital Region Airport Commission
 Patricia Paige, New Kent County
 Dan Schmitt, Henrico County
 Nancy Thomas, Retail Merchants Association
 Lori Waran, Richmond Raceway

Guests Present

Doug Smith Colonial Heights
 Matt Smolnik, New Kent County
 Clay Bowles, Chesterfield County
 Rodney Hathaway, New Kent County

Absent:

Neil Amin, Shamin Hotels
 Pat Collins, TowneBank
 Rich Conti, Science Museum of Virginia
 Lester Johnson, Mama J's Kitchen
 Todd "Parney" Parnell, Richmond Flying Squirrels
 Ellen Robertson, City of Richmond
 Lisa Sims, Venture Richmond
 Chris Tsui, EAT Restaurant Partners
 Jennifer Wakefield, Greater Richmond Partnership

Staff Present

Katherine O'Donnell
 Michelle Lovatt
 Tom Loftus
 Matt Robinette
 J.C. Poma
 Jerrine Lee
 Carla Murray
 Jatiska Reed
 Gerald Taylor
 Nancy Bass
 Jason Whitt
 Cate Moffatt
 Justin Anderson
 Dhara Patel